Desperately Seeking Kindness:
An Epistemological Paradigmatic Adventure

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Abstract

This thesis studies the concept of kindness. The study of kindness is limited in management and organizational studies and this research problematizes the concept of kindness, shows how kindness research is represented in other academic fields and offers ways forward to understand and engage in new thinking on kindness as a concept for individuals at work and for organizations.

To expand understanding of kindness at work, thirty-two public servants in Nova Scotia were interviewed. Using Weick's (1995) sensemaking properties these workers' understandings of and resistance to the concept of kindness were analyzed. From this analysis, themes were built to take these individual conceptualizations of kindness and engage with the theories and theorists of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigmatic framework. This research allows us to better understand barriers to kindness and offers ways for organizations to get to work on integrating the concept of kindness within their workplace.

Key contributions of this research include: A unique methodological approach of fusing Weick's (1995) sensemaking properties and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms leading to multiple understandings of the same phenomena.

The ontological and epistemological perspectives of kindness interpreted through the four paradigms of Burrell and Morgan contributing to kindness theorizing in organization and management studies.

Exploration of kindness as an expression of *love in action* and its potential impact on psychological health and safety and employee well-being through greater understanding of individual, relational and organizational enactment of the concept of kindness.

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Chapter One: Kindness at Work

Introduction

This thesis is a quest of discovery; a journey to explore the importance of the concept of

kindness for workers, in an effort to suggest the practice of kindness in the workplace could be

an embodied approach to enhancing employee health and wellbeing. The intention to expand the

current narrative on employee health and wellbeing within management and organizational

studies to include kindness comes at a time when there is an increase in management and

organizational research in problems and impacts of unhealthy behaviours in organizations, such

as, in/civility (Pearson & Porath, 2009), bullying (Sutton, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2003) sexual

harassment and gendered work (Bruner et al, 2014; MacKinnon, 1979; Farley, 1978), and

conflict (Follett, 1934, Graham, 1995).

To anchor this work within a historical context, this study begins with a summary of *On*

Kindness (2009), Phillips and Taylor's overview of the evolution of the concept of kindness.

Their definition (p. 6) is the working definition used throughout this paper. Adam Phillips, a

psychoanalyst and Barbara Taylor (2009) a feminist historian, recognize people are leading

secretly kind lives all the time but without a language in which to express this, or cultural support

for it (p. 4). They ask, "How do people come to forget about kindness and the deep pleasures it

gives to them?" (p. 5). Their unique point of view of the concept of kindness resonates with

observations and questions that led to the initial interest in exploring this topic. Their work did

not explore kindness in the workplace specifically and I wanted to build on their definition,

based on my workplace research.

Adding the concept of kindness to the body of research in unhealthy behaviours in

workplaces is an important area of focus for management and organizational studies as well as

for organizations themselves given there is little evidence that kindness, as a specific area of

study, has been integrated into the study of worker health and well-being. One can see ways the

concept of kindness has been approximated in management and organizational studies. Examples

include, spirituality in the workplace and the idea of essential goodness (Burack, 1999); one's

true work coming from one's own being (Fox, 1994); religion and values in the workplace

(Mitroff & Denton, 1999a); cultural studies (Parker, 1999; Rhodes, 2001; 2004; Clark, 2008;

Rhodes & Clark, 2008) and its tie to popular culture. The concept of kindness, though hinted at,

is not sufficiently developed from a critical and practical perspective.

In other academic areas of study, such as religion, psychology and education, there is

substantial work in the study of kindness. The discourse of kindness in religious studies is

framed within the language of the golden rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto

you (Wattles, 1996). In psychology, organizational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1997) comes

with its checklist of collegial behaviours and reciprocated actions as interpretations of kindness.

Education captures and bounds kindness as a strength of character (Binfet, 2015). The focus of

the kindness research within this thesis will be different from what is offered in other areas of

management and organizational study such as care and empathy (Ciulla, 2009; Tompkins &

Simpson, 2015) and compassion (Castellano, 2014) by its attention to ways workers

conceptualize kindness to self, kindness to others and kindness to the organization.

The concept of kindness, as it is presented in various academic literature included in the

literature review or in the popular press, relies on an assumed, innate understanding that remains

simplistic, as though it were a mere generous act. For example, in defining kindness through

religious expectations, *do unto others as you would have them do unto you,* a phrase that is

readily offered without religious intent, what is missing is the appreciation of how kindness is

reliant on each individual's personal history and values. Ironically, thus, a manager who is

unable or unwilling to engage in a mental health discussion with a staff member because it is

deemed too intimate or inappropriate based on their belief system, or personal comfort level is in

fact, doing unto others as they wish would be done unto them, but may not in fact be 'being

kind' if the employee is in need of support. The thesis will examine the concept of kindness

being more than merely a generous act but also a complex, biased, individual, relational,

organizational and cultural set of actions and behaviours. These actions and behaviors may be

understood differently depending on the paradigmatic perspective of the individual. To connect

the personal and individual understandings and experiences of kindness to management and

organizational studies, a micro - macro analysis is presented. This micro-macro analysis provides

a framework for the study of kindness as a discursive idea that covers a concept whose

understanding is dependent on dominant and contested notions of a type of behaviour and/or

feeling.

     One of the ways this kindness research differentiates itself from other areas of

management and organizational studies is in its marriage of workers' experiences (or

sensemaking) and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms and organisational

analysis. Weick describes sensemaking as a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities

(1995, p. xi). Weick's model of sensemaking grew from a set of "schemes of interpretation"

(1979, p. 46) to a larger framework, understood as a process that has seven distinguishing

characteristics (1995, p. 17) which serve as a rough guideline for inquiry into sensemaking in the

sense that they suggest what sensemaking is, how it works and where it can fail (ibid, p. 18).

Weick acknowledges the word sensemaking may have an informal, poetic flavor, but that should

not mask the fact that it is literally what it says it is (ibid, p. 16). He writes of it as a process of

understanding, "sensemaking emphasizes that people try to make thing rationally accountable to

themselves and others" (1993, p. 635). Weick's seven sensemaking properties were used to

process the sensemaking on the concept of kindness through the interviews of thirty-two public

servants. Through the examination of kindness as a concept from individual workers'

perspectives and the use of Weick's (1995) sensemaking properties, shared understandings and

themes on the concept of kindness were identified. These themes were then explored through

Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms. By investigating workers' understandings of kindness

from a multi-paradigmatic perspective, the concept of kindness in organizational studies is both

problematized and broadened.

Evolution of Kindness

        This study deconstructs various understandings of how "kindness" is traditionally

recognized. This deconstruction is meant to interrupt the unquestioned experiences and

understanding of workers conceptualization of kindness and enrich the scholarship on the

concept of kindness. What makes kindness such a complicated and interesting study is the varied

ways it is understood and defined. From dictionaries, to religious teaching, from ethical and

moral values to cultural norms, kindness is complex.

        Walter Skeat (1888), philologist and early etymologist traces *kind* from Middle-English,

kunde or *kinde*; Anglo Saxon or Old English, *cynde* meaning natural or in-born related to Gothic

kunds or born. The origins of the word in Middle English define kind as well-born or well bred, well-disposed by nature, courteous, gentle and benevolent.

The Latin roots of kindness lead to benevolence, or rather, benevolentia (bene - well) and velo (wishing). Benevolentia - that means benevolence, kindness and good will. Historically, kindness was understood as inborn and natural in the Bible and other religious texts, being kind was understood in terms of behaviors in relationship to others: "do unto others as you would do unto yourself". This religious base, from the development of Christianity from a Jewish sect into a universalist faith was marked by a strong assertion of kindly values… Christian teachers described it as a divine love that flowing from heaven into the human soul, irradiated the soul with *caritas*. To "love thy neighbor as thyself" was the great moral law. (Phillips & Taylor, 2009, p. 20). This universalizing of Good Samaritan and Christian kindness grew. The belief that, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" creates the debate between humanity and divinity.

The Protestant Reformation demoted kindness from its foremost place in Christian moral understanding (ibid), replacing it with benevolence, "the Enlightenment's buzzword for kindness" (ibid, p. 26). Religious thinking created an internalized and expected behavior and belief in the value of being "kind'. While there were substantial shifts in religious doctrine nonetheless, kindness, a feeling of empathy and concern for others, remains a cornerstone within religious teachings. As religious debates on the nature of expected, innate and normed behaviors were happening, there was another development on societal behaviors.

The changing language from Victorian times shows a change from the concept of kindness as being God-given to primarily female-focused. This is an important component in the evolution of the concept of kindness. The shift is seen from internal and innate to externalized

actions and interactions. These changes bring a new perception of kindness that is gendered;

kindness as weakness, kindness associated with the fairer sex and kindness as selflessness.

Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate

position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth (de Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxviii).

The gendering and Othering (deBeauvoir, 1989) of kindness is further explored in the literature

review.

Kindness is defined in dictionaries as: "the quality or state of being kind; kind being

defined as, "having or showing a gentle nature and a desire to help others: wanting and liking to

do good things and to bring happiness to others" (Merriam-Webster); "the quality of being kind'

(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary); kind being defined as, "having or showing a friendly,

generous and considerate nature" (OED). The term "kindly" brings in the concept of laws of

nature, "existing or occurring according to the laws of nature' (Shorter Oxford English

Dictionary, 2007).

There are limitations and also a reinforcing narrative to these dictionary definitions.

There is an understanding about the concept of kindness "…the idea that reality [kindness], as

we know it, is socially constructed", but also that this idea [kindness] "has become a commonly

accepted claim" (Chia, 2003, p. 111). This social construction plays out in the enacting of the

dictionary definitions – liking to do good things and bringing happiness to others. Code (2007)

writes of a complex ontology of truth where there probably cannot be one true-story, one true

way of *knowing* (p. 225). Who is defining what is a good thing? Who is determining what would

bring happiness to someone? When kindness is brought into the workplace, these commonly

accepted claims, can indeed be less commonly accepted, as multiple people are engaging their

own individual interpretations of a good thing or bringing happiness.

Philanthropia (love of mankind) and caritas (neighbourly or brotherly love) recognize

religious teaching on kindness. For centuries, Christian caritas functioned as cultural cement,

binding individuals into society, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" served as a kind of biblical

mantra. References to kindness exist in The Vedas, The Bible, The Sutras, The Torah, and the

Koran. Alongside these deeply held beliefs of the importance and value of kindness is Hobbes's

Leviathan (1651) dismissing Christian kindness as a psychological absurdity (Phillips & Taylor,

2009. p. 7).

Working Definition of Kindness

The working definition for this thesis comes from Phillips and Taylor (2009, p. 6):

> Kindness's original meaning of kinship or sameness has stretched over time to
> encompass sentiments that today go by a wide variety of names – sympathy, generosity,
> altruism, benevolence, humanity, compassion, pity, empathy. The precise meanings of
> these words vary but fundamentally they all denote what the Victorians called 'open-
> heartedness' the sympathetic expansiveness linking self to other.

This definition captures the emotional and wide-ranging dimensions of the concept of

kindness. It links self to others and highlights the connection to open heartedness. Because most

people spend most of their waking hours at work, there is growing concern and growing research

in the areas of how the workplace affects psychological health and safety and worker well-being

(Guest, 2002; Dimoff & Kelloway, 2013; World Health Organization, 2019, Mental Health in

the Workplace; Government of Canada, 2016; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013,

2018; Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety). Using the above definition helps

integrate these concepts for management scholars.

Phillips and Taylor add another component to their definition of kindness that also

resonates with this research and the importance of studying kindness academically and

professionally: "Kindness, that is, the ability to bear the vulnerability of others and therefore

oneself, has become a sign of weakness" (ibid, p. 8). This concept of weakness and its link to

emotions and care for others can make kindness a feminist issue too. Women are seen in

organizations as managing emotional wellbeing at a much higher rate than men (Erickson &

Ritter, 2001; Guy & Newman, 2004) and having a "care orientation" (Brunier, 2003).

One of the beliefs driving this research and my area of focus comes from an evolution in

understanding kindness throughout my work life. I have observed that the concept of kindness at

work fails when systems and policies that currently exist are no longer sufficient to support

employees. New practices need to accommodate another way of viewing the worker and the

work. The reason for this need in our new working reality is captured by Helms Mills (2003, p.

174) in her study on organizational change, "What had previously made sense was now viewed

as unacceptable because it didn't fit with the new construction of reality." By studying kindness

through a sensemaking and paradigmatic framework in this thesis, the ways kindness is

understood and enacted and experienced individually can also be understood organizationally.

By paying attention to the worker and the workplace with the lens of kindness on actions,

decisions and outcomes, this connection can help provoke change and the development of better

organizational options to support workers' wellbeing and workplace relationships.

Theoretical Framework

The decision to use Weick's (1995) sensemaking and Burrell and Morgan's (1979)

paradigms may seem like an unusual coupling. And yet, these two frameworks marry individual

workers' conceptualizations of kindness in the workplace with management and organizational

studies theory, allowing for an in-depth analysis of 1) the concept of kindness 2) barriers to

kindness in management and organizational studies and 3) distinct directions forward.

Sensemaking.

Choosing to use Weick's seven sensemaking properties in the exploratory study of the concept of kindness allowed a solid theoretical basis from which to better understand the concept of kindness in the workplace. As noted above, sensemaking is a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities. The explanatory possibilities are one of its key strengths and support this research, in discovering and exploring the concept of kindness at work and helping to better understand barriers to kindness at work and ways forward. It enabled the deconstruction of the phenomenological process through which shared realities [of kindness] are created, sustained and changed through meaning-making interviews with workers.

Weick's (1995) socio-psychological properties (grounded identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, driven by plausibility rather than accuracy) were used to unpack the ways kindness was understood, enacted and imagined at work. The interviews were coded using Weick's (1995) seven properties of sensemaking which allowed for both capturing an individual's understanding of kindness at work and for better understanding and conceptualizing the contextual factors which public servants shared. Through retroactive sensemaking, multiple understandings and interpretations of kindness were uncovered.

Burrell and Morgan.

After applying a sensemaking framework to understand the public servant interviews, the paradigmatic lenses of Burrell and Morgan (1979) were used to unpack the concept of kindness through leading theorists and the themes that emerged from my informants. By engaging in an ontological and epistemological review of Burrell and Morgan's paradigmatic framework, it enabled a better understand the barriers to kindness at work and also propose ways forward. This

approach to understanding concepts of kindness, in turn, contributes to new ways to understand

the significance and complexity of kindness in the workplace.

Researchers reflect on how paradigms of thought deal with organizational issues

differently. Two examples include, Hearn and Parkin's (1983) work on gender and authority in

relation to each paradigm and Hassard's (1991) case study based on the four paradigmatic

perspectives and ensuing four distinct understandings of work in the British Fire Service. Burrell

and Morgan's four paradigms are being used to frame an analysis of kindness from major

theoretical influences in the past and the kindness themes from the sensemaking of 32 public

servants. The themes that emerged from the interviews provide distinct entry points to how

kindness could be understood from an organizational perspective. Situating the study in an

organization of over 10,000 Nova Scotians allows for diverse experiences and sensemaking to

add to the paradigmatic review. Additionally, 'the ontological inseparability of intra-acting

agencies" (Barad, 1998, p. 87), allows for the discussion of future research possibilities of

kindness in organizational studies.

Kindness is a concept that is influenced (Fleetwood, 2005; Berger & Luckman, 1967) by

a number of sensemaking and contextual factors held by members of an organization. This study

deconstructs various understandings of what is traditionally recognized as "kindness". Using

Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms to explore emergent and contextual notions of

kindness at work may also have the added benefit of suggesting ways of developing strategies

for kindness at work.

In summary, by studying kindness through a sensemaking and paradigmatic framework,

the ways kindness is understood, enacted and experienced individually can also be understood

organizationally. By broadening our understanding, there is the potential to better understand the

discursive construction of kindness within the workplace and among workers.

Methodology

The methodology was designed to show how different paradigms can be used to explore how workers understand kindness, experience kindness and connect kindness to themselves and their workplace. The interview questions (Appendix A) were intended to better elicit what kindness meant to the individual, and how kindness was experienced or understood in relationship to their colleagues and in relation to their organization. In addition, the interviews explored if people made connections between kindness to employee engagement; how people defined a healthy organization; and what, in their opinion, stopped or inhibited kindness in working relationships. Through these conversations, it became clear that individuals do not understand kindness in the same way.

The workers' interviews are contextualized beyond the individual to explore potential impacts of kindness within organizations. Through the themes constructed from Weick's (1995) sensemaking properties, an ontological and epistemological review of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigmatic framework was conducted to better understand barriers to kindness at work as well as propose ways forward. Each paradigm provided a lens to explore theories in management and organizational studies tied to how workers understand kindness, experience kindness and connect kindness to themselves and their workplace. This unique pairing provides further problematization of the concept of kindness.

I began this research with a curiosity about kindness. This curiosity stems from a personal belief that kindness is powerful (Kahane, 2010), and that kindness is connected to love (bell, 2010). While research is prolific in the area of health and safety in psychology (Kelloway et. al., 2017; Walsh, et. al., 2014; Kelloway & Barling, 2010), critical management studies have

not embraced the concept of health and well-being or kindness with the same degree of attention.

In fact, research in health and well-being has led to what some call the 'new management speak'

(Foster, 2018) and the belief in a one-size fits all solution. Criticism from an occupational health

perspective to this approach (Karanika-Murray & Weyman 2013, p. 109), argues 'the relative

influence of individual vs situational variables' and the need to think beyond an individual

employee's choice and what factors such as job design, social relationships, management style or

organizational culture have as an impact." In addition, beliefs that big organizations are noxious

environments for human beings (Leavitt, 2007), and 'sick' organizational souls (Bell et. al.,

2011) and the choice to study kindness and imagine its power and possibilities could be

perceived as naïve by some.

Questioning common understandings of kindness led to this approach of integrating

interviews and sensemaking. This methodological approach provided a process to dig into

assumptions about kindness, beliefs about kindness, and resistance to the concept of kindness.

The decision to speak to people working in the largest organization in the province of Nova

Scotia enabled access to workers in a variety of workplaces who were responsible for a broad

range of jobs. In my work in organizational health, I observe and experience daily how people

treat each other, how people talk to and about each other and how relationships do and do not

work. It is this, my lived experience (Van Maanen, 1990) as a public servant that has led to my

research work.

Meanings are interpreted through a lens of past experiences and understandings (Thurlow

& Helms Mills, 2009, p. 462) and identity construction is central to the whole sensemaking

process (Helms Mills et al., 2010). Because workers' beliefs about kindness are assumed to be

similar for everyone, this "knowing-in-practice" is rarely questioned. "Knowing-in-practice puts

forward the idea that knowing is a practical accomplishment situated in historical, social, and

cultural context in which it unfolds (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Blackler, 1995, Ghererdi, 2000;

Orlikowski, 2002, Tsoukas, 2005, Fox, 2006 in Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014, p. 135). Alongside

these individual beliefs, informed by all these factors plus experience in the workplace with

people and structures that may or may not be perceived as kind, is insight from working in an

environment featuring heavy reliance on technological tools (i.e. Skype for Business, Yammer,

Sharepoint, Zoom, and iPhones), increased work load, a leaner workforce and increased

expectations of availability.

Interviews.

The interviews sites were at the provincial government of Nova Scotia. The provincial

government is the province's largest employer with over 10,000 employees. The government has

offices across the province and provides service through 16 different departments. Each

Department is structured with a Deputy Minister at its head with an executive leadership team

for the various branches of the department and Directors and Managers of divisions and units

within the branches. There are two employee unions: the majority of union members belong to

Nova Scotia Government Employee Union (NSGEU) and the rest to the Canadian Union of

Public Employees (CUPE). Employees who are not in the union are in what is termed excluded

classification (EC). Access to employees began with an email sent to all Deputy Ministers from

the Deputy Minister to the Premier, an unexpected and appreciated act of kindness. Twelve of a

of a possible sixteen deputy ministers participated in the interviews. Each one provided names

for further interviews. Cognizant of the hierarchy within provincial government departments, a

variety of staff were sought through these contacts and through already established working

relationships.

Analysis.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, reviewed and analyzed. Through this process, of listening and reading, repeated words, concepts and sentiments were isolated. This micro-level conceptualization of kindness was the beginning of building themes for my analysis. It was the extracted cues (i.e., references to specific behaviours and experiences) from the interviews, my own retrospective sensemaking and Weick's seven sensemaking properties that revealed commonalities in how the concept of kindness was understood. Thus, the themes came from the exploration of how these workers understood, enacted and experienced the concept of kindness.

Themes and theories.

Each theme created entry points into each of Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms. The four paradigms define fundamentally different perspectives for the analysis of social phenomena, they approach this endeavor from contrasting stand points and generate quite different concepts and analytical tools (1979, p. 23). By applying the themes of kindness and encountering barriers to kindness within each paradigm, multiple ways forward in the preliminary study of kindness were created. Like any other map, it provides a tool for establishing where you are, where you have been, and where it is possible to go in the future. It provides a tool for mapping intellectual journeys in social theory… (ibid, p. 24).

Reflexivity.

My reflexive approach to this work positions me as both a practitioner, a public servant working for a department within the provincial government with an organizational health role, as well as a researcher studying how kindness is made sense of in an organization. My awareness is tied to embracing a *reflexivity* that increasingly interrogates the relationship between knowledge and knowledge production (Calás & Smircich, 1992, p. 180).

Holding the dual roles of employee and researcher meant I was both an observer of and participant in my research and this required an ongoing awareness of and attention to reflexivity (Giddens, 1976). I was making sense of how other employees were making sense of kindness in an iterative cycle. When I use a sensemaking framework to interpret what my informants were telling me, I am aware of my understanding and resistance as well as acceptance of, structural power in my hierarchical bureaucratic workplace. Reflexivity places me as listener, interviewer and worker all in the same moment; I am both subject and object (Foucault, 1981). Additionally, my epistemological lens implies a willingness and a readiness to be open to the stories and experiences of my informants. I am driven by an epistemic responsibility (Townley, 2011), that is, recognition of other persons as knowers (p. 80) in my support of the health of my organization and individual workers and that I must consciously be "maintaining a space for others to speak, and in many contexts, holding the paradoxical position that even as I claim to know, I allow you to tell me that I am wrong, and I am prepared to take that seriously, not defensively, arrogantly, or dismissively "(2006, p. 50). I have a great deal of concern for the health of my colleagues and the health of my organization. My goal is to contribute more than just hope for a healthier workplace. This contribution will assist in building micro, meso and meta levels of kindness within our systems. Specifically, this means, valuing and integrating the multiple concepts of kindness at work in relation to the health and well-being of individuals and the organization.

I am also committed to being reflexively critical of [my] own intellectual practices (Alvesson, 2003). I am making conscious what is often unconscious in organizations, the often-subconscious process by which we know ourselves, and story our identity, (Boje, 2000). I strive to bring awareness that my own understanding of kindness, how I define, believe, enact and speak of kindness, influences my work.

By the nature of my role as worker in the organization I am studying, I am constantly questioning and observing; for example, internal communication, senior leaders, meeting structure and frequency, tone in discussions. The intention of this study is to shine a light on the practices of kindness at work, to build knowledge around the concept of kindness at work and to explore ways to implement changes. "…If we assume that organizational legitimacy is premised on the need to achieve organizational goals then the inversion, the need for organizations to first and ultimately prioritize the needs and goals of individuals, is inherently revolutionary… (Morin & Morin, 2003, p. 59). While the purpose of this thesis is not in starting a revolution, spending time focusing on the concept of kindness, understanding it, seeking it out and embedding it into practices does in fact feel revolutionary as workers may feel empowered to care for themselves differently.

This work is driven by a personal belief that kindness, and kind, caring organizations, "a culture of care" (Slaughter, 2015) can fundamentally change lives and vice versa; that a kind organization can lead to both business success and employee-well-being

Contributions.

This study of kindness and its presence and absence for the thirty-two public servants interviewed provides new ways to think about the concept of kindness in the workplace.

Using Weick's sensemaking properties and treating sensemaking as a process that draws upon properties as constitutive elements and language as a mode of expressing meaning (Murray, 2014), I have expanding the meaning of kindness in the workplace which both adds to our organizational understanding as well as responds to Weick's (Weick et al., 2005) call for more sensemaking studies.

By fusing individual sensemaking and ontological organizational perspectives, I have

provided a unique approach to researching workers lived experiences in recognizing and

honoring their agency and contextualizing organizational theorists in the creation of building

bridges over barriers and finding proposing ways forward.

In choosing to research an understudied area of management and organizational studies, I

have started (and will continue) to add to the literature on kindness at work. This new knowledge

also provides groundwork for organizations to explore the concept of kindness in their

workplaces and how it may support psychological health and safety and employee well-being.

Suggested ways forward for organizations to take action are presented in Chapter Six, with

specific direction based on each paradigmatic lens.

Mapping the process.

This first chapter has provided a brief introduction to the research, highlighting the

evolution of the concept of kindness and problematizing the notion of kindness. It has set up the

study by providing a working definition of kindness, the theoretical underpinnings of the

research and an overview of the methodology and analysis.

In Chapter Two, the literature review uncovers kindness research from various academic

fields, chosen because of the attention paid to the concept of kindness. These include religion,

education, psychology and cultural studies. In organizational and management studies, the

literature is not available in the same obvious ways, therefore an overview and analysis of

kindness in three areas of plausible interpretation are presented: compassion and care, spirituality

in the workplace and cultural studies.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework supporting this work through the use of Weick's sensemaking properties (1995) and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological route taken including interviewing public servants, the retrospective sensemaking brought to the interpretation of the interviews and the process of analysis leading to the development of themes.

Chapter Five dives into the workers' interviews to analyze their understanding of kindness through their sensemaking. Their words built themes which helped to place kindness in the workplace and to broaden our understanding of kindness in organizational and management studies.

Chapter Six situates the kindness themes from the interviews within each of Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms and explores both barriers to kindness within each paradigm as well as ways forward.

Chapter Seven is the concluding chapter which presents contributions, limitations, practical applications for workplaces and hope for the future.

Chapter Two – Kindness as a Subject of Inquiry

Introduction

In the following review of literature, it is clear that certain academic fields have engaged with kindness and with the notion of bringing our humanity into the workplace. There is still space to expand our understandings and our enactment of kindness in management and organizational studies. In this chapter, kindness as a concept is further problematized through social and academic interpretations of kindness and also focus on its gendered nature. Before

presenting the literature, I want to further explore the evolution of the concept of kindness and ground this conceptualization historically.

As noted in the first chapter, the contributions of psychoanalyst Adam Philips and feminist historian Barbara Taylor in their book, *On Kindness* (2009) anchor the first section of this chapter. Their study provides a historical account of how we have come to under-value kindness in a social context in which people are fundamentally antagonistic towards each other (Philips & Taylor, 2009; Clegg & Rowland, 2010). Phillips and Taylor's research provides a useful overview of the historical evolution of kindness. Their exploration roots kindness in religion and changing society, framing the shift away from Christian beliefs to Hobbes's dismissal of Christian kindness as "psychological absurdity" (p. 7). Additionally, their work is a psychoanalytic account of kindness as part of human subjectivity (p. 44), as a moral obligation and as a desire (p. 50). The distinction of my work and their work is my focus on the concept of kindness in the workplace. Yet, their historical grounding of kindness, the change in status of kindness and kind acts and its ultimate feminization, may help support an explanation as to why we have such a barren landscape of research on the concept of kindness in management and organizational studies.

The investigation of particular areas of management and organizational studies was chosen as it provides an opportunity to engage with concepts of agency and kindness. This includes kindness-like studies which attempt to link the worker, Human Resource Management and Workplace Spirituality to the world outside of work. The role of popular culture provides a connection as do Compassion and Care. Next, we debate kindness literature in other academic fields. This component provides further exploration and contextualization of the concept of kindness. Time and focus in various areas of non-MOS is intentional, to both emphasize the

attention and care kindness has received in other academic fields and to better understand and

showcase the multiple definitions, descriptions and discourses of kindness in religious studies,

psychology, education and gender studies. The aim is to expand our understanding of the concept

of kindness, both ontologically and epistemologically.

Kindness in the Past

"Kindness from a perfect stranger – a sudden will to benefit me and everybody-is a salient spring, it is a hint of the presence of the living God" (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

The romanticism attached to the concept of kindness is long held as this Emerson quote

from Phillips and Taylor (2009) highlights. Historically, kindness was understood as inborn and

natural. In the Bible and other religious texts, being kind was understood as expected behaviors

in relationship to others, as in the command to, "do unto others as you would do unto yourself."

This religious base, from the development of Christianity from a Jewish sect into a universalist

faith was marked by a strong assertion of kindly values. Christian teachers described it as a

divine love that, flowing from heaven into the human soul, irradiated the soul with *caritas*. To

"love thy neighbor as thyself" was the great moral law (Phillips & Taylor, 2009, p. 20).

This universalizing of Good Samaritan and Christian kindness continued to grow. The

belief that, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" creates

the debate between humanity and divinity. The Protestant Reformation demoted kindness from

its foremost place in Christian moral understanding (ibid) and *benevolence*, "the Enlightenment's

buzzword for kindness" (ibid, p. 26). Religious thinking created an internalized and expected

behavior and belief of the value of being 'kind'. Phillips and Taylor highlight how, from the

sixteenth century, the Christian rule "love they neighbor as thyself" came under increasing attack

from competitive individualism. Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan (1651) – the urtext of the new

individualism – dismissed Christian kindness as a psychological absurdity (ibid, p. 7). For most

of its premodern history, stretching into Enlightenment, kindness had been treated as the solution

to a problem: the problem of other people. Self and other were seen as separate entities with

kindness serving as a bridge between them…but kindness as an individual attribute could never

escape the prison of the ego…the alternative Enlightenment account of kindness that avoided

these dangers, by treating self and other as interdependent. (ibid, pgs. 27-28). It is important to

emphasize the profound impact of Hobbes, an impact that is seen today. With Hobbes,

selfishness and aggression were transformed from moral vices into psychological facts (ibid, p.

24).

Economic changes in the eighteenth century led to the notion of natural kindness as a

response to the way competition was causing societal disruptions. Phillips and Taylor present a

dramatic image of "a veritable army of "benevolists," their hearts throbbing with "social

affection" and "practical philanthropy" (p. 26). This led to activism in England and America on

previously ignored societal wrongs which Phillips and Taylor highlight as benevolence at its

best. At its worst – and the worst became very evident as the century progressed – it descended

into a mawkish cult of tenderheartedness… "moral weeping" became the vogue, especially

among women who preened themselves on their extreme softheartedness (p. 26-27).

Another step in the evolution led theorists to embrace the notion of oneself and others as

being interdependent; linked. Subjectivity was interpersonal, and it was this that made kindness

possible (p. 28). Jean- Jacques Rousseau, "probably the greatest kindness theorist of Western

thought" (p. 28) believed dependence as integral to "the very process of becoming human… that

"our true *self* is not entirely within us" (pgs. 30-31). This notion, our true self is not entirely

within us reinforces the kindness definition used in this study, "…linking self to other" (p. 6).

Religious debates on the nature of expected behavior, innate and normed behaviors, led to another development in understanding societal behaviors. The changing language of Victorian times shows a change from the concept of kindness as being God-given to being primarily female-focused. This is an important component to the evolution of the concept of kindness. The shift from it being internal and innate to it being understood in term of as an expression of weakness, associated with the fairer sex and kindness as selflessness. Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth (deBeauvoir, 1989). The gendering and Othering (deBeauvoir, 1989) of kindness will conclude the chapter.

Management and Organizational Studies and Kindness

Why is kindness as a concept missing in our textbooks of management and organizational studies? One reason can be the value placed on utility and cost above other human values (Clegg & Rowland, 2010) and therefore the study of kindness is "subversive of neo-liberal assumptions" (ibid, p. 720). This captures the tension of the duality so often present in the language of businesses and organizations in language that speaks of cost ratio, return on investment, productivity, outputs versus people, care, Total Worker Health®, bringing your whole self to work. Thus, being human (Archer, 2000) in the workplace brings a myriad of possible complications; with humanness comes complexities that interrupt "the work".

While kindness literature as its own field of study does not appear within management and organizational literature, it is of interest to acknowledge the multiplicity of ways management and organizational studies focusses on "anti-kindness" such as bullying (Sutton, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2003) sexual harassment and gendered work (Bruner et al., 2014; MacKinnon, 1979; Farley, 1978), in/civility (Pearson & Porath, 2009) and conflict (Follett,

1924; Graham, 1995). It is important to notice how attention is paid to the negative, the bad, the problem and not to the positive, the good and the possible.

The following management and organizational studies areas – spirituality in the workplace, human resource management and care and compassion, offer three plausible interpretations of kindness - kindness as innate, kindness as duty and kindness as agency

Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality literature relies on certain assumptions, such as, "essential goodness" (Burack, 1999). "One dispirited leader, seeking something more than a good bottom line discovered his soul and learned how to be kind to his spirit and that of the organization." (p. 281). Another oft repeated phrase in the workplace spirituality literature is the notion of "true work" (Fox, 1994). Fox writes that the individual's experience and sense of "spirituality at work", 'true work', comes from one's own being. In this view, goodness and being are interchangeable" (p. 81). This is an example that reinforces the essential goodness narrative, adding being and true work, so that essential goodness becomes part of the spirituality at work narrative. This aligns with the omnipresence of good and evil in religions. For example, Buddhists reference basic goodness and being willing to open yourself to yourself (Trungpa, 1988) which leads me to wonder if kindness then is an expression of goodness or an expression of being? I believe it is both, that kindness can be seen as an inherent part of our being and as an embodiment of our goodness. Our enacted subjectivity expresses our beliefs: valuing open-heartedness and linking ourselves to others allows for us to express our innate kindness. It is the enactment of what Heidegger called *zusage,* which means to accept, to say 'yes', to affirm the Other rather than the self (Derrida, 1997a, in Tasselli, 2019).

Long (2011) made a point of distinguishing between spirituality and religion (in the workplace). He writes of the Dalai Lama's distinguishing between belief in a particular religious tradition with its own teachings and rituals and institutionalized forms of experiencing the sacred, with requisite beliefs and cultural artifacts. Is kindness a cultural artifact? Another group of scholars understand spirituality as being more internalized and therefore as a deinstitutionalized and privatized form of religion (Auberdee, 2005; Mitroff, 2003). This differentiation of religion and spirituality did not align with other scholars. For them, religious values and practices may be a fundamental part of one's spiritual expression at work through an interest in sacred aspects of life, transcendent experiences, and the essentially human search for meaning (Hicks, 2003; Hill & Smith, 2003). "The experience of spirituality for many, indeed most, people remains embedded within a religious context" (Hill & Smith, 2003, p. 234). These scholars are exploring the way workers represent spirituality while in the workplace – "spirituality is the source that gives rise to humanistic and performance-oriented activities that serve the best interests of the individual and the organization, respectively (Guillory, 2000). Integration of spirituality in the workplace involves, "sacred/ultimate/whole-system values which enable the human spirit to grow and flourish" (Butts, 1999, p. 329). One study of workers found, "most people felt somewhat strongly that spirituality was relevant as a topic in the workplace, when asked about the appropriateness or the inappropriateness of spirituality, they were neutral" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, p. 87). This neutrality may in fact be part of the reason kindness and spirituality at work and kindness in management is not directly connected in the research per se. The management-kindness focus is left to the broader theological beliefs discussed above. Purzan & Pruzan Mikkelsen (2006) explore spirituality in leadership through research driven by their awareness that "Many business executives are increasingly becoming workaholic human-

doings, longing to be full and integrated human-*beings*" (xiiiv). Their interviews with 31

spiritual-based leaders from 15 countries and six continents touches on love, compassion and

divinity in their lives as leaders and believers. Guillory (2000) offers tangible examples of

spiritual practices in various American workplaces. They cite awarding certificates in leadership,

faith and spirituality at a local college near Tyson Foods Inc. as examples of how organizations

which are spiritual and faith-friendly are more likely to have higher levels of job satisfaction,

higher levels of customer service, greater innovation, and lower turnover and absenteeism. Xerox

and Ford sponsor spiritual retreats and Vision Quests for greater creativity and innovation.

Microsoft offers online spiritual service; Apple Computer provides spiritual rooms for

meditation and prayer to improve productivity and creativity; Sounds True allots extra vacation

days for spiritual interests; Patagonia offers yoga class on company time. The World Bank

sponsors a Spiritual Unfoldment Society; Marriott provides a day off for their "Spirit to Serve"

in the local community; and Timberland pays employees for up to 40 hours a year to do

community service work. In Nova Scotia, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education

offers short and free meditation sessions. These sessions are framed as free of spiritual or

religious connections, with mass emails sent out to staff containing messaging such as: "*Instead

of a coffee break this afternoon, take a mind break, everyone is welcome."*

Moore and Casper (2006, p. 109) write, "spirituality in the workplace is purported to

benefit organizations at three levels, the societal level, organizational level, and the individual or

employee level." As well, a link between positive psychology and workplace spirituality are

made as both are "discourses of the self, of self-actualization, of moral obligation and of social

improvement and both have been cast as movements in the field of organizational studies"

(Long, 2011, p. 180). These areas, 'discourses of the self' and 'self-actualization', were explored

during the interviews with public servants by asking how the practiced being kind to themselves.

Research in kindness to self is quite limited (Kristen Neff's work on self-care notwithstanding),

and virtually non-existent by name or subject in management and organizational studies.

Human Resource Management (HRM)

The history of HRM practices can be traced back to the late 19th century when

unionization was increasing, and an industrial relations movement was emerging simultaneously

in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan (Kaufman 2007; Langbert,

2002 in Itani, 2016). Within this field there are a number of notable periods when organizations

and how they responded to the worker changed, each period bringing about particular emphasis.

The Hawthorne Studies represent one such period in human resource management. While the

study began with the intention to improve light bulb production time, soon attention was given to

the psychological components of work (Johnson, 2006). This new way of thinking about factory

production combined with work of Mayo (Itani, 2016) led to the human relations school gaining

greater recognition which brought new researchers and new thinking about work, the worker and

the workplace.

The introduction of soft HRM practices, "participative management", was the primary

umbrella concept in the 1970s. By the 1980s the language of management had changed: the shift

over the years away from traditional unionized manufacturing industries towards process

industry, high-tech manufacturing and the service sectors, with accompanying changes in

occupational and employment structures and union density, had already been mirrored in

managers' increasing tendency to refer to 'employee' rather than 'industrial' - let alone 'labour' -

relations, well before the perceived slackening in trade union pressure in the politico-economic

environment of the 1980s (Legge, 1995, p. 63).

An alternative explanation (e.g. O'Connor 1999; Rose 1989) hints that the 'human face' of the human relations model and Mayo's philosophy of moral management were motivated more by the practical and calculated needs of managerial elites, who had increased in number and needed external justification for their existence and actions.

On the one hand, the developing nature of the worker as human can be viewed as an evolution in the emotional dimensions of 'management'- positive, caring and possibly kind. Or, as critics believe, the attention to the worker serves dominant groups through socialization in business schools and provide the aura of science to support the introduction and use of managerial domination techniques (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 84). The criticisms of HRM include its role as a "practical control mechanism" (Itani, 2016, p. 266). In many ways, these varying perceptions of the human relations model represent the functionalist and radical humanist paradigms.

Cultural Studies

Cultural studies and the study of organizations and popular culture (Parker 1999, Rhodes, 2001, 2004; Clark 2008; Rhodes & Clark, 2008) offers another angle to kindness research and shows how popular culture shapes values and beliefs (Lause & Nachbar, 1992). The management research on kindness being sparse, the focus is typically presented through various areas of study that could be perceived as *anti-kindness* research, such as bullying (Namie & Namie, 2003), incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Sutton, 2007). It is this focus on the negative, on the constant need to be in reaction-mode to issues; reactive not proactive, that makes it difficult to define or situate kindness within organizations. Narratives of media culture offer patterns of proper and improper behavior, moral messages, and ideological conditioning, sugar-

coating social and political ideas with pleasurable and seductive forms of popular entertainment

(Kellner & Durham, 2006, ix).

The theme of kindness is also a discourse in popular culture, meaning both "folk" and

"popular" beliefs, practices, and objects rooted in local traditions as well as "mass" beliefs,

practices, and objects generated from political and commercial centers (Mukerji & Schudson,

1986, p. 47). Social media is a reflection of the zeitgeist; sites such as Facebook and Twitter

construct kindness too. There are over thirteen million YouTube videos

on/about/showing/naming kindness. Facebook has *Acts of Kindness, Words of Kindness, Random*

Acts of Kindness, Kindness Matters, Kindness Week, Practice Kindness, Kindness Counts,

Kindness is Catching pages and many more. Pinterest has pages of activities, 30-day kindness

challenges, lessons such as pat on the back-kindness lessons for teachers, kindness quotes from

the saccharine – *Kindness is always beautiful*, to the demanding – *Be Kind or Be Quiet*.

Instagram has over 1,157,779 posts with the #kindness and Kindness Twitter accounts number

over 500,000.

> It is a telling conceit of organization studies that its relationship with popular culture is
> seen not as one between equals (or, perish the thought, one where organization studies
> would be seen as deficient), but as one where the latter stands for a lesser or a more
> frivolous representation of reality. All the while, popular culture is powerful specifically
> because it is popular, and the way in which it constructs realities must be taken seriously
> (Rehn, 2010, p. 148-149).

While popular culture is constructing and commoditizing kindness, management and

organization studies lags far behind. Organizations concern production, whilst popular culture

concerns consumption, and the intersection is a narrow one (Rhodes & Parker, 2008).

In the case of the popular culture discourse on kindness one could posit it is in fact

producing expectations (act this way, think this way, work this way, be this way) and that, in

fact, organizations and workers within organizations are consumers, and that perhaps, if we

created expectations for how to act in a kind way, we might draw lessons from popular culture.

For example, a public servant on her way to work can drive by a café and read a sign stating

Kindness is Currency, enter her workplace and see a sticker on the fridge in the communal

kitchen reminding her that *Kindness is free (pass it on),* go for a walk at lunch and pass a

telephone pole with a sign telling her to *Be Kind to Others* and after work stop by the local liquor

store and have her wine put in a bag with *Be Kind* stamped on the side and instruction to *throw*

kindness around like confetti. The above example emphasizes the heuristic of "kindness" and its

ability to inspire positive change.

Compassion and Care

While the study of compassion has a long tradition in religion, medicine and sociology, it

has a short history in organizational behavior (Lilius et. al, 2008). To unravel compassion and

look for care in relation to kindness, there is debate, "In a Heideggarian world, compassion,

kindness and niceness are neither necessary nor sufficient for care (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015,

p. 1023). Their concept of caring leadership at work is grounded in kindness to self, "…caring

leadership seems first and foremost an organization of self rather than an organization of others,

and this is how we view its agency (p. 1025). They view, "an articulation of agency in terms of

an appreciation of complexity and ambivalence, resistance to soothing discourses of normativity

and 'best practice', attention to one's presence in the world, and an organization of self, which

applies to all organizational members, not just the chosen few" (p. 1027). These are important

linkages to kindness as it relates to self and others in the workplace.

Yet this same language touches on the difficulty of defining care. "Unlike the golden

rule, which is objective and egalitarian, care entails having certain dispositions and feelings. It is

highly subjective and selective" (Ciulla, 2009, p. 3). This echoes in fact a crucial difficulty in the

study of kindness at work as it too is, "subjective and selective" (Patriotta, 2003). Patriotta

suggest, "Understanding the ontological bases of organizing means understanding how

organizations translate the proximal into the distal, how they turn equivocal happenings and

streams of experiences into agreed facts and institutionalized meanings, how they inscribe

human agency into stable structures of signification and durable outcomes such as technologies,

routines, procedures, organizational artifacts, and so on (ibid, p. 154). These agreed upon facts,

structures, routines as they relate to an institutionalized meaning of *kindness* could help

encourage organizations to engage in this work.

Gendering of Kindness

Mary Parker Follett, (1868 – 1933), the prophet of management (Graham, 1995)

influences management theory by bringing to light a number of crucial areas in organizational

studies including participatory problem-solving, power-with and care in relationship building.

When reading Follett's work and writing on management, I see in her the closest to kindness-like

thinking found in organizational studies. Her philosophy of care in building, maintaining and

being in relationship shows in her writing on constructive conflict, participatory problem-solving

and power-with (Follet, 1930; Graham, 1995). The creative experience as the key to individual

growth and constructive conflict was at the heart of interpersonal relations (Feldheim, 2004).

And yet, there remains a sense of "discovery". Monin and Monin (2003) note prominent

management theorists and practitioners – Drucker, Lawrence Nohria, Parker, "confess to an

introduction to her writings early in their careers, and to being profoundly impressed by her

ideas, yet Follett continued to be largely ignored for decades after those first meetings" (p. 58).

In many ways, it is the above noted work of Follett that shines the brightest light towards

kindness with her attention to power-with, constructive conflict, integration and her thinking of

businesses [organizations] as social institutions. There seems no clear-cut rationale for so many, for so long to ignore her work though it is possible to see her attention to relationships and care as two possible reasons. This attention to care in the workplace links a number of neglected female organizational theorists (Williams & Mills, 2017). "Francis Perkins brought "a feminist ethic of care" (Prieto et al., 2016, p. 50) to her work in organizations. Noting her belief in conference style engagement (Williams & Mills, 2017), both Perkins and Follett focus on relationships and care for others, "the welfare of one linked with the welfare of all" (Perkins, 1934, p. 127).

This discussion of women in MOS and their philosophies highlights the connection between care and kindness. It is this ethic of care as a facet of morality that focuses on the concrete needs of people with whom we are in relationship. It is driven by the emotions flowing from those relationships and is understood as a social practice (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2012). Kindness and its enactment through care and caring relationships is tied to an "ethic of care [which] should be an integral part of an organization's culture and should be included in its core values" (Prieto et al., 2016, p. 67). This "care orientation" (Burnier, 2008) is seen in the work of two other notable and neglected female organizational theorists Lillian Gilbreth and Mary van Kleeck. Gilbreth is recognized for her focus on the human factor, bridging between scientific management and the Human Relations School (Paludi et al., 2014) and Van Kleeck "combined her feminist concerns with an interest in scientific management and its potential for assisting social change" (p. 58). Gilbreth, with her attention to the human factor, and Van Kleeck's feminist concerns on social welfare and well-being, offer us useful alternative voices in our study of the concept, value and potential of kindness using a different voice (Gilligan, 1982). They

sound out a real opportunity to disrupt the traditional dismissal of the concept of kindness and

"leverage 'soft power'" (Nye, 1980 in Williams & Mills, 2017).

Mainstreaming Kindness

If people aren't reading PhD dissertations on kindness or The Bible, where does one's

understanding of kindness come from? As noted earlier, dictionaries are not particularly helpful:

"the quality or state of being kind" (Merriman-Webster), "the quality of being kind" (Oxford

Advanced Learner's Dictionary), and "having or showing a friendly, generous and considerate

nature" (Oxford).

There are limitations and also a reinforcing narrative to these dictionary definitions.

There is an understanding that "…the idea that reality [kindness], as we know it, is socially

constructed", but also that this …idea [kindness] "has become a commonly accepted claim"

(Chia, 2003, p. 111). It is this commonly accepted claim that makes the popularization of

kindness as discourse worth reviewing. The power of kindness is presented with a twist in

Tillquist's (2009) book on developing kindness. Five tools are taught, 1. The Power of

Reputation: building a strong caring reputation, 2. The Power of Reciprocity: giving and

garnering reciprocal kindnesses and favors from others, 3. The Power of Personality: learning to

be someone that others like, 4. The Power of Thanks: being appreciative of others and 5. The

Power of Connecting: connecting with others and building a strong network. These tools and the

intention to build kindness capital are questionable only in the abrupt shift from doing good,

being nice to others, to being strategically, possibly malevolently kind, for your individual good.

An article, *The Kindness Cure*, in The Atlantic (July 21, 2015) on cultivating compassion, notes,

"prompting yourself to act with kindness often requires not only vigilance but a bit of

willpower." This is kindness with expectation. The New York Times, one of America's largest

newspaper had a full page on kindness in the Sunday edition on November 13, 2016 from

kinded.com/kindness. It read:

> This World Kindness Day, we need to rediscover an ideology that has made America
> great: its name is kindness and its face is human.
> American greatness is rooted in the courage to be kind. Empathy and kindness are often
> confused with weakness. It takes strength to listen, particularly when we feel vulnerable –
> to learn to disagree while preserving respect and understanding.
> If we are to remain the UNITED States of America, we must begin seeing kindness as a
> tremendous strength and tie that binds us.

Here kindness requires courage, empathy, strength to listen, preserving respect and

understanding, it is a tie that binds. Unlike the dictionary definitions, it demands more action,

more power and offering a larger reward – emphasizing being UNITED. Compare this to a story

in Halifax shared by local news outlets about two masked men, #*ThePayItForwards* who are

quoted, "Our slogan is little kindness, big smiles, better world." Global News reported these men

helped tie skates at a local skating rink and handed out coffee and donuts at a ferry terminal. In

one story of kindness, courage and empathy are emphasized, another story of kindness is

understood as free coffee and donuts.

Kindness in the Academy

Kindness, as a distinct subject, is studied in other academic fields. To provide an

overview of how kindness is understood, ontologically and epistemologically in other academic

fields, a review of the literature in religious studies, psychology, education, and gender follows.

First, an overview of religious literature on kindness will introduce a discussion on how

kindness has been understood and portrayed. It is useful to begin with religious studies of

kindness as this is a consistent reference point in conceptualizing kindness. Following will be a

review of organizational psychology literature as kindness, named specifically as kindness,

defined and used as a measure in multiple studies. Educational research on kindness comes next and discussion and debate on gender and othering follows.

Kindness in Religious Studies

This search to understand what kindness means beyond the dictionary definition of "to be kind," led to religious studies and religious texts – The Bible, The Torah, the Koran, and Buddhist writings.

There is a repeated narrative on kindness that showed up in both the religious studies research and in the interviews. This discourse follows similar lines whether it is in the teaching of Buddhism, Christianity or Judaism. Within all of these religious philosophies, kindness was represented within the themes of "loving thy neighbor"; "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and "loving-kindness". There are phrases, repeated, normed and seemingly unquestioned in each religion. For example, the Dalai Lama and the Buddhist belief in loving-kindness is a mainstream concept if Google citations provide a context. The quote, "My religion is simple, my religion is kindness" from the Dalai Lama has 5.4 million Google citations and appears in books such as, *Dalai Lama, a policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama* (1993).

Another example of the discourse of reciprocity is The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Luke 6:31) in the Bible. This phrase was referenced numerous times during the course of my interviews. This Golden Rule is similar to the backbone of many other religions beyond Christianity for example Judaism. Gilner (2012, p. 29), writes of the example of "the reading from the Torah for Yom Kippur afternoon includes the teaching in Leviticus 19:18 "Love thy neighbor as thyself." In the mid second century CE, Rabbi Akiva taught: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself; this is the greatest principle in the Torah."

(ibid). Also, there is a broad scope of kindness and spirituality found in numerous journals

ranging from *Humane Health Care International*; *Science; Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*

and *Journal of Religion and Health*.

Kindness from the Christian perspective can be found in a number of verses throughout

the Bible, such as Micah 6:8, "*He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD*

require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?" In this

verse kindness is a requirement from God. What it means to be kind is not explained. Nor in

Romans 2:4, "*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience,*

not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" Here kindness is a gift, a

treasure from God that leads to salvation. It is also something God gives freely as Luke 6:35

shows everyone needs love, even the ungrateful and evil men [sic] *"*But love your enemies, and

do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be

sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."

In the Torah, kindness is presented similarly to Mathew, "Do unto others as you would

have them do unto you". The Koran gives us*,* "Wish for your brother, [sic] what you wish for

yourself"; Hinduism offers the "Dharma" simplified as "that which is unfavorable to us, do not

do that to others."

Further to the popular quote from the Dalai Lama's interpretation of the Gospels is love

for our fellow [sic] human beings and the reason to develop this is because we love God…the

sense of having infinite love. In Buddhism, the teaching has a clear method. All sentient beings

are equal, all lives of all beings are as precious as our own and that is how a sense of concern for

others is developed (Curtin, 1995). The spiritual certainty in Buddhism helps build the concept of

kindness and love being inseparable. In fact, in Buddhist teaching, maitiri, meaning loving-

kindness *Karuna* (infinite compassion or kindness) are described as an emotion. The place of

emotion in the workplace, in organizational and management studies tends to be framed as

compassion.

Compassion

Compassion is often used in describing kindness in religious and spiritual writing. Often,

compassion is used when kindness is meant or could be used in place of the term compassion.

Sharon Sazlberg a popular Buddhist teacher, prolific writer and active on social media shared the

following which connects loving kindness to compassion:

> Sometimes *#Lovingkindness comes in the form of compassion, the stirring of the heart in
> response to pain or suffering — our own, or that of others. Compassion overcomes the
> tendency to isolate ourselves if we're the ones in pain, or to avoid others whose pain we
> fear will discomfit us. Compassion ultimately involves seeing difficult states like fear,
> greed, and jealousy not as bad and wrong and terrible but as states of suffering. The
> more we do that; the more compassion will spontaneously arise within us.* (March 12,
> 2016, www.twitter.com).

The study of compassion has a long tradition in religion, medicine and sociology, it has a

short history in organizational behavior (Lilius et al, 2008; Frost, 2003). Newer studies on

compassion are tied to organizational productivity with evocative introductions such as, "*Move*

over, exercise. Compassion is the new panacea. Mounting research shows that compassion can

improve the health and well-being of individuals and corporations," (Castellano, 2014). The

article goes on to cite Emma Seppälä, PhD with Stanford and Yale whose research shows, "A

culture of compassion - in which managers and employees are friendly and empathic makes

employees happier and more productive… with finding showing, positive social interactions in

the workplace are linked to lower heart rates and blood pressure, resulting in decreased stress and

stronger immune system." Seppälä's research shows ways to increase our capacity for goodness.

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research at Stanford University has developed an 8-

week Compassion Training course. The course uses daily meditation, visualization, breathing

exercises, lectures and discussions, and "real-world homework."

There is literature on compassion which shows how in certain occupations such as

nursing and social work, compassion is normed and in other occupations, compassion is

noteworthy. A story caught widespread media attention when a staff member let her colleagues

know she was taking time off for her mental health and her CEO, Ben Congleton response:

> Hey Madalyn, I just want to personally thank you for sending emails like this. Every time
> you do, I use it as a reminder of the importance of using sick days for mental health – I
> can't believe this is not a standard practice at all organizations. You are an example to us
> all, and help cut through stigma so we can all bring our whole selves to work (Toronto
> Star, July 15, 2017, thestar.com)

There appears to be both a recognition of the power of kindness, named often as

compassion in religious literature and also a perception of kindness as weakness - beyond the

lyrics of a popular Rihanna, Kanye West and Paul McCarthy song, "*All my kindness taken for*

weakness" (West et al., 2015). Marks writes, "…Compassion is too weak to overcome self-

interest; people will "stop giving when they feel pinched themselves…compassion is not

substitute for justice, because it is a kindness the powerful extend to the weak" (2007, p. 728).

Here the author is using kindness, framed as compassion to highlight a power-over structure.

These compassionate ways of being – *being present to states of suffering*; *being friendly and*

empathetic, these *"stirrings of the heart"* are not widely discussed or attached to theorists in

organizational studies.

The Golden Rule

This "Golden Rule" can be linked to all major religions. Wattles (1967, p. 9) notes that it

exists in some form in most or all of the world's religions, "only in the Confucian and Judeo-

Christian traditions did the rule become a prominent theme for sustained reflection." Confucius

(551-479 B.C.E) provides historical roots. Tzu-kung asked, "Is there single word which can serve as the guiding principle for conduct throughout one's life?" Confucius said, "It is the word 'consideration' [shu]. Do not impose on others what you do not desire others to impose upon you."

The discursive nature of the "Golden Rule" is powerful and appears to be embedded in the workplace in various ways, whether as a competency of respect in the list of province of Nova Scotia values, or in the labour exchange of colleagues that ends with, "I owe you". In fact, in reviewing the foundation of the psychological literature of kindness, the golden rule might but the root of all its measures. In the quest of uncovering kindness in the literature, it appeared that the notion of universal truths as a deeply rooted religious conception remains enacted in the working world. Before delving into the management literature, it is important to recognize that kindness, the word, the meaning, the context and its enactment appears to be based on a heuristic. This acceptance of kindness as an unquestioned component within these fields serves to highlight its gap in management and organizational studies.

This literature review is intended to explore, question and build on this seeming epistemological universality of kindness. If kindness is understood as a universal ideal, "the ideas themselves are universal, in the sense that they transcend the individual" (Walden, 2015, p. 78), then the discourse of kindness, and more generally, the universalism debate, brings Kant and transcendental idealism into the discussion. Can it be our cognitive matrix, the lens in which we see and experience the world, which actually defines our understanding of kindness? Is it possible that Christians, Buddhist, Jews and Muslims have a kindness cognitive matrix to process and perceive kindness? What about the agnostics and atheists in the workplace? Does

kindness fit into Kant's categories of understanding? And how are these categories are

experienced in the workplace?

While there seems to be a commonality in the religious literature on the religious ideals

themselves, there is much debate on the way in which they are embodied and understood (de

Souza, 2012; Melchart, 1995). Also, it is necessary to problematize how one person's

understanding of religious *kindness* could in fact be another person's oppression. This

complexity is found in the field of religion and education as religious educators seek practices

that are inclusive (deSouza, 2012).

Psychology Defines Kindness

The field of psychology actively studies clusters of behaviors researchers have defined as

"kindness at work" but uses terms such as organizational citizenship behaviours (Organ 2009,

2000) and prosocial organizational behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Organizational

Citizenship behavior (OCB) is defined as individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or

explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the

effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988a, p. 4). The term discretionary speaks to

choice and presents the behavior as being optional. OCB has been shown to have importance in

the workplace because it is related to performance of the individual (Skarlicki & Latham, 1995)

and the group (George & Bettenshausen, 1990, Karambayya, 1989; Podsakoff et al., 1997; Smith

et al., 1983) and also the organization (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 1992).

Prosocial organizational behavior (POB) is defined as behavior which is (a) performed by

a member of an organization, (b) directed towards an individual, group or organization with

whom he or she interacts while carrying out his or her organizational role, and (c) performed

with the intention of promoting the welfare of the individual, group or organization toward

which it is directed (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 711). The term "intention" again speaks to

choice and presents the behavior as optional. The phrase "promoting the welfare of the

individual, group or organization" is a close reference to the definition of kindness. A better

understanding of the cost and rewards of these seemingly kind actions at work would be helpful.

The complex world of work, with its wealth of experiences, is too hard to pin down in the

laboratory (Gardner, 2002), as all critical management scholars know. Nonetheless, copious

work has been done to better explain the drivers of extra role behavior (George & Brief, 1992);

organizational citizenship behavior (Organ 1990); and prosocial behavior (Brief & Motowidlo,

1986; Chencellor, et al, 2017).

  Otake et al. (2006) recognize that kindness entails enacting kind behaviour *toward* other

people believing kindness has three components (a) the motivation to be kind to others; (b) the

recognition of kindness in others; and c) the enactment of kind behavior in one's daily life (p.

362). Another study that has led to more questions and possibilities for future research is the

work of Exline et al., (2012) and their attention to *normative kindnesses* and *non-normative*

kindnesses. They also bring to question the notion of love energy passing from person to person

(referencing Post, 2003). This simple reciprocity means kindness is extending to third parties,

often strangers, the term for this is upstream reciprocity. What has been most useful of the

review of their work has been the discussion of generosity and how it relates to acts of kindness.

This ties into the expected workplace norms and acceptable workplace cultural habits. This is the

type of work in organizational psychology that would benefit from further study and quantifying

both expectations of organizational citizenship behaviors and how normative kindness and how

non-normative kindness is exhibited at work.

Kindness at work is cited as being of positive benefit and affects employee health

(Liukkonen et al.,, 2004; Barling et al., 2005). The emerging psychological health and safety

awareness entering the lexicon of leaders' responsibilities and potential liabilities is another

angle to the growing research in employee health and leadership. Thun and Kelloway (2011)

studied character-based leadership in a three-part study. Their research on virtuous leaders'

names character strengths in a theoretical virtue category of Humanity: love and kindness. Two

kindness items: generosity of time/resources and compassionate caring highlight the actions and

impact of leaders in the workplace. It is interesting to note the focus on virtues and character.

This attention is similar to what is prevalent in educational research on kindness. As well as the

research presented above on religious teaching, all connections to kindness rely on

compassionate caring as an expected action and also as an indicator of faith.

Emma Seppälä, a leading positivist researcher in compassion and author of *The*

Happiness Track (2016), shares her views in TEDx talks on compassion, and YouTube videos.

She contends that, "research shows that we all have compassion and that being kind is actually

our first response, it's our first automatic tendency." Another area of study in organizational

psychology that may relate to kindness is found in the positive psychology literature (Seligiman,

2002, 2005; Fredrickson, 2009, 2013) as well as Kristen Neff's work on self-care and self-

compassion (2003, 2011, 2016) which is also being linked to kindness in the psychology

literature. Neff writes, "…a culture shift which recognized the value of self-compassion could

also benefit society, as it would encourage a kinder, less self-absorbed, less isolated, and more

emotionally functional populace" (2003, p. 96). These researchers are part of the essentialist

team, that kindness is innate, part of our human nature. The power given to valuing care of self

and a more emotionally functional populace is intriguing and clearly aligns with my interest in

employee well-being. Making the leap from self-care to a better world may not be absurd.

Educational Research on Kindness

Educational researchers support the importance of kindness in classrooms. Even more

than honesty, gratitude, or hope, the trait of kindness is identified as one of the top-ranking

character strengths valued in Western society (Binfet, 2015; Karris & Craighead, 2012; Park et

al., 2004). Binfet (ibid) writes of the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL), "The

theme of prosocial behavior, of encouraging students to enact kindness, is a common tenet across

SEL programs… despite the school context, and teachers in particular, being well-positioned to

foster kindness, the focus to date has largely been on preventing unkind and anti-social acts, such

as bullying, rather than promoting prosocial behaviors such as kindness" (2015, p. 50). Binfet

(ibid) offers a review of extant educational literature on defining kindness.

The educational literature has a broad approach to defining kindness, linking it to

behaviour, relationships, and character. Kindness is a combination of emotional, behavioural,

and motivational components and kind acts are behaviours that benefit other people, or make

others happy (Kerr, et al., 2014). Happiness and positivity are noted in this field of research as

activities that promote positive relationships (Layous et al., 2012). There is also attention to

behavior, "... kindness is a behavior driven by the feeling of compassion" and that when we "act

on this feeling of compassion in a helpful and caring way, this behavior becomes an act of

kindness" (Long, 1997, p. 243) and the focus on enacting kind behavior toward other people

(Otake et al., 2006).

For Peterson & Seligman (2004) kindness is tied to character strength and "the pervasive

tendency to be nice to other people – to be compassionate and concerned about their welfare, to

do favors for them, to perform good deeds, and to take care of them" (p. 296). There is a

distinction made around voluntary and intentional behaviours that are not reward or punishment

motivated (Eisenberg, 1986). When exploring motivation, Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) note the

inference that kindness can mean one person can benefit from another. The majority of

educational research in kindness connects kind acts that are grounded in and support positive

relationships (Binfet & Gaertner, 2015) to assertations of self that are positive (Cataldo, 1984).

These researchers show the spectrum of educator's understandings about and also the struggle

they have to define kindness. It is both social in nature – "it is about relationships"; "the fact that

one person benefits another"; "act of emotional or physical support that helps build or maintain

relationships with others" - and also individualized, "an assertion of self that is positive in feeling

and intention," and more broadly captured with a description of "nice" as a character strength,

"character strength [that] describes the pervasive tendency to be nice to other people."

Rowland (2009) has a much more complicated reading of kindness in education, "… the

concept of kindness is singularly silent in accounts of teaching excellence, student satisfaction or

professional values. It seems to have little place in a world driven by competitive individualism"

(p. 207). He continues noting that the change in how education and teaching and schools are

commodified, "…teaching performance becomes increasingly accountable, so the personal

quality of kindness is replaced by more manageable routines of 'due care'… But speaking (or

writing) about kindness in the context of research, or indeed any discussion of education, brings

about embarrassment" (ibid). Embarrassment is a deterrent, when kindness is connected to

virtues or justice, it appears to have a greater value. Does being kind mean being committed to

social justice? In later work, Clegg and Rowland (2010) question kindness and offers this

additional narrative about kindness in education, "What is subversive in thinking about higher

education practice through the lens of kindness is that it cannot be regulated or prescribed."

To the extent that it is not capable of being regulated or prescribed, then thinking about

kindness in organizational terms becomes even more complex. This conclusion is debatable as

there are numerous "rules" or "social norms" written and/or experienced that regulate kindness at

work. For example, one can find prescribed behaviours, written into policies and management

manuals respectful workplace policies and also, more informal practices of expected practices

such as executive directors holding monthly potlucks or birthday celebrations. These practices

come with unwritten rules of regulated and prescribed workplace 'kindnesses'. When Clegg and

Rowland (2010) write in terms of education and higher education pedagogy, "Kindness' is 'out

of place.'" It can suggest a sentimental and *unrigorous* approach taking us into fields better

addressed by therapy and as indicative of being focused on the relational at the expense of ideas"

(p. 722). I can exchange the word education and the words higher education pedagogy to

conversations I have had in my workplace with managers who have said phrases such as, "*I am

not a counsellor*" and that, *"the work still needs to get done"* when discussing changes to the

health and safety policy which now includes psychological health and well-being as part of their

departmental health and safety management system. This constant tension between sentiments

versus ideas is striking, both for teachers and for managers, as though we are not capable of

teaching, or working and thinking in between the lines.

The view on issues with kindness in educational thinking highlights similar management

and organizational studies concerns. There has been work done in the study of care in the field of

education, in the "ethic of relation" (Noddings, 2005) where the attention to care, for self, for

others "is as much a mark of personhood as rationality" (ibid). As stated earlier, kindness is seen

as being 'out of place' in much talk about higher education. It is notably at odds with research

which is saturated in kindness as an expected and sought after behaviour. It is quite a shift from

teaching young children about kindness and character in elementary classes to engaging with

young adults strictly on an intellectual level. This dichotomy brings into play the sociology of

regulation, "do this – x,y and z and you will be seen and understood by your peers and your

teachers/colleagues as kind and good. Agency needs to be added here too, "it is important that

teachers, doctors and other public servants are held to account by the public they serve. The

problem arises when this requirement leads to a substitution of a personal quality, kindness, by a

public one, a duty of care" (Clegg & Rowland, 2010, p. 725). And with regulation and agency, or

lack of agency, can come performativity – "through surveillance and regulation of the necessary

emotional labour many organizations now require of many employees" (ibid, p. 724). Bringing

attention to the complexity of agency, performativity and regulation leads directly to kindness

and gender.

Kindness and Gender

The shift over time from innate, god-driven, or religious belief in kindness to expected

normative practices over time has a connection to gender, that is, to regulated and prescribed

gendered practices, and regulated and prescribed norms for females. For the purpose of this

discussion, the terms, gender and female, are used as culturally defined (Butler, 1999). In using

the term gender in relation to concepts of kindness, I mean gender 'is thus not the product of a

choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from

relations of discipline, regulation, punishment' (Butler, 1993, p. 23). The following chapter,

showcasing the evolution of kindness, provides further explanation on kindness' gendered

manifestation.

In thinking specifically of women in relationship to the concept of kindness there is a seemingly unquestioned performativity (Tyler & Cohen, 2010) implicit in how women enact kindness in the workplace. These beliefs of how women (and conversely, men) are supposed to act at work are not new (Acker & van Houton, 1974) yet continue to be studied in academic research and shared broadly through mainstream media. For example, UK's Independent newspaper cites a 2016 University of Zurich study with the headline, "Women are kinder and more generous than men study finds"[1]. The regulation and performativity of gendered expectations of kindness are historical. Taylor and Phillips showcase the Enlightenment period as a time showing women as more instinctively attuned to the needs and feelings of others and by the end of the Victorian period, kindness has been largely feminized, ghettoized into a womanly sphere of feeling and behavior (2009, p. 40-41). Consequently, thinking of women at work, "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) impacts how women are meant to lead (Billing & Alvesson, 2000) and perform emotional labour (Höpfl, 2003). This is not a new issue. Organizational theory and research has been heavily weighted toward the study of male society (Acker & van Houton, 1974, p. 152). Does this explain why the concept of kindness at work and kinder workplaces have not been broadly explored in management and organizational studies beyond the research work in psychology? What is it about the concept of kindness that resists intellectual exploration, critical review, engaged, thorough studies? Reading Code (1987) and her work on empathy, creates a spark of recognition, a plausible answer to the lack of attention to kindness as a subject of its own.

> Two distinct ways empathy has been understood. Empathy can be aligned with femininity and accordingly dismissed. Empathy can be devalued by taking it to be located in an untheorized female nature, 'naturally confined' to the caring nurturing activities of a 'private domain' (p. 137) … It is regarded as a natural, maternal, caregiving capacity,

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[1] www.independent.co.uk

rather than a practiced skill, and it is taken to be based in emotion rather than thinking. When seen as a feminine trait, it is one that doesn't count as knowledge. Denial that empathy is a mode of knowing can operate to characterize women as ignorant. It is part of a devaluation of women's knowledge that coincides with the exclusion of women from reason (p. 130).

Reading Code helped push my feminist thinking as I grapple with the concept of kindness as a way of being, the embodiment of kindness as a way of seeing and responding, kindness as a nuanced, deliberate, valuable and valued skill set in the workplace, that is presently devalued in, for example, male senior leaders response to questions about kindness, "I don't think about kindness, I think about respect."

The gendered discourse of women at work (Runté & Mills, 2006) highlights unquestioned normed behaviours and highlights the absence of women at work and the silence of women at work. This silencing of women's impact in workplaces historically, tells a parallel story to kindness as an unspoken but expected performativity of women at and outside of work. Socio-political notions of gender became embedded in management theory (ibid, p. 715). Additionally, gendering organizations usually means paying attention to how they are dominated by culturally masculine meanings (Alvesson,1998). And gendering expectations of behavior include the emotional labour expected of women (Fineman, 1996, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). It is important to reiterate the lack of kindness as a research area in organizational studies. This gap can be compared to the absence of space and recognition given to female scholars in organizational studies (Williams & Mills, 2017).

The othering of women (deBeuvoir, 1949) and othering of kindness in the workplace can also be compared. The active process of second-sexing; that is, the systematic devalorization of the female (Gherardi, 2001) and the gendered feminized understanding of kindness lead to a structure where the enactment of kindness is perceived as not only a task to be completed by

women but an allowed and expected absence of kindness in language used by men; who suffer

no expected performativity. Kindness is layered onto the expected emotional experience women

provide and manage within the workplace.

In Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to ground the heuristic of kindness in academic literature.

The universalized and practical applications of 'kindness' in the literature highlights ways

kindness is understood in different literatures which provides clarity on how kindness is

understood and identified. The 'ontological absence' of kindness in management and

organizational literature juxtaposed with the evidence of kindness in other academic fields of

study provides a supportive rationale that kindness can and ought to take up space in

management and organizational literature.

This gap in management and organizational literature is an area that would benefit from

further research and attention. Mary Parker Follett's awareness of behaviours, relationships, and

expectations provides a possible map to follow even these many years after her research. The

focus on outcomes, the productivity discourse taking precedence over care and caring for

workers, is a disconnect in workplaces that this research on kindness is grappling with and

questioning.

Over the course of this literature review it is apparent that kindness is an emergent and

contextual concept. It a discursive idea that covers a concept whose understanding is dependent

on dominant and contested notions of a type of behavior, set of behaviours or feeling.

The following chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks used to continue this

exploration of the concept of kindness.

Chapter Three - Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

In this chapter I will present the theoretical frameworks guiding my research. The combination of Weick's (1979, 1995) sensemaking and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms build a robust process to situate the concept of kindness at work. The first section details this fusion of frameworks followed by the trajectory of sensemaking and a detailed overview of Weick's seven sensemaking properties and how they are applied. The interviews with public servants were analyzed using these seven sensemaking properties and the analysis and process is presented in Chapter Four (Methodology). Through this process I was able to develop emergent themes of the concept of kindness. This thematic development is detailed in the Chapter Five.

The second section of this chapter presents an overview of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological paradigms. I will explain in detail each of the four paradigms: functionalist, interpretivist, radical humanist and radical structuralist, and highlight how each paradigm provides contrasting viewpoints that are helpful in problematizing the concept of kindness. This section is intended to provide the reader with clarity on Burrell and Morgan's work.

Fusion of Approaches

One of the gifts of Weick's sensemaking is its contribution to our understanding of everyday life in organizations by focusing attention on the social psychological processes through which organizing occurs and is made possible (Mills, 2008). Since sensemaking occurs at an individual level, the concept of agency is important (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2009). This work makes it possible to highlight patterns and themes which are reflected through specific ontological perspectives. That is, individual sensemaking on kindness at work (agency) and the

four theoretical lenses (contexts) work together to allow a space for, and provide new ways to

think about, the concept of kindness at work. The decision to fuse sensemaking and Burrell and

Morgan's sociological work allowed me to merge analyses of agency and context.

   Combining an individual's sensemaking of kindness at work and contextualizing it

through various organizational theorists' epistemological and ontological perspectives which

allows for a much more complex engagement with the concept of kindness. Important work has

been done to move sensemaking towards a more critical and nuanced form of analysis (Helms

Mills, 2003; Helms Mills et al., 2010). Mills (2008) appreciates that sensemaking provides, "an

ethnomethodology of organizing…" yet the problem he notes, "its apparent focus on the

reproduction of existing senses of organization rather than a way of understanding social

change" (p. 29). Grappling with this gap led me to Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms as a

way to engage not only with management and organizational theory but also to engage in

exploring what types of barriers inherent in each paradigm would need to be overcome to move

toward kindness-led social change. There will be more on these barriers in Chapter Six.

   Combining Weickian Sensemaking and Burrell and Morgan Paradigms with Public

Servant Interviews created a process to use individual workers' stories of agency and their

understanding of kindness to move beyond these individual experiences and enter a greater

contextual understanding within the worlds of Burrell and Morgan's paradigms. This bridging of

agency and context offers a unique way to think about kindness. This combination creates a new

and powerful conceptual space in which we are able to engage at a more theoretical and practical

level with the concept of kindness for workers. For example, one of the emerging themes which

will be presented in Chapter Five, names kindness as fully embraced and an unquestioned

identity or entirely rejected and dismissed; in one case the public servant does not identify with

kindness at all.

Weick's Sensemaking

The evolution of sensemaking, from a stand-alone theoretical framework, to now being

used as a method and a methodology has been examined for the last several decades (Weick,

1995; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Helms Mills, 2003; Boudes & Laroche, 2009, Murray, 2014).

Using sensemaking to study the concept of kindness is a further development of sensemaking in

organizations. Weick's framework in Sensemaking in Organizations (1995) provides an

explanation for how individuals and organizations make sense of their environment (Helms Mills

et al., 2010). This framework supports the "process in which individuals engage past experiences

as an aid to cope with ambiguous situations in the present" (Hartt, 2013, p. 88). As sensemaking

is grounded in both individual and social activity (Weick, 1995, p. 6), Weick's sensemaking

properties provided a micro and macro analysis tool to examine and develop an understanding of

the concept of kindness as an individual sensemaking process. Hearing how workers interpret the

ways in which the social and structural understanding of kindness at work is constructed, enacted

and also resisted, allowed me to benefit from the "ongoing conversation" (ibid, xii) that

sensemaking provides.

Weick reiterates that sensemaking is not a body of knowledge, rather a recipe for analysis

(ibid, p. 47). Sensemaking was born from concerns Weick had with the way traditional

organizational analysis as the attention focused more on structure, not process. This gap was

what led to the concept of sensemaking (Weick, 1979, 1995; Weick et. al., 2005). In his 1979

work, Weick presented two sensemaking properties, retrospective sensemaking, that looked at

what had already happened and ongoing sensemaking, which is the constant change that happens

in organizations. Weick's further development of sensemaking includes the other sensemaking

properties discussed below. These seven sensemaking properties are: grounded in identity

construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and

by extracted cues and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995).

Figure 1. Weick's Seven Sensemaking Properties

        Sensemaking looks at how people generate what they interpret (Weick, 1995, p. 13). For

this study of kindness in organizations, it was understanding the concept of kindness and their

interpretation of the concept of kindness in their workplace, that was of interest. Weick's theory

of organizational sensemaking covers how individuals and organizations give meaning to events,

understanding how different meanings are assigned to the same event (Helms Mills et al., 2010).

Taking worker's experiences and my sensemaking of their experiences provided the base to

build kindness themes. Sensemaking, as noted above is triggered by shocks and disruptions. At

its most basic level, asking workers about kindness is in itself a disruption. The process of

sensemaking is a framework "to understand how people cope with disruption" Weick, (1995, p.

5).

Weick's seven sensemaking properties provided a solid theoretical basis from which to build and develop the concept of kindness in the workplace. Sensemaking is, "a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities" (1995, xi). The explanatory possibilities are one of its key strengths and clearly support this research work – not only in discovering and exploring the concept of kindness at work, but also in helping better identify barriers to kindness at work and ways forward. This study relies on Weick's conclusion that one needs to …"understand that the order in organizational life comes just as much from the subtle, the small, the relational, the oral, the particular, and the momentary as it does from the conspicuous, the large, the substantive, the written, the general, and the sustained. To work with the idea of sensemaking is to appreciate that smallness does not equate with insignificance. Small structures and short moments can have large consequences." (Weick et al., 2005, p. 410). It is important to note I was not looking so much for 'order' in this organizational study of kindness, rather, I wanted to observe and contemplate the small, the relational, the oral, the particular and the momentary experiences and understandings that workers shared. His work on sensemaking was indeed a useful tool for building this emerging work on the concept of kindness. Sensemaking in the workplace provided entry points of analysis in my construction of themes and an emerging concept of kindness at work.

This decision to use sensemaking as a framework of analysis mirrors the work of Helms Mills (2003). In the Helms Mills study, Weick's sensemaking properties provided an approach to make sense of the process of change at a Nova Scotian company. Helms Mills writes, "the properties of sensemaking Weick (1995) offers a framework for explaining (a) individual differences in the way events are understood (b) how/why those differences are translated into sensible interlocking behaviours (Weick 1979) and (c) the relationship between identity

construction and organizational outcomes (p. 35). Helms Mills used Weick's (1995) properties of

sensemaking as a framework to analyze the process of change at Nova Scotia Power by

attempting to answer six questions on change. This approach previews the interview questions I

used (see Appendix A) to answer questions on kindness and utilization of Weick's (1995)

properties of sensemaking to analyze workers responses. Sensemaking allows greater

understanding of how workers understand, construct, manage and interpret [kindness] in their

worlds (Marrow, 1995); it is this construction and interpretation that interests me in the work of

studying kindness. This research is less about a specific event and focusses more on the

individual similarities and differences of understanding that build a "group" understanding of a

complex concept like kindness.

      Within the process of sensemaking, Weick argues that individuals try to make sense of

their actions by seeking out cues to make plausible explanations for their behaviour (Helms

Mills, 2003). Exploring what kindness means to them helped workers connect their

understanding with their workplace and the "interlocking behaviours" of similarity and

differences in the expression of kindness. Helms Mills third explanation of using sensemaking

properties as a framework aligns with my focus on both individual interpretations, enactments

and experiences of kindness and an organizational interpretation, enactment and identity with the

concept of kindness. Thus, sensemaking focuses on how these workers' experiences could be

understood in terms of the seven sensemaking properties. These properties provided ways of

hearing about kindness and hearing about work and kindness/lack of kindness within their

workplace.

      Weick's properties make a space to take individuals, with their individual interpretations

of the concept of kindness and their unique workplace experiences through various viewpoints of

the properties, which create new understanding. Instead of a focus on organizational outcomes,

sensemaking provided insights into how individuals and organizations give meaning to events

(Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 182). To better understand the concept of kindness, the voices and

the experiences of workers was crucial. Using the sensemaking properties expanded singular

experiences and organizational structures into a larger story of what kindness at work meant to

workers. This underlies why sensemaking has been described as a 'new fundamental unit for

organizational analysis' (Nord & Fox, 1956 in Helms Mills, 2003, p. 71).

I wanted to explore the language of kindness at work: if, in fact, there was a language of

kindness, how it was understood and used, where it could be heard and where it was silenced.

Weick (1995) quotes James Boyd White extensively on the importance of "words that matter,

matter as much to self as to others" (p. 106). This individuality of meaning from White, helped

me in interpreting the variety of meanings the community of public service workers gave to

kindness. "… Part of maintaining a community is maintaining the agreement not to speak or ask

about the ways in which its language means differently for different members" (ibid). By asking

about kindness, I was in fact asking about individuals' meanings which were not necessarily

derived from a community agreement as kindness has been neither a part of the named cultural

values of the public service nor typical language used within their workplace. Thus, by using the

seven properties of sensemaking to analyze workers' understanding of kindness, their

individuality, their agency, was exposed. For example, when asked how they experienced

kindness at work, the response often highlighted the social and ongoing nature of kind acts; they

both identified and enacted their understanding of kindness. Analyzing individual's responses

and using the sensemaking properties to interpret how they understood and embodied the

concept of kindness was done through this combination of their reflections and the sensemaking

properties. Agency in how they constructed their identity as kind (or not), how the constructed

stories of kindness through reflecting on past experiences at work highlighted retrospective

sensemaking and how kindness was or was not enacted in their own behavior or perceived in the

behavior of others. These individualized understandings and interpretations were viewed through

the seven sensemaking properties to seek out themes. What was shared over and over again?

What did people experience that others also experienced? Building themes from the sensemaking

of the workers was the starting point to then engage with each paradigm in Burrell and Morgan's

work.

It is important to note that sensemaking is a function of individuals constructing meaning;

it is not just a function of the organization. It is how people socially construct the organization

(Helms Mills et al., 2010). Thus, how individuals make sense of a situation can have a significant

impact on the organization. As will be seen in the elaboration of the properties below, each

element is interconnected with and dependent on the others. Depending on the situation, one or

more of the properties may play a more significant role than the others (Weick et al., 2005).

Identity construction occurs through retrospection, interaction with environment, and social

context. It is this construction that makes sensemaking such a sensitive tool for exploring the

concept of kindness at work. It creates the opportunity to hear, in multiple ways, the meaning

making of interviewees. Sensemaking guides the interpretation of the language and symbols of

kindness understood by the public servants I spoke to. The conversations on kindness were

intended to seek what are the "languages and symbols important to sensemaking" (Weick, 1995)

when studying the concept of kindness.

In understanding how and why sensemaking occurs, what provokes it, Weick et. al.,

(2005) states that explicit efforts at sensemaking tend to occur when the current state of the

world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world, or when there is no

obvious way to engage the world (p. 409). It is the "ongoing, instrumental, subtle, swift, social

and easily taken for granted" (ibid) actions that lead to interpretation. Kindness, lack of kindness,

expressions of kindness, actions of kindness and unkindness are happening, every day in every

organization. Thus, sensemaking, "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images

that rationalize what people are doing (ibid) creates the opportunity for this retrospection. Weick

explains sensemaking is never ending and each new sensemaking event is triggered by

uncertainty or ambiguity, which causes us to find meaning (Helms Mills et al., 2010). The

opportunity to find meaning in the concept of kindness at work has been a driver of this work as

sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right (Weick et al., 2005).

Seven Sensemaking Properties

In this section, each property is explained. At the beginning of each property, a quote

from the interviews is provided and allows the reader to engage in the sensemaking analysis of

the property.

1) Grounded in Identity construction:

I'm hired to be the admin support for my team. Any kind of help to with those tasks,
that's my job and the I have specific jobs only I do, so if I see somebody who works for
the department, but not my team, and I see they need help, I'm going over, not just
because I want my boss to see me, I would do that in the street. I wouldn't just do that
when I'm at work. I would do that just as me, as a person. I like to help people, it's the
right thing to do. (female, union)

Identities are constructed out of the process of interaction (Weick, 1995, p. 20). What

makes this property such a complex analysis tool for a study of the workplace are the layers and

layers of construction. The above the public servant's identity is grounded in 'helping people'

and by 'doing the right thing.' The public servant walking through the doors on a Monday

morning is bringing their childhood, schooling, friendships, previous work experiences, present

relationship and family experiences to work too. Their entering a workplace where job titles and

job roles build another identity creates a rich space for further and ongoing identity construction.

In many ways, my kindness work is an invitation for public servants/workers to reimagine not

only what kindness means on a personal level but also what it means at an organizational level.

Identity construction is making sense of the sense maker (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p

184). In the interviews, I wanted to understand how the individual constructed their identity in

relationship to the concept of kindness. By asking, "How are you kind to yourself?" I would

learn what actions they took, beliefs they held, values they enacted in their construction of an

identifiably kind person. This question was intended to allow their understanding of themselves

to be on display. Their engagement or resistance to the concept of kindness was less about the

discussion of 'kindness and what being kind' meant and more about how they understood

themselves or perceived themselves. Our identity is continually being redefined as a result of

experiences and contact with others, for example, parents, friends, religion, where we went to

school, where we work and what type of job we do all affect how we view or interpret certain

situations (Helms Mills et al., ibid). This property allows for the interviewee to be understood

through a variety of experiences that combine, shift and evolve.

2) Retrospective:

> I guess you could say something to one person that is kind and say the exact same thing
> to another person and the might take it as unkind because they are in a different
> headspace or a different time in their life or have different age, stage of life, different
> intellectual capacity. (male, senior leader)

Weick (1995) argues that sensemaking is always retrospective because people act first

and then make sense of their actions, and that making sense is an ever-recurring process that

takes place within a specific context. "How can I know what I think till I see what I say" (Weick,

1977, p. 279). In the example above, the research question allows the worker to reflect on how

the workers she speaks with may hear and understand her differently. The interview process,

asking questions about how the organization is kind was for many a disruptive question that had

not been answered or even considered before. Thus, the sensemaking in that moment relied on

reflection and specific past examples to build a response to the inquiry. Where a situation is

either new, confusing, and/or dangerous the actors involved will have a heightened need to make

sense and will look to others for clues or will fall back on contextual or individual routines

(Weick, 1993, 1996). This can be seen in the responses to questions of behavior and of personal

decision making that is being reviewed (through interviewing).

In her study of organizational change, Helms Mills (2003) questions the role of

retrospection in comparison to contextual factors. Comparing Weick's 1979 and 1995 writings

on retrospection, in 1979 he wrote of 'future perfect thinking' basing meaning on past experience

but in 1995 he wrote action has to have taken place before retrospection can occur. Helms Mills

asserts, one of the biggest weaknesses of the sensemaking model…the sense maker, because he

or she relies on routine scripts, does know what he or she is thinking before acting. In other

words, people, *do* make sense of their actions *before* they act (p. 169). I understand and agree

with Helms Mills to a point. For example, retrospection can be seen clearly through the closing

questions asked during my interviews with public servants. After the interview was complete, I

would ask if they had any recommendations for someone I could interview in their department.

Inevitably, I would then be asked, "Did I want to speak to someone who was kind or not kind?".

They had made sense of their colleague's kindness "routine" and imagined how they would act

in an interview on kindness. The sense they were making of their colleagues 'kindness' in their

workplace came from their past interactions with those people, highlighting that actions are

known only when they are completed (Weick, 1995, p. 26). Yet, in numerous interviews,

workers had not, in fact, thought about kindness at work and our interview was in fact the action

required for the worker to engage in an analysis of their ideas on the concept of kindness.

3) Enactive of sensible environments:

> If a co-worker or friend says, it's a nice day, wanna go for a walk? If I can fit it in, but to
> me, my job is my priority and when I go home, my family is my priority. (female,
> Excluded Classification, non-union)

Enactment brings us to the core of sensemaking. If the other six properties are about

influences on sensemaking, enactment is about imposing that sense in action (Helms Mills, 2003,

173-174). In this study, the sense of action (and reaction) was focused on how kindness was

understood and enacted by workers in a workplace. In the example above, the woman shared her

priorities – at work to work, at home for family. This quote is a good example of how multiple

properties are at play in identity construction of what it means to work. In this case, the worker

identifies work as coming before personal relationships and her own physical needs. It appears to

come from a social construction of [the] reality [of the workplace] (Weick, 1979, p. 164). This

meant kindness was separate from "working" and not part of this workers mindset. This property

reinforces the status quo; people created their own environments and these environments then

constrained their actions (ibid, 31). In thinking about kindness at work, one senior leader said,

"The connotation of the word versus the behavior that it implies, there are many places where

kindness would be equated with weakness rather than strength." Another senior leader says, "I

can't be kind if someone's in the union, cause kindness and union don't go together."

Confirming what Helms Mills writes, "Members of an organization will enact the part of an

organization that exists for them" (2003, p. 175). Another leader says, "I experience a lot of

kindness from people" and then continues, "people get too busy sometimes to be as kind as

you'd like to be." – this leader is both creating their own environment and constraining their (and

others) actions. A newer employee felt people were being kind when they challenged her on her

behavior because they wanted her to grow. At the heart of enactment is the idea that cognition

lies in the path of the action. Action precedes cognition and focuses cognition. The sensemaking

sequence implied in the phrase, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" involves

the action of talking, which lays down traces that are examined so that cognition can be inferred.

These inferred cognitions then become pre-conceptions which partially affect the next episode of

talk, which means the next set of traces deposited by talk are affected partially by previous labels

and partially by current context. These earlier inferences also affect how the next episode of talk

is examined and what is seen. (Weick, 1988, p. 307).

An interesting component of enactment in an organization is how individuals on the same

teams, in the same departments can have distinctly different experiences of kindness and

therefore enact kindness in distinctly different ways. The influences of past and present

experiences lead to sensemaking and then to actions which are either constrained or encouraged

by the very environment that it has created. Similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy, this property

maintains that the environment that has been created by the sense makers reinforces his or her

sense of credibility (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 185). In structural leadership roles, this can

result in impasses where two components of the workplace (unions and kind interactions with

staff) may be nearly impossible to connect.

4) Social Sensemaking:

> I, after many years of working have a personal code which says, even if I don't feel like
> it, I will say good morning to everyone on my team. And I will ask them, even if it is
> only, 'how are you?' I will make sure that I greet everyone every morning. It is very easy
> not to. I make a point of taking the first 10 or 15 minutes of the day saying hello. It's not
> necessarily people I supervise, it's people that I work near. I worked in an office a long

> time ago and the supervisor would only say good morning to certain people, and I was
> not one of them. (female, union)

Weick, et. al, (2005, p. 409) describe sensemaking as a process that is ongoing, instrumental, subtle, swift, social, and easily taken for granted. What makes social sensemaking particularly interesting in light of its relationship to the concept of kindness is the role of the individual. Helms Mills notes three layers to this sensemaking property. First, sense making is based on common language and everyday social interactions, secondly the relationship of the individual sense maker and others - how an individual makes sense is 'contingent on the conduct of others, whether those others are imagined or physically present' Weick (1995, p. 35) and thirdly, making sense for others, influencing how they make sense of events (Helms Mills, 2003, p. 57). The quote highlights each of these layers. Many decisions and beliefs are often unquestioned and understood as norms and groupthink, reinforcing what is expected and normalized. Thus, the introduction of a new idea liked flexible work options, can be quite disruptive when individuals have no organizational reference points or common language to discuss the new piece of thinking. After many discussions, pilot programs, examples to reference, requests made and pressure to provide flexible work options, what was once a disruption to the social process three years ago becomes part of the language used in describing work options. Maitlis (2005, p. 21) describes organizational sensemaking as "a fundamentally social process" in which "organization members interpret their environment in and through interactions with each other, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively". This stance sees sensemaking as the "discursive processes of constructing and interpreting the social world" (Gephart, 1993, p. 1485).

When studying the concept of kindness, this reliance on the 'social world' means paying attention to both internal influences in the organization and external influences. Within an organization, the individual's ability to make sense will rely, to a large extent on "…organizational routines, symbols, language and scripts" (Helms Mill, 2003, p. 57). For example, the recent introduction of the new workplace health and safety promotion policy referenced in Chapter One, is bringing with it, new language. The formal presentation of the policy introduces such phrases as, a *culture of care*. Maitlis (2005, p. 21) describes organizational sensemaking as "a fundamentally social process" in which "organization members interpret their environment in and through interactions with each other, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively" In this case of new health and safety policy, the new language leads to constructed accounts based on continuous conversations where a *culture of care* is repeated and referenced and named. "Social sensemaking means that to be part of an organization and individual makes sense within a given framework of ideas" (ibid). Introducing the concept of kindness at work is subject to social sensemaking through social media and popular culture as well as in interactions in hallways, in meetings, through email exchanges. "Social sensemaking suggests that individual sensemaking is contingent on the conduct of others" (Weick, 1995, p. 30). This is exciting to see in the organization studied, and as a self-proclaimed agent of change and structural found in a formalized leadership role, I am enjoying the social sensemaking I lead when I discuss care and kindness at work.

Many scholars also see sensemaking as the process through which "people create and maintain an intersubjective world" (Balogun & Johnson 2004, p. 524), and "produce, negotiate, and sustain a shared sense of meaning" (Gephart et al., 2010, p. 285). Organizational rules, routines, symbols, and language influence an individual's sensemaking activities they also

provide routines or scripts for appropriate conduct. When routines or scripts do not exist, the

individual is left to fall back on his or her own ways of making sense (Helms Mills et al., 2010,

p. 185). When routines are disrupted, they require a new way to make sense. The new health and

safety policy embed psychological health and safety and employee well-being, as well as

physical health and safety. This is new language and opens up new ways for public servants in

Nova Scotia to think about and make sense of what health, well-being and safety mean. Over

time this new language can create new 'symbols and rules' of appropriate conduct will be a rich

source of discovery over time as staff reach and maintain a new shared meanings of workplace

health and safety beyond such physical factors as air quality and ergonomics.

> 5) Ongoing:

> …they have a lot of anger, I usually, I don't invalidate what they're telling me but I try to get them to see their frustration fits int a larger context of other frustrations. And I challenge them, 'well have you spoken to your manager or your director about it?' and if they say they don't feel safe, then if I meet with the director, I will speak in generalities but I will say, your staff are feeling like this and this. People can't change what they don't know. I don't think shutting down the toxicity necessarily works, then the frustration just stays inside…Let's not tell anyone, because we are not allowed – to me it's more channeling or reminding people of the power they do have. (female, union)

Researching the concept of kindness and sharing this research topic has a tendency to

elicit an emotional response in others: from a smile, a nod, a tilting of the head to an intense and

intimate sharing of negative or positive work experiences. "An interruption to a flow typically

induces an emotional response, which then paves the way for emotion to influence sensemaking.

It is precisely because ongoing flows are subject to interruptions that sensemaking is infused

with feeling" (Weick, 1995, p. 45). In the quote above, the nature of the story highlights the

ongoing emotions workers share. This particular property is rather nuanced as Weick presents

not just the flow of, and interruption of sensemaking but also the emotion of sensemaking and

the notion of contradictory evidence attached to this property. The ongoing nature of

sensemaking is recognized by the fact that, "[s]ensemaking never starts. The reason it never

starts is that pure duration never stops. People are always in the middle of things, which become

things, only when those same people focus on the past from some point beyond it" (ibid, p. 43).

This became especially clear during the interview process. The interview was an interruption, not

just literally to their daily work tasks but in many cases, an interruption to their organizational

narrative – "I don't think of kindness" says one, "Kindness isn't a word I would use" says

another, or another, "Kindness is not a word I have ever used." And yet, through the course of

the interview, asking questions about their understanding of kindness, about kindness at work,

allowing the focus on the past could come bring it into focus.

Another intriguing point about this property is the link to emotion and arousal. For those

workers who referenced their religious upbringing or parental influence on their concept of

kindness, kindness evoked a positive emotion. For those who struggled with understanding

kindness in the workplace as a concept, there were no obvious emotional connections. The

conversation of kindness led to a conversation about respect, language that fit within emotional

parameters they were comfortable inhabiting. Thus, introducing the concept of kindness led to

contradictions, a resistance to the concept of kindness, yet a willingness to spending an hour

talking about kindness, "…(W)e acknowledge sensemaking is ongoing and neither starts fresh or

stops cleanly" (ibid, p. 49). Being a part of the shifting culture of care at work through the focus

of psychological health and safety showcases this property quite clearly. New identities take

form and exist as they are put into language by individuals and organizations (Thurlow, 2007).

6) Focused on and by extracted cues:

I'm kind in terms of my scheduling. I try to leave it free and open and interspace it with
different activities, allow for variety of physical and mental challenges and rest periods…
I do like to go out to lunches, not breakfasts and suppers… I like to leave blocks of free

time. If my calendar was booked like some of my colleagues, I would go nuts. (male, senior leader)

Cues are linked to a series of ideas and actions and, as such, influence not only what is extracted but also how something is interpreted; thus, cues can serve to 'tie elements together cognitively' (Weick 1995, p. 54). Other kindness cues included how kindness was understood, as a powerful force by one respondent and as a word "I have never thought of before" by another. In the quote above, this leader saw breaks as cues about kindness. His colleagues' schedules suggested the opposite of kindness for him. These responses provide clues to how the concept of kindness is interpreted or actioned and ultimately how the concept of kindness influences individuals, their relationships and the organization.

In writing about organizational change, Helms Mills writes "Whether it is naivety or ignorance, Weick's assumption that the greatest strength of cues is their ability to animate people to generate cues ignores the reality of *conflictual sensemaking* and how to deal with it (2003, p. 161). Conflictual sensemaking captures the complexity of cues, first, that individual interpretation/extraction of cues can be in direct conflict with organizational cues/expectations and second, that it can tie elements together cognitively. What workers focus on and choose to interpret is driven by multiple cues, not the least of which is what values and beliefs they walk through their office door/climb into their truck focusing on. Weick (1995) captures the ephemeral quality of this property: "…sensemaking tends to be swift, which means we are more likely to see products than process…a curse for investigators because it means they are more likely to see sense that has already been made than to see the actual making of it" (p. 49). While the concept of kindness is not yet embedded within the organization studied, there are signs that it is becoming part of the conversation. Since the introduction in 2013 of the notion of psychological health and safety this has led to the two recent changes referenced earlier (policy

change and newly established Office of Workplace Mental Health) provides a front-row seat to

the creation (and resistance) to cues given organizationally about mental health.

> 7) Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy:

> It's like assuming that the public service is lazy. And if they were performance managed, you could squeeze more out of them. It's not my experience with public servants. Public servants I know, it's such a small percentage that would fall into that category, most of them are killing themselves, these are people who are already denigrated in the public, that have the public perception and despite that, get up in the morning, get out of bed, apprehend children or they are front line teachers or an OHS officer. They are everyday public servants that will work around the clock to make the Minister look good. Will they make mistakes? Yes. And do we work with some people who can be arseholes? Yes. But for the most part, the public service is awesome. (female, senior leader)

This property ties into the complexity of cues and the meaning-making people bring to

their experiences. Sensemaking is about accounts that are socially acceptable and credible

(Weick, 1995, p. 61). Mills and Helms Mills (2004) determine that "plausibility is the crux of

sensemaking formation" (p. 148). The senior leader quoted above illuminates the stark contrast

between public meaning-making about civil servants and the experience shared by the civil

servants themselves. What makes this property interesting is, again, this notion of conflictual

sensemaking. That is, our working worlds are, "…inhabited by people with multiple shifting

identities, an obsession with accuracy seems fruitless, and not of much practical help either

(Weick, 1995, p. 61) and yet the influence of what is socially acceptable is crucial in determining

what is plausible. For example, there may be an unspoken and accepted norm to check email and

text messages early in the morning, late at night and on the weekend within certain job

classifications in the organization studied (not unique one could assume). This socially

acceptable and credible (*Look how hard I work*) action is in direct contrast to research on the

detriments of screen time's negative effects on concentration, sleep patterns and relationships.

Helms Mills et al. (2010) recognize that this property may also contribute to the inconsistency of

sensemaking among organizational members. This inconsistency can create confusion in

workplaces where kindness is not discussed, valued or understood and when the cultural

expectation is to adhere to unexamined organizational norms (e.g. email and texts surveillance).

Weick's recognition that sensemaking is about plausibility, coherence and reasonableness

(1995, p. 61) highlights how organizations can shift in focus and re-think what was once

understood as implausible. For example, technology means there is no longer a clear divide

between work and home; like "we bring our whole self" to work and, we are building "a culture

of care" in messaging attached to a new safety and health promotion policy in the organization

studied. Shifts have occurred away from what was once understood as reasonable (no flexibility

in start and end work times to flexible hours and locations of work), or coherent (i.e. Access NS

Centers only operating during 'regular' working hours to Access NS Centers opening at

staggered hours allowing other workers who work 'regular' hours to access the services provided

by the Access Centers.)

Sensemaking made sense.

In introducing sensemaking, Weick (1995) recognizes the "durable tension of the human

condition…" which grounds sensemaking in both individual and social activity which

themselves may not be separable. It is a theme throughout the book [and indeed throughout this

thesis] (p. 6). Ultimately, the intention of using Weick's sensemaking framework is in support of

the potential for social change (Mills, 2008). I believe embracing the power of kindness at work

has real potential for positive social change. Additionally, using the sensemaking framework for

analysis contributes to what has been described (Weick et al., 2005) as a lack of empirical studies

using a sensemaking framework (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2009).

Bridging two frameworks.

Wanting to build a bridge to link the individual sensemaking of workers and kindness to larger theoretical debates, I engaged with Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms. These ontological perspectives provide the opportunity to connect kindness concepts and themes with key theories at work in organizations and within organizational studies. Burrell and Morgan became my accomplices as I entered each paradigm with my themes at the ready. The initial sensemaking and then paradigmatic exploration contribute to a better understanding of how individuals make sense of kindness in the workplace. This process of taking individual workers sensemaking on the concept of kindness and building kindness themes to then explore ontological paradigmatic perspectives is the methodological contributions of my work.

Burrell and Morgan's sociological paradigms.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) seminal (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) work has had widespread impact (Deetz, 1996) and is regarded as a classic text on organizational theory. Their work provides an overview of the key theories that management and organizational practitioners are exposed to, and as such, offers a coherent and comprehensive framework for investigating the concept of kindness by defining the meta-theoretical assumptions underpinning major theoretical and methodological positions (Hassard & Cox, 2013). While Burrell and Morgan's classic work is not without its critics, (Donaldson 1985; Reed, 1985; Willmott, 1993) this thesis is not intended to debate the merits of the four paradigms but to use them to provide distinct theoretical perspectives to provide a space within management and organizational studies where kindness might be situated. Using Burrell and Morgan's contextual framework builds theoretical entry points into this study of kindness. Each paradigm provides a different lens with which to look at the concept of kindness. These paradigms designate a shared set of ontological and

epistemological assumptions that unite a community of scholars (Prasad, 2005). Of concern, the

"grid has been used to reify research approaches; and second, and more importantly, its

dimensions of contrast obscure important differences in current research orientations and lead to

poorly formed conflicts and discussions (Deetz, 1996, p. 191). Donaldson believes, "we have to

question the true nature of the analysis of our field as made up of paradigms (1998, p. 267).

Willmott adds to the critiques taking issue with the sharp division of 'subjectivist' and

'objectivist' forms of analysis and the work is poorly equipped to counter functionalist

hegemony as their work, '…strongly endorses a restriction of analysis within the confines of four

mutually exclusive ways of seeing (1993, p. 682). Itani (2016) notes the value of the paradigms

in relation to the organization and social sciences despite the fact that not all critical schools of

thought (i.e. feminism and post-structuralism) were even discussed. Their work and some of their

methodology is less appreciated, "The most significant objection to confining one's work to one

of these so-called paradigms is the claim that it forces one into making 'either/or' choices which

are utterly artificial and stultifying (Watson, 1997, p. 5). I disagree, believing rather, by engaging

with each paradigm, we can utilize the various theoretical spaces as useful tools in broadening

the discussion on the concept of kindness in organizational studies and providing opportunities

for greater understanding.

Introducing the Paradigms

What follows is an overview of each paradigm, functionalist, interpretivist, radical

humanist and radical structuralist, highlighting foundational thinkers and theories embedded

within the four paradigms. "To be located in a particular paradigm is to view the world in a

particular way" (Weber & Morgan, 1979, p. 24). As discussed in the previous chapter, the social

phenomena of kindness is seemingly absent in organizational theory and organizational writing.

This creates both an immense challenge and great reward in seeking possible connections and

finding meaning within the theories and thinkers of each paradigms. There becomes both a meta-

theoretical pursuit and with the addition of public servant interviews, a micro-

experienced/experiential viewpoint. In this chapter, the intention is to lay out the boundaries of

the theories. The exploration and engagement in learning from each paradigm and ways to

develop strategies of kindness at work, will be expanded upon and showcased in Chapters 5 and

6.

 The visual below from Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Paradigms (1979, p. 22)

illustrates the ontological perspectives to be discussed:

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RADICAL CHANGE

'Radical humanist'	'Radical structuralist'
'Interpretive'	'Functionalist'

SUBJECTIVE   OBJECTIVE

THE SOCIOLOGY OF REGULATION

Figure 2. Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Paradigms

The Functionalist Paradigm (Objective-Regulation)

 The functionalist paradigm represents regulation and the objectivist point of view with

key phrases for understanding this paradigm include: *the status quo*, *social order*, *consensus*,

social *integration, solidarity, need satisfaction and actuality.* The approach used to respond to

sociological concerns tend to be realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (ibid, p. 26). It is

problem-orientated in approach and concerned with providing practical solutions to practical

problems (ibid, p. 26). This paradigm is based upon the assumption that society has a concrete,

real existence, and a systematic character oriented to produce an ordered and regulated state of

affairs (Morgan, 1980, p. 608). From the foundational work of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim and

Pareto, Simmel and Mead, Burrell and Morgan engage in an overview of four principal

theoretical perspectives in the functionalist paradigm: 1. Social System theory and objectivism,

2. The Action Frame of reference, 3. Theories of bureaucratic dysfunctions and 4. Pluralist

theory.

Burrell and Morgan cite two opposing functionalist ways of thinking, noting the quality

of working life movement and its approach on the humanization of work (p. 184) and the

economic benefits to be derived from improving the quality of working life (p. 183) and

contingency theory which believes in rigid, dehumanizing work structures may be appropriate

for achieving organisational effectiveness (p. 183).

For example, my research on kindness in the bureaucratic organization I work within,

seeking kindness, valuing kindness, desiring a different form of bureaucratic structure where

kindness is a stated organizational value is seemingly contrary to Weber's "precision, reliability,

efficiency". The cleanliness of this organizational structure Weber adheres too is disrupted by

Merton and his students, with Merton's work representing the middle ground of the functionalist

paradigm. His work is in contradiction to Weber and brings to light the problems of patterns of

bureaucracy, the rigidities created by this "compulsive adherence to institutional norms" (ibid, p.

185) then reinforce the importance to conformity to rules and regulations and the unfortunate

"trained incapacity' of the bureaucrat" (p 186).

Another area of debate within this paradigm, through the work of Crozier (1964), Etzioni (1961), Kerr and colleagues (1964), Fox (1964), Kahn and Boulding (1964) is the concept of power. Burrell and Morgan acknowledge the conservatism in organisation theory and its bias to a managerial control. As well, noting, "power as a variable does not figure prominently in functionalist systems theory, so the fascination of these theorists with it can be seen as especially significant" (ibid, p. 213). Power and its relationship to the concept of kindness could provide a telling addition to a correlation between structural power in defined roles and an organization's capacity for kindness.

The attention Burrell and Morgan give to Mead's work highlights Mead's thinking on mind and self and the social process of development (ibid, p. 74) "the generalized other" (Mead, 1934, p. 155) which is a helpful way to conceptualize work relationships and collegial relationships. There appears to be a type of dance between what are understood as structured concepts of kindness concurrent with individuals own personal twist of kindness. Kindness, that is personalized and also partnered with, an organization's literal or figurative walls, and interactions with the generalized other could be possible in a functionalist world. This is a place for further development organizationally.

A key piece of Durkheim's influence comes from his thinking on the value of order. Combined with Pareto, another key theorist, who saw in the concept of equilibrium a useful tool for understanding the complexities of social life (ibid, p. 47). This thinking highlights an attention to a structural, standardized, competency like, check list of behaviours kind of kindness that is defined and scripted, perhaps even as expected decorum.
This paradigm supports an engagement with the concept of kindness an organizational characteristic that is clearly defined, validated, structured and written into job descriptions and

leadership competencies. Yet, as it is believed to be "objective and value free" (Hassard, 1991, p. 277) how then can the concept of kindness, a concept that is nuanced and widely interpreted, ever exist in an organizational structure without value attached to it? In thinking about the concept of kindness and the structural requirements in bureaucratic organizations to build structures for workers to adhere to, there is then a need for kindness to be structured.

The legacy of Taylor "man is no more than a machine" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 130) lives on in bureaucratic organizations and provides a telling backdrop to conversations with workers about kindness. Perhaps, this is in fact the most problematic component of the functionalist paradigm, as kindness requires individual awareness and individual actions which is denied within the and ignored, bereft of value for functionalist thinkers.

For foundational functionalist thinkers, Comte, Spencer and Durkheim, the complexity of conceptualizing kindness I think would be curious as "facts" are never problematized. Comte's belief, "…there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts" (Comte, translated by Martineau, 1868, p. 27) has influence that is far reaching. Comte's foundations for the mode of social theorizing characteristic of the functionalist paradigm and ground rules to explain social order and regulation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 42) provide an interesting opposition to kindness

And yet, this resistance to the complexity of individual's needs and differences makes the work of kindness in bureaucracies exciting and challenging. "As a paradigm it ignores conflict, change and meanings ascribed by individuals within the social system" (Legge, 1996). In appreciating the "dynamic element" (ibid. p. 189) Merton and co. sought, to expand the functionalist perspective, this could be disruptive to the functionalist paradigm and to bureaucracy with its value on regulatory roles and structures. In many ways, this paradigm

highlights the structural obstacles of bureaucracy and embedding the concept of kindness within.

It also may explain the resistance to the concept of kindness, shining a light on the historical

resistance to kindness within management and organizational studies as a concept. The concept

of kindness may reach outside the lines of the contained models functionalists find so reassuring.

Interpretive (Subjective – Regulation)

This paradigm shifts away from the structures entrenched in functionalism and brings

awareness of how organizations rely on subjective constructions - the social construction of our

everyday experiences, that we live an "intersubjective experience…the social world is best

understood from the viewpoint of participant-in-action" (ibid, p. 277). Understood as relating to

the nature of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration and cohesion, solidarity

and actuality (ibid., p. 31). There are a number of key influencers in the development of the

interpretive paradigm and four predominant theories to the interpretive paradigm. Burrell and

Morgan highlight Kant, Dilthey, Weber and Husserl and highlight the foundations of the

interpretative paradigm comes from Kant and a social philosophy which emphasises the

essentially spiritual nature of the social world. Both the functionalist and interpretivist

viewpoints rely on regulation, thus the key concern is "to provide explanation of society in terms

which emphasize its underlying unity and cohesiveness" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 17).

Prasad (2005) writes of the tradition of studying human action and interaction and the

shift from the functionalist mode of science and the natural world. Kant, and this study of

kindness connect with his notion of a priori, how one understands, and processes information

being both inherent and in-born (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 27). This Kantian belief, of the

mind and intuition as a priori understanding which then engages with empirical reality, makes

this intersection of individual a priori beliefs within a workplace interesting to explore. Whether

we look at a microcosm of 20 office workers, or a macrocosm of a 10,000 plus workforce - each

individual interacting with other individuals, all bringing to work their own inherent beliefs

about and understanding of kindness is fascinating.

In addition to Kant, there are three areas of Max Weber's contributions to organizational

theory that I am choosing to focus on. First, the Protestant Work Ethic (Weber, 1930), secondly,

ideal types and thirdly, verstehen. These three pieces of Weber's thinking influence my analysis

of kindness from an interpretive perspective. First, the Protestant Work Ethic with its attention to

"constant toil" and the individual identity to work and working. Ideal types, the ontological

status of typifications or 'ideal types' which comprise the core of social reality (ibid, p. 257),

encourages the desire for greater exploration of ideal types in relation to kindness at work. The

method of *verstehen*, of understanding humans through their minds and feelings (ibid, p. 229) is

linked to an individual workers interpretation of kindness/kind acts and its separation to

structural components of organizations. "…Self-understanding is connected integrally to the

understanding of others" (Giddens, 2013, p. 24).

In fact, it may be this method of *verstehen* that is the most meaningfully developed

conceptualization of kindness – the sentiment, the open-heartedness and most importantly the

linking of self to others. This relationship, of understanding others (and oneself), will be

explored further in the analysis of interviews through sensemaking.

What makes the interpretivist paradigm useful to study the concept of kindness is its

responsiveness to the "positivist position came to be seen as increasingly unsatisfactory and

problematic" (ibid, p. 228). Dissatisfaction came from two arenas, the natural sciences and

cultural sciences. The recognition that scientific method could no longer be regarded as value-

free and humans were seen as being of "essentially spiritual character" (ibid, p. 228) led to

renewed interest in idealism and also a greater attention to the subjective as opposed to the

objective.

The goal of theory building in the interpretive paradigm is to generate descriptions,

insights, and explanations of events so that the system of interpretations and meaning, and the

structuring and organizing processes are revealed (Gioira & Pitre, 1990, p. 588). This supports

this research and the decision to interview workers and their explanations of kindness In the

context of the interpretive paradigm the central endeavor is to understand the subjective world of

the human experience (ibid., p. 253). It is only logical that as an interpretivist I would seek an

interpretivist tool to help make sense of workers meaning of the concept of kindness. Prasad

(2005) writes of the tradition of studying human action and interaction and the shift from the

functionalist mode of science and the natural world by noting Weber's 1949 writing on

Naturwissenschaften and Geisterwissenschaten with the latter distinguishing knowledge about

the cultural and social world and the former term representing focus on "hard" sciences that

examine natural or biological phenomena. This shifting away from the structures entrenched in

functionalism and bringing awareness of how organizations rely on subjective constructions and

it is from that space where I believe we can better understand and engage in conceptualizing

kindness. "The social world is thus of an essentially intangible nature and is in a continuous

process of reaffirmation or change" (ibid, p. 260). This continuous process of change is where

the concept of kindness might make its presence most felt in organizations.

The Radical Humanist Paradigm (Subjective – Radical Change)

This paradigm moves from the sociology of regulation into the sociology of radical

change. The shift from regulation into radical change is understood through the work of key

theorists including Husserl and Hegel and early Marx. The theoretical categories Burrell and

Morgan use to define the paradigm are Solipsism, French existentialism, anarchistic

individualism and critical theory, and the notion that "…the ultimate reality of the universe is

spiritual rather than material in nature." (p. 279).

The radical humanist paradigm, while sharing with interpretivism an appreciation of the

socially constructed nature of our everyday experiences, "highlights the alienating modes of

thought… and linking…thought and action as a means of transcending alienation (ibid, p. 278).

There are two streams, subjective and objective idealism explored within this paradigm. The

subjective idealists within radical humanism highlight two areas of interest, the view of the

individual as trapped with the mode of existence he [sic] creates (ibid, p. 280) and the focus upon

the pathology of intentionality, where, in creating the external world, man [sic] separates himself

for his true 'Being' (ibid, p. 280). Objective idealism, Hegelian system, Phenomenology of Mind

(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 280), relies on the dialectical process, a universal principle leading

to a state of 'absolute knowledge' overcoming subject and object to create human consciousness,

"aware of its location within 'absolute spirit'" (ibid, p. 281).

It is the work of Marx, as he shifts away from Hegel that is interesting in relation to

kindness in the workplace. Marx placed the individual rather than 'absolute spirit' at the center

of the stage. This changed the focus from the external to the internal and the alienation Hegel

saw as being external and part of the human experience towards self-realization, Marx saw

society and the status quo as being the alienating force that dominated human's essential being

and nature. Marx started from the premise of the alienation of man [sic]. "A consequence of this

alienation of humans from their own nature is that they are also alienated from each other.

Productive activity becomes 'activity under the domination, coercion and yoke of another man.'

This other man becomes an alien, hostile being. Instead of humans relating to each other co-

operatively, they relate competitively. Love and trust are replaced by bargaining and exchange. Human beings cease to recognize in each other their common human nature; they see others as instruments for furthering their own egoistic interests (Singer, 1980, p. 36). Later Marxist theory split from radical humanism and idealism into what will be explored from a radical structuralist perspective.

This separation is the theoretical connections to existentialism, and Jean-Paul Sartre specifically, in his "Existentialism is Humanism" speech in 1945, believing existence precedes essence. This leads me to ask what then is the essence of a kind worker, a kind person, a kind workplace? "Generally speaking, however, freedom of choice, individual dignity, personal love, and creative effort are the existentialist values, and, generally speaking, the most important among these are freedom of choice, and individual dignity" (Olson, 1962, p. 18). A critique of both Husserl's phenomenology and Sartre's existentialism is the belief that only the self exists (Macey, 2000, p. 359), such solipsism is seen as selfish or egotistical. Olson's analysis offers, "Now it should be clear that when an existentialist denies that man [sic] seeks happiness he is not denying that there is some state of being which is most desirable for mankind or that in fact all men do in some sense seek this state of being. What he is denying is that men seek happiness as specifically conceived by the vast majority of common men and traditional philosophers. He is not, therefore, in any way prejudicing his claim that the most worthy and only realizable human values are those generated by a life of frustration, insecurity and painful striving." (Olson, 1962, p. 16) With this "…clear-sighted appreciation of the human tragedy" (ibid, p. 17) there is nonetheless a place for the pursuit of kindness. I see the most potential for a connection to kindness in the concepts of en-soi, pour-soi and the nature of the relationship between being-in-itself (en-soi) and being-for-self (pour-soi). This space between, "a distance or gap between the

real world and consciousness of individual men…Sartre calls 'nothingness' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 304). I note a cynicism of this acceptance of nothingness versus what I see as 'possibility'; possibility of connection and of energy and of love, is 'being-for-others' and instead of this understood as "a paradoxical relationship between human beings in a social context as self-imposed constraints placed upon human freedom, 'bad faith,'; it is being- for-others that can be freedom, the opposite of bad faith, the opposite of constraint, it is opportunity, it is possibility, it is bigger than, greater than, it is more, because of the connection. It could be seen as the embodiment of being kind through the linking of oneself to others.

There was resistance standing in the way of human freedom and individual's happiness. Stirner rejected any search for universal laws governing social life (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 300). What is most interesting in Burrell and Morgan's analysis of Stirner and "…the tradition of objective idealism and focuses upon the subjective dispositions with the individual as the starting point for any radical transformation of society" (ibid, p. 301). That Stirner and the anarchistic individualism – least subjective and most change oriented, was an example of extreme social theory that advocates radical change. Radical change emphasizes the importance of subjective factors. Marx would see anarchism as reactionary (ibid, p. 301) yet I see it actually as being a way to conceptualize and take action and make space, time and routines and rituals to oneself, for oneself while at work feels like a radical act of kindness.

Critical Theory lay the foundation for human emancipation through deep-seated social change. The Frankfurt School and particular theorists covered in Burrell and Morgan's critique "forms and sources of alienation, which they see as inhibiting the possibilities of true human fulfillment" (ibid, p. 299). This term, true human fulfillment leads to a number of important questions, none more meaningful than the exploration of what true fulfillment mean to the

critical theorists. As time has passed since this original work, it becomes somewhat cryptic to

imagine what human fulfillment meant then and now. Prasad (2005) recognizes changes to

"pure" form of critical theory and quotes Poster (1989), Critical theory springs from the

assumption that we live amid a world of pain, that much can be done to alleviate that pain, and

that theory has a crucial role to play in that process. It is the doing, the alleviating, that brings the

focus back to what kindness could mean in a workplace where pain is acknowledged and also

responded to with intention.

I was keen to delve into the work of Simone de Beauvoir as she has intrigued me for her

professional/intellectual/academic mind. I hoped to find in her work, language and theory that

made a space for kindness and homed in on "The Other" (1939). What I found instead added

more to the debate of individual and universal thinking about kindness. For de Beauvoir (1989),

gender "…in a world in which woman is essentially defined as female, it is as female alone that

she can find justification (p. 435). This thinking may feel like a stretch, and yet, the brilliance of

de Beauvoir's thinking can shed some light on kindness when she writes "…if the body is not a

thing, it is a situation…(1989, p. 34) and continues on to write of weakness of women in

comparison to men and then confirms that weakness, "can only be defined with reference to

existentialist, economic, and moral considerations" (ibid).

I am trying to align a way of thinking about being - female/weak, and a way of thinking

of what being kind (individually and relationally) is, not a thing, but a response... Is that too an

othering? If we conceptualize and define and debate and determine what isn't female/what isn't

kind, is that another way to the Other? I think of the "intersubjective process of becoming a

woman and in doing so, assuming the status of (as she put it), if not the Other, then certainly an

Other" (Tyler, 2005, p. 565). And make another kindness connection. When kindness is

dismissed, unrecognized, not valued, that can be an Othering of a worker's emotional or

religious or personal ways of being. It can also be seen as enacting an Other - how workers show

up at work.

Beyond my grappling with de Beauvoir and the opportunity to re-Other vis a vis

kindness, I have two specific questions when I think of kindness and radical humanism. The first

question is in relationship with the discourse of subjective idealism and an individual's choice to

become/be kind, to act in intentionally kind ways, however, you/the individual determines

kindness to be. Is that then akin to 'being trapped' or could it in fact be, an escape route?

The second question I have about this ontological perspective is the attention to

internalized and externalized worlds. The inside/outside spatial metaphor implied by the term

'internalization' harks back to the equally pervasive subjective/objective distinction whereby

people are seen to have an internal psychological realm that is somehow divided from external

reality (Fleming & Spicer, 2003, p. 168). In conceptualizing kindness at work as internalized and

externalized actions, does the radically kind humanist then offer the most obvious pathway to

organizational change? And yet, there could be a vulnerability or an uncertainty on the side of

the individual worker to be open about one's individual needs, particularly if they are contrary to

the unquestioned needs of the organization. It is from a radical humanist perspective that I can

imagine engaging in the concept of kindness at both an individual and an organizational level,

having the most substantial organizational change

Radical Structuralist (Objective – Radical Change)

Radical structuralism is the final paradigm and returns to the objective viewpoint. Unlike

the functionalist paradigm of an objective – regulatory lens, the radical structuralist paradigm

brings objectivism together with radical change. Radical structuralism is based on "an ontology

which emphasizes the hard and concrete nature of the reality which exists outside the minds of

men [sic] (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 326). Based on this paradigm, theorists see inherent

structural conflicts within society that generate constant change through political and economic

crises. The radical structuralist paradigm differs from the radical humanist paradigm, believing

"social reality is considered a 'fact'…independent of the way it is socially constructed… and that

the social world is characterized by intrinsic tensions and contradictions. (ibid, p. 278).

In thinking about the work of Marx post-1850, Burrell and Morgan highlight two elements –

superstructure and substructure. "Marx's principal contribution here can be found in the strong

connection he made between material economic conditions and all other institutions in society…

any set of economic relations with its corresponding modes of production is responsible for

structuring all other social formations (superstructures) including state, culture, family and

religion (Prasad, 2005, p. 116) …the base is almost like the skeletal frame of a society, with the

superstructure representing the flesh and the countenance" (ibid). In applying the idea of

superstructure and the substructure to the public service of Nova Scotia, the superstructure

consists of the provincial apparatus (state) and, the substructure, the workers. I wonder about the

impact of the superstructure of the connection to care and kindness of workers to the state

"outcomes" by way of not just economic conditions but also emotional conditions and how that

could affect health conditions. This attention to kindness, for worker's health and well-being and

beyond, the health and well-being of Nova Scotians could have enormous economic implications

from the cost of abseentism, the cost to our health care system for physical and mental illness

and taken further the impact on children, the education system and the long term health and well-

being of future generations. The notion of contradiction is central to Marx's explanation of social

change and the way in which one form of society replaces another through crisis produced by

these contradictions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 329). An area that captures the notion of

contradiction in the workplace studied can be located in the attention to psychological health and

safety and worker well-being. One can observe change, the creation of an Office of Mental

Health funded by the NSGEU and provincial government, new Workplace Health and Safety

Promotion policy which includes attention to not just physical health and safety but

psychological health and safety and employee well-being. This is presently small c change but in

nonetheless, it is a contradiction to how work was done – attention only to physical health and

safety, and how work is now done, attention to physical and mental health and safety. One could

cynically call these organizational responses a 'fetish of commodities' (ibid., p. 329) that

workers are the commodity or resource to be bought and sold (or kept healthy) in the labor

market.

In addition to super and substructures, this paradigm relies on the notion of equilibrium.

The work of Bukharin through historical materialism, scientific sociology as ways to explaining

the general laws of human evolution (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 337). Of the work of Bukharin,

I am most interested in where and how kindness at work fits into "harmony and co-operation as

the primary modes of social organization (ibid, p. 336). I also find it intriguing to consider his

view that it can take catastrophe to disturb equilibrium. What he refers to as 'total shift' leads me

to think of the work in the United States on the Total Worker Health model. In this example of a

total shift in social organization where the worker has multiple meanings attached to her health

(job stress, home life, health status, external factors like physical job site), this awakening to

worker as person, not worker as cog, has the potential to be perceived as catastrophic within the

present workplace structures.

"To paraphrase Marx, radical organizational scholars have only described the world, the point is to change it" (Mills, 1998, p. 287). What makes kindness such an interesting and potentially subversive topic in organizational studies lies in the contradiction between worker as the means of production and the changing relations of production, not just the obvious technological changes but more specifically the shift to employee wellbeing, to psychological health and safety, and the new language beginning to be used in organizations, for example the organization studied, of bringing one's whole self to work. Yet, the distinction of radical structuralism is that it tends to place relatively little direct emphasis upon the role and nature of man as an individual human being (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 326).

Burrell and Morgan recognize Weber's influence throughout all four paradigms and use the term radical Weberism (p. 331) to distinguish his influence in radical structuralism. The attention Weber paid to the iron cage of bureaucracy, authority and power and man's [sic] domination and enslavement by the social structures in which he lives (p. 333) is an obvious area for further exploration in relationship to kindness: to self, kindness to others and kindness to and from the organizations. In asking these three questions to the bureaucrats participating in my research, I was in fact, trying to shake the cage. Weber's longing for change is captured in remarks made during a debate at the convention of the Verin fur Sozialpolitik (Bendix, 1962, p. 464)

> This passion for bureaucracy…is enough to drive one to despair. It is as if in politics…
> we were deliberately to become men who need order and nothing but order, who become
> nervous and cowardly if for one moment this order wavers, and helpless if they are torn
> away from their total incorporation in it. That the world should know no men but these; it
> is such an evolution that we are already caught up, and the great question is therefore not

how we can promote and hasten it, but what can we oppose to this machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parceling out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life.

I work in a bureaucracy and yet I am full of hope. I see the cage and I shake it and see how it is shaken by other influences. While I am not naïve enough to not appreciate, "the interests of the power holders are so clearly distinct from the interests of the relatively powerless that deep-seated, irreconcilable conflict is viewed as the natural and the only permanent feature of social life" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 350). I see the concept of kindness, the embodiment of kindness to self and organizational kindness as irreconcilable to staying in conflict. Winter storms are a useful example to highlight power dynamics, conflict and change. Structurally there are storm policies to follow, directives on open and closed offices dependent on Deputy Minister's decision making, worker's individual needs including children staying home from school due to closures, dangerous road conditions and personal comfort in driving/taking public transportation during storms, and organizational expectations and outcomes The micro example of an individual seeking to resolve her personal and professional conflict means - the secretary asks to work from home when there is a winter storm instead of traveling into the city on dangerous roads or using limited vacation time and the macro level response of senior leaders adjusting departmental and corporate storm policy to keep staff safe. Engaging in what kindness, can mean, specifically in being kind to oneself at work and kind to others, especially in a bureaucracy, may be the greatest opposition at our disposal.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the two theoretical frameworks anchoring this study of kindness. It

presented the seven sensemaking properties of Weick's sensemaking framework and delved into

Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms.

In the following chapter, the research process is mapped out. This chapter also illustrates

the interviews were interpreted using the properties of sensemaking and how this analysis-built

themes. These themes are presented in Chapter Five. The combination of these sensemaking

themes plus barriers to kindness as well as possible ways forward are presented in Chapter Six in

a discussion of the future for kindness at work.

Chapter Four - Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the methodological decision-making process and reasoning are presented

in three parts. The first section provides an overview of the methodology, covering the

methodological drivers of the work and the method of my analysis. The second section presents

my data collection process, interview questions, how I coded the interviews and developed

themes and the concluding section of the chapter includes reflexivity and my role as researcher.

Methodology

Weick's sensemaking properties provided a multi-faceted entry into the exploration of

the concept of kindness. Weick's sensemaking gives a tool to understand a process that

individuals use to make sense of something, i.e. when an individual identifies an act as 'kind'

there are psycho-social processes involved in that sensemaking. "Organizations are built,

maintained, and activated through the medium of communication" (Weick, 2001, p. 136). Each

question asked was analyzed through sensemaking properties to understand how each individual

made sense of the concept of kindness. In many ways, the sensemaking we attribute to kindness -

the identity construction of a kind person, the extracted cues of a kind act, the plausibility and

enacted meaning of kindness comes from a very basic almost simplistic adherence to the golden

rule - a stereotypical, religious and righteous meaning of kindness as shown in Chapter Two.

Access to Public Servants

Research site.

Deciding to use the provincial government as my research site made sense. Not only is

the provincial government the in the province with over 10,000 employees, it is also where I

work and have worked for over a decade. To study my own organization supports both my

academic pursuits to understand kindness at work as well as my professional role as a leader in

organizational health. Within the provincial government bureaucracy, the Public Service

Commission acts as a central point of direction for all provincial government employees, is

responsible for generating and enforcing corporate policies and houses Human Resource staff.

The Public Service Commission also directs the required employee competencies defined by the

Hay Group[2]. These competencies represent expected behaviors and are built into job

advertisements and job descriptions. There are also clearly stated Public Service Values: Public

Good, Accountability, Diversity, Integrity, and Respect. The Public Service also defines Conflict

of Interest rules and maintains HR Manuals that outline specific behavioral expectations. These

rules are able to, "simultaneously serve to contain differences of opinion, beliefs, and values

while resulting in practices that give the appearance of unity of purpose" (Helms Mills & Mills,

2000a, p. 58). It is important to note the variety of work experiences within the thousands and

thousands of workers, all employees of the province. There was not an expected difference in

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[2] www.haygroup.com

sensemaking for government workers as opposed to private sector workers built into this study

design, while all government workers are part of a provincial organization, practices vary greatly

from branches within departments and from one department to the next. For example, there is a

human resources policy signed off by the public service commission on earned days off (EDO),

one division and branch allows every second week to be taken as an EDO while in the same

department, another division and branch only allows every third week off. This one example

highlights a limitation of this organization's policies as guidelines or directives. The ability for

decision-making at the division level or branch level or department level is strong and means a

less cohesive structure as a whole.

I gave precedence to my colleagues' stories over the textual construction of meaning

making. In my decade plus career as a public servant I have served three different political

parties. Each political party brought in new mandates and the texts, reports, strategies and plans

changed based on the leadership. Because of the political nature of the work environment and its

incumbent shifts in focus, it was the people that I chose to focus on. Qualitative research focuses

on how people understand and experience their worlds (Morrow, 2005). My desire to contribute

to a greater academic investigation of kindness in an actual workplace also supported my

methods.

I sought a methodological process that could capture the complexity and multiplicity of

workers experiences. Qualitative researchers should reveal and revel in complexity (Wolcott,

2002, p. 96). It was important to be both transparent and also reflexive in my approach to

revealing what thirty-two public servants shared about kindness in their working lives. Because

academic work in management and organizational studies in the specific area of kindness is

limited, hearing directly from workers about their understanding and experiences of kindness in

their workplace allows for new information to come to light that can be built on for further

research. The decision to use sensemaking as a starting point was not without concerns. In

organizational life, as people's individual projects and actions are dependent upon others'

projects and actions (Weick, 1979), interruptions and sensemaking will mainly focus on these

interdependent acts that help people to complete their various projects or hinder them from doing

so (Allard-Poesi, 2005). The premise of interviewing, sitting down with public servants and

talking about kindness was an interruption and knowing this, I also can know the limitations of

our interviews, in that we met and spoke and I left, helped in my project by their actions. This is

not meant to diminish the sensemaking we engaged in during the interview process, rather

intended to note the limitations of an interview as a disruption in someone's organizational life.

The organization I work for, and studied, has an educational leave policy which may

include paid time off for studies, payment for certification and degrees with written contractual

commitments and for some staff, the option to take unpaid leaves. This policy, as with other

policies such as the one I noted above about earned days off, can be arbitrary and dependent on

supervisors and senior leaders. Nonetheless, while individual experiences may vary there is an

understanding that professional development and training and education are activities supported

within the organization. Thus, my request to interview public servants as part of my PhD

program was met with openness and willingness from across departments and with the Public

Service commission and the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union as well. The description

of my research site provides details of a bureaucratic culture (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).

Gathering the Language of Kindness at Work

    Interviews.

      My plan of inquiry (Josselyn & Lieblich, 2003) relied on interviews as a tool of discovery. This decision was based on the belief that people working for the provincial government would be willing to reflect on their "stocks of knowledge that reflect their embodied locations in preexisting and emergent political, economic, ritual, and moral structures of crystallized social experience" (Denzin, 1983, p. 130). Because kindness is not a typical job competency, role requirement or preexisting expectation for work, I knew interviews would allow me to "…understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world…" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 1).. Interviewees were encouraged to expound and elaborate; seeking answers with depth, meaning, and context, according to the individual situation (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bryman, 2012). This first step, interviewing public servants, was the start to making sense of what workers thought about kindness – how they defined it and experienced it and expected it was crucial to then understanding barriers to kindness in organizations and ways forward. In total I interviewed 32 public servants from over 12 different departments in the provincial government. During the interviews, there were consistent words and phrases and beliefs that built into themes using the sensemaking properties as tools of extraction.

      The Deputy Minister to the Premier became a champion of my research. This provided unexpected access to leaders in the organization that I had no connection nor network attachment. His email sent directly to all Deputy Ministers had the subject line: SPECIAL REQUEST and within the email he encouraged each Deputy Minister to take part in my research. This email created an ease of entry into the senior leadership of my organization and I

was able to interview twelve of a possible sixteen Deputy Ministers. Access to these powerful

leaders provided an opportunity to learn how the top leaders in my organization, (who in some

cases were responsible for hundreds and hundreds of civil servants) thought about kindness. The

other twenty interviews I conducted came by way of a snowballing technique (Vogt, 1999). I

asked the person I was interviewing to recommend another person I should interview. Snowball

sampling is arguably the most widely employed method of sampling in qualitative research in

various disciplines across the social sciences (Noy, 2008, p. 330). I also sought a diversity of

experiences and perspectives, including length of service, gender, job role and job location. This

diversity was made possible through my knowledge of the organization and suggestions from

those I interviewed providing recommendations.

Interview questions.

I created a list of questions that led the interview process from a general discussion about

an individual's conceptualization of kindness, "What does kindness mean to you?" into more

specific, personal experiences of kindness at work. The questions were based on what I wanted

to know about the concept of kindness from a worker standpoint. As noted earlier, I was curious

about ways that the conceptual framing of kindness and individual enactment of kindness

married. Interviews would bring this sensemaking to light. Culture is not itself visible but is

made visible only through its representation (Van Maanen, 1988).

The conversations were structured by these questions. These nine questions were open-

ended. I followed the flow of the planned questions with various segues based on the individual

conversation, nonetheless each person I spoke to responded to each of the questions.

I also asked the participants if they would be willing to keep a journal for a few weeks in

case they had anything further to add to their reflections on kindness. This journal was intended

as a process for those interviewed to reflect on our conversation and potentially add more information to what had been shared during the interview. Of the 31 people I asked to keep a journal, (one interviewee had retired the day before we spoke), 5 agreed and of those, I received three journals back, technically four as one was returned empty with apologies and the fifth was lost. One person had shared the journal with her colleagues, another had used it over a tumultuous time in her department and the third used the journal to reflect on kindness at work daily for a week. When I reference journal entries, this is noted with *journal entry*.

Informants.

The breadth of work experience ranged from being new on the job, one informant (excluding the Premier) had worked less than 6 months as a permanent employee to another working for over 29 years in the public service, another was a week away from retirement after 27 years in government and I met one man the day after he retired. I felt this cross-section of public servants provided a microscope view into a large organization's concepts of kindnesses.

Within these two extremes the average length of time working for the provincial government was 19 years. The age range of interviewees was between 30 and 67 and the gender identities were 14 males and 18 females. I spoke to Administrative Assistants, Human Resource Consultants, Program Administration Officers, Supervisors, Senior Leaders – Deputy Ministers and Executive Directors, and the Premier of Nova Scotia. Some were members of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union (NSGEU), others were Excluded Classification (EC) employees. Access to the Premier came from a fortuitous elevator ride where I happened to be standing next to him in a crowded group of people and thought, "*Why not…?*" Our subsequent interview is part of the public record, hence the transparency here.

The majority of people I interviewed were based in Halifax for their work though many lived outside the city but only two worked in regional offices. The provincial government has offices across the province from Yarmouth to Sydney, Cape Breton and because of the office locations of two people, the interviews were done by phone. I met three people in local Halifax café's and the rest of the 27 participants, interviews were held either in their departmental offices or nearby meeting rooms for face-to-face interviews. When quoting participants, I note their gender and their job classification. That is, a Deputy Minister or an Executive Director are named as Senior Leader. Staff who are part of the union are classified as NSGEU or if they are not part of the union, as EC. I wanted to distinguish these two points as there are implications of power through position in a bureaucracy, and there appear to be gendered constructions attached to the concept of kindness. I wished to highlight this by tagging the people I interviewed.

Each interview followed semi-structured interview questions and lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and a half. The interviews followed a set of questions and the structure was intended to be semi-formal, nonetheless, each of the 32 interviewees were asked the same questions. The interviews were taped, and each participant signed a consent form (Appendix A). The interviews were recorded and transcribed. All interviews comments are verbatim and have not been altered in any way.

After thirty-two interviews, I felt confident in my range of responses and representation. This decision, that I had reached theoretical saturation (Glasner & Strauss, 1967; Bryman, 2016, p. 412) was difficult, nonetheless. Though I had by then heard similar language and similar examples and understanding of kindness repeated, I hungered for more stories, more meaning-making. Yet, I knew my interviews had given me helpful information in which I could engage in *a process of interpretation* (Blumer, 1969, p. 5).

I ended each interview with the request for another possible informant. Inevitably, the

question was asked, would you like someone who is kind or someone who is not kind? Initially I

laughed and asked for both names. The narrative is always present (Czarniawska, 1999, p. 64).

When this response was repeated, I was aware of the dissonance in the organization, the way

kindness was understood, had a clear meaning to all in the workplace and the concept of kind

and unkind workers were accepted. And yet, sometimes these very same participants, at the

beginning of our interview would not be able to comfortably and confidently answer the first

question which asked them to articulate what kindness meant to them. They would say they had

never really thought about kindness, or they would say they never really used the term, yet, when

asked for someone else to interview, they had a very distinct knowing of kind or unkind

colleagues.

After transcribing each interview, I then coded the responses using the seven

sensemaking properties. I listened for how the worker spoke of their identity and how (if)

kindness was expressed as part of their understanding of kindness and if so, how. What were the

extracted cues they used in this construction? Each question was coded. The coding process used

the properties as main categories and words and phrases and stories shared were categorized into

one or more properties. It was repetition, key words, key phrases and key concepts which built

themes. Next, I turned to Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms to bring in organizational theory

for further analysis. Wanting to delve more deeply into theoretical grounding of management and

organizational studies with the themes of kindness in an organization was a unique approach that

I felt could lead me to better understanding the barriers to kindness at work and also, from each

ontological perspective, provide possible ways to move the concept of kindness at work forward

in the field. One could argue that these four paradigms provide conflicting viewpoints and it is in

fact, these multiple perspectives that enrich the discussion of kindness at work, as well as being

helpful in gaining different insights.

What makes the combination of Weick's sensemaking and Burrell and Morgan's

paradigms, so alluring is the potential to combine the individual with the organizational; the

micro to the macro. That is, Weick sensemaking focusing on the individual allowed me to

discover and discuss how workers individually understand kindness but does not adequately deal

with context. Burrell and Morgan's paradigms provide conflicting viewpoints that are helpful to

gaining different insights (Hassard, 1991) yet none of the four paradigms deal centrally with

individual sensemaking nor with kindness. Thus, by using Weick's Sensemaking and Burrell and

Morgan's paradigms, there is now the capacity to process in-depth discussions of context and

agency.

Sensemaking

I asked each interviewee the same questions with the intention of understanding if and

how workers made sense of kindness through the use of the seven sensemaking properties. I

wondered about how they would/if they would, identify as a kind person. When I asked them

during our one on one interviews about kindness they had experienced in their organization I was

asking them to both extract clues on what a kind organization meant, what it looked like and felt

like and that question was also asking them to look back retrospectively to experiences, working

relationships and organizational events that influenced their kindness narrative. We engaged in

meaningful discussion that captured varying degrees of reflection, that showcased the ongoing

nature of their conceptualization of kindness, how they saw kindness in their workplaces and

how some would explain the lack of kindness. These often-conflicting understandings and

multiple perceptions of kindness were fascinating to me as the concept of kindness and

individual's sense of agency became messier and messier, my excitement grew as the

sensemaking properties, as tools to dig in to understanding, created new spaces for the

complexity and richness of kindness to be unearthed.

The rich and layered conversations with workers about the concept of kindness led to the

revelation of particular patterns. I then developed themes using Weick's seven properties as

guides to interpret the patterns. Each question I asked, led to answers that were very similar or

there were responses that were strikingly different. This was typical of every question I asked.

To replicate the study would be to replicate the questions. The coding consisted of the repetition

of particular phrases, ideas and words. The codes became a shorthand to the broader themes that

were built from each question asked and each response given. For example, in each interview

when I asked, "What does kindness mean to you?" I heard connection between kindness and an

action or a family member/relationship or I heard resistance to the concept of kindness with no

sharing of kindness as action or connection or relationship. Thus, if another researcher was to

replicate the study of kindness at work, they would ask, "What does kindness mean to you?" and

the responses they would hear I would expect to be similar to what I heard in terms of kindness

understood as an action, explained through a relationship or noted by its absence. The outcome

of the coding process using Weick's sensemaking properties as the foundational framework

made for very satisfying analysis. It was satisfying as the process helped me to understand

kindness in new ways, new to me, to my organization and created a way to further engage with

concepts of kindness. Weick created this framework because of his belief that the organizational

approaches used important factors in how individuals made sense of their experiences (Weick,

1979, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

The genesis of sensemaking is shared through Weick references his fascination with sensemaking from a conversation he had in the early 60's with Harold Garfinkel and Harold Pepinsky. Garfinkel has recently completed studies of jurors and the way they made sense of the facts they heard. This leads Weick (2005) to thinking a crucial property of sensemaking is that human situation are progressively clarified, but this clarification often works in reverse. He goes on to say, sensemaking is what it says it is, namely, making something sensible (ibid, p. 16). Knowing these tools and their intentions reinforced their value in this study of kindness, allowing for kindness - what it means, how it presents itself at work, how people make it make sense (or not) highlights the strength of using sensemaking.

Intellectually and emotionally, I experience the world from what Prasad (1995) names as the interpretive tradition. That is, I take seriously acts of subjective meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1993). I wanted to see what "common constructions and shared interpretations" of kindness existed (Prasad, 1995, p. 16) which aligns with both Weick's sensemaking and my decision to use in-depth, one-on-one interviews. I wanted to hear the voices of public servants as they shared their concepts of kindness. Though relying on different theoretical backgrounds, researchers converge to see sensemaking and learning as created and situated in the micro-practices of interactions, conversations and coordinated actions between people (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000; Hellgren & Löwstedt, 2002, Allard-Poesi, 2005). My inquiry followed the lead of symbolic interactionists in the study of human meaning (Prasad, 2005, p. 21) as I wished to see how "meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). The construction and interpretation of kindness was the beginning. Taking the workers words and building themes led to the next action which was to

connect these individual sense makers and themes from the interviews and engage these themes

of kindness and organizational theorists.

Sensemaking Approach to Coding and Themes

The interviews were analyzed using two basic elements of grounded theory: concepts and

categories (Glasner & Straus, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I organized all the responses by

question and categorized the repeated words, ideas and phrases, the seven sensemaking

properties helped in this analysis as I could begin to see where and how the public servant's

words and ideas took shape into themes. I needed to hear stories and understand the sensemaking

process workers used to make sense of kindness. It was this ongoing sensemaking, this particular

property, as part of the coding process stood out as meta, the fact that I was asking workers about

kindness was an interruption, "An interruption to a flow typically induces an emotional response,

which then paves the way for emotion to influence sensemaking. It is precisely because ongoing

flows are subject to interruptions that sensemaking is infused with feeling" (ibid, 45). Often

times, during the interviews I watched as the interviewee struggled to answer my questions about

kindness. More than one stated, "I have never thought about kindness." These are senior leaders

in charge of departments with hundreds of staff and their lack of understanding or appreciation

of the concept of kindness was a surprise each time. I am noting this bias as part of my

researcher role, reflecting and being reflexive.

As stated above, I consciously did not use texts (i.e. policies, government strategy

documents) as my twelve-year career has shown me over and over again these are seldom

enacted or referred to and when yet another document is under construction, comments will be

made – "this won't collect dust on a shelf" but invariably this happens. I followed the suggestion,

"... to *listen* closely to *what* the interviewees are saying and *how* they are saying it (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998: 65; emphasis in original). This belief, that "Homo narrans" (Brown, 2000) is the most useful way of understanding sensemaking is as a narrative process is shared (Bruner 1990; Weick 1995; Brown 2000). Narrative analysis is "a tool or program for making sense of events" (Gephart 1991, p. 37); "a blueprint that can be used to predict future organizational behaviour" (Martin 1992, p. 287). Sensemaking is accomplished through narratives which 'make the unexpected expectable' (Robinson, 1981, p. 60) and crucial to the decision to use sensemaking in my study as, sensemaking is an ethnomethodology of organizing (Mills, 2008).

After each interview was transcribed, I listened to it repeatedly. I took the transcribed text and organized responses by question, and, within the questions, assessed and sorted the information into how I saw each interviewee engage in a sensemaking process of kindness at work. Sensemaking is not a linear process (Helms Mills et. al, 2010) and my re-listening and re-reading of the interviews and sorting by question were my attempts to make sense of the questions and responses. As noted above, part of this coding process was the repetition of key words and phrases. What were people consistently saying? These words and phrases were gathered by question and it made sense to filter through the sensemaking properties. I kept reading and sorting, re-reading, re-listening and analyzing. Through this process the key questions I focused on were: *What does kindness mean to you? How do you define kindness to yourself at work? Please give examples. How do you define kindness to and from your colleagues at work? Please give examples.* and *How do you define kindness to and from your organization i.e. how do you feel the structures/policies/ practices in your department "show" kindness?* Identities are constructed out of the process of interaction (Weick, 1995, p. 20). The interviews were an interaction as was my analysis as I learned how each individual's identity influenced how they understood kindness.

What makes this such a useful tool for analysis is its ability to study the complex construction of 'a worker' built from the life experiences of each public servant. The worker walking through the doors on a Monday morning is bringing their childhood, schooling, friendships, previous work experiences, present relationship and family experiences to work too. And then entering a workplace where job titles and job roles build another identity creates a rich space for further and ongoing identity construction. In many ways, this kindness work is an invitation for public servants/workers to reimagine what kindness means on a personal level but also at an organizational level. In the interview process, I wanted to understand how the individual constructed their identity in relationship to the concept of kindness which is why I asked participants, "*How are you kind to yourself*?" seeking to understand the multiple identities influencing how they made sense of the concept of kindness.

Making Sense of the Meanings of Kindness

After using the sensemaking properties and deductive coding to ground the sensemaking of kindness that was offered by my informants, I then built themes using an inductive coding approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). That is, through the categories built be the properties and repeated phrases, expressions and responses, the multiple meanings of kindness began to take shape. As is typical in inductive studies, the analysis was an iterative process in which the data was constantly revisited (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). This process, this sensing, feeling, gut-driven analysis process feels very intimate and personal and yet I also have confidence in its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and ability for verification (Morse et. al., 2002). And this process, built on workers words and my interpretation highlights the beauty of sensemaking and its ongoing nature. Words approximate the territory; they never map it our perfectly. That is why sensemaking never stops.

(Weick, 1995, p. 107). Taking public servants words led to this initial mapping of kindness and

its multiplicity of meanings. This method for kindness construction begins with a principle

question: "How will I know what I think until I see what I say?" (Weick, 1995).

Burrell and Morgan

Combining Weick's (1995) sensemaking properties to worker's conceptualization of

kindness and linking Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms was a process of engaging

theorists with workers. This bridging was done by taking each individual theme and engaging

with each paradigmatic perspective. That is, I used the themes from the interviews and each

paradigm's theorists and theories and analyzed how kindness could or could not exist in each

paradigm. It was this analysis that led to a greater understanding of barriers to kindness in

organizations and also created a road map for ways forward.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity and its attending systemic reflection (Prasad, 2005; Alvesson & Sköldberg,

2009) means the words I heard from the Premier, and from deputy ministers are heard with bias

and expectations that I need to be aware of and pay attention to as I code the sensemaking

process of each interviewee. I believe as well, "my own connection with this research as an asset

to the process, I also respect the poststructuralist tradition of owning and acknowledging that

experience" (Thurlow, 2007, p. 103). As discussed, using interviews was a meaningful and

useful process to learn from colleagues and hear how kindness was understood across a number

of different organizational positions, different departments and a number of different office

locations across the province. Because of my position and role in the organization, I also

explored where and if kindness in the workplace did or did not link to organizational health and

employee engagement. These questions and subsequent responses have provided not only useful

data for kindness construction but also influenced my career path and my present position in

government

Retrospectively, I can see now how rigidly I held onto the prescribed flow of questioning.

This is an example where I see my research as an interpretivist bumping into my conditioning in

a positivist, data-driven, evidence-based working world. I needed to keep reminding myself, "It

was never answers, really that interested me so much as a better idea of the processes in play, the

mechanisms which seemed to be operative in the hegemonic production of ideology" (Thumin,

1995, p. 74). The interview process, following a script of nine questions provided a consistency

to the kindness conversation. The responses began to show what was at play, what ideas and

beliefs were operating in their conceptualization of kindness at work and how the seven

sensemaking properties helped showcase the production.

Additionally, choosing this research method was able to inform my own work in the

government as a civil servant. I have worked in the public service since 2002, for almost half of

my time at work I have also been a student, researching kindness at work. This dual role creates

a constant state of sensemaking for me and influences how I heard and interpreted the stories of

the informants. I believe it is my responsibility as a researcher to, "engage critically in the

process of interrogating how we have settled on the stories we tell; how else these stories could

be told?" (Fine, 1994, p. 26).

I brought into each conversation my own lived experiences in the organization and my

ongoing sensemaking as well as my belief in the importance and value of kindness and quite

frankly, frustration with the lack of kindness often shown. In my organization, the concept of

kindness is not anchored in any formal way, it is not a required skill set, a competency to adhere

to, nor a response that is expected. Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) opened her book with a

statement that resonates with my research, "This book is about making sense of how people in

organizations that do not make sense try to make sense of what they do." It also speaks to how I

handled my methodological process. I wasn't sure if people thought about kindness when I

started. I wasn't sure if there would be any real discussion or debate or even a conversation. I

also, unbeknownst to the interpretivist researcher I believed myself to be, became uncomfortably

aware of "positivist anxiety" (Prasad, 2005, p. 4) as I worried about having 'enough data', the

'right participants' and asking 'proper questions.'

As a kindness scholar, I think, observe, assess, and wonder about kindness daily. I look

for it. I search for it, wonder about it and I analyze it. I am a kindness seeker. With a symbolic

interactionist perspective, this means my days are made of ongoing, multiple social constructions

(Prasad, 2005, p. 17) and this undoubtedly shows in the way I present the interviews and my

analysis, which I believe to be both useful and troublesome (Acker et al., 1983).

Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the methodological tools used in my study of

kindness. Through an interpretive tradition of study, I relied on interviews to understand and

contextualize kindness from workers in a large organization with multiple work sites. Through the coding process using Weick's seven sensemaking properties, patterns and themes emerged. These themes are explored in depth in the following chapter using Burrell & Morgan's (1979) four paradigms with the intention of using the various ontological perspectives to further explore the concept of kindness in the workplace.

Chapter 5 Conceptualizing and Constructing Kindness at Work

Introduction

In this chapter, I turn to my case study to hear government employees talk about kindness and filter what I learned from these interviews through Weick's (1995) seven sensemaking properties and my own sensemaking. I begin the chapter with an overview of the themes that emerged through this analysis. In the next section, the interview questions, analysis as well as the coding process are outlined.

The themes were built from the analysis of the questions on how individuals define kindness, how they enact or do not enact kindness in relationship to themselves and with their colleagues at work. The last section explores how kindness to and from the organization is understood and explained.

Emergent Themes

As stated in Chapter Four, I identified the following themes using an inductive coding approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As is typical in inductive studies, the analysis was an iterative process in which the data was constantly revisited (Alvesson & Robertson, 2006). These themes capture the nuances of this study of kindness, there were numerous contradictions from one interview to the other in the responses to the questions.

In theming their words, my intention was to capture the multiplicity of meanings given to kindness at work.

Theme: Kindness is/isn't an identity.

Kindness is an identity; mostly female workers related to and understood and internalized being kind as part of their identity. Or alternately, kindness is not valued or even considered. This theme captures the ways gender informs worker's enactment of their individual conceptualization of kindness.

Theme: Kindness is an action for others.

Kindness is an action done to others, for others, and kindness to self is rarely applied, understood or considered. For those who identified as kind and were engaged in kindness at work, they had clarity and commitment to being kind. Yet, kindness to self was typically rejected, this was curious, and the paradigms may help explain why this is such a contradiction.

Theme: Organizations are unkind.

Organizations have the capacity for kindness but the systems in place are not kind; bureaucratic roles and hierarchies obfuscate the ability to think of anything called kindness and its application to organizational success. This juxtaposition of workers who identify as kind bounded with the walls of an unkind system highlights the chasm between being and doing. This theme demands further study and is important for change.

Theme: Kindness is a belief.

Kindness is plausible, a concept that everyone believes they understand and know, it is unquestioned and unexplored. Because of the extraordinary number of external kindness cues previously referenced, educational teachings, religious teaching, popular culture, there appears to be an uninvestigated acceptance of the concept of kindness. This theme is important as the

attention to worker well-being grows, as too will the need to better understand what has

previously been allowed to exist unexamined.

Interview Questions

> **Question - What does kindness mean to you?**

This question led participants into an exploration of their identity. The people I spoke to

either embraced, explained, engaged in kindness conversations or resisted, questioned, and

doubted the place of kindness at work. "Our identity is constantly being redefined as a result of

experiences and contact with others, for example parents, friends, religion, where we went to

school, where we work and what type of job we do all affect how we view certain situations

(Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 184). Below are examples of how identity relied on parental

influence and the past. "I think of my mom when I think about kindness, just absence of self,

what my mom has demonstrated through her life" (male, senior leader). *"*Kindness is a way of

being with people. It's respect and being helpful and just being nice in all those old community

definitions of the word nice" (female, administrative role).

> I have a general philosophy in life and at home that we all need to treat each other in the
> way we would like to be treated and that transcends into a discussion about kindness and
> that means to me that I care about the people I work with and I care about the people we
> work for and I try to treat everyone with a level of respect and empathy…Now my kids
> I'm sure would have comments to you about how kind I am at home. I can remember
> being on the phone with someone at work and my teenager said to me, 'you use up all
> your nice at work and don't have anything left for us. (female, senior leader)

It is noteworthy for the male senior leader he understood kindness from a gendered

construction of absence of self. Another names kindness as "nice" and connects to another

traditional view of community and an unquestioned belief in the concept of "nice". "Nice" was a

word that many interview subjects used. In the case of "nice" above, the cue is "extracted"

(Porac et al, 1989; Weick, 1995) as nice is part of a mental model of the concept of kindness.

> When I think about kindness, the first thing I think about is, it's just be nice to people. But what does that mean? In the context of the work environment where we get there, it's not possible all the time, you have certain things that just aren't nice…even when you can't be nice, how can you be kind? (female, senior leader)

'Nice' for this leader was less plausible as it interfered with her ongoing sensemaking about what must happen at work but shows an "enacted" (ibid) cue with some doubt on the actual enacting. "Kindness is somewhat of a subjective experience, to be kind, is ah, in the context of labour management relations there is two opposites, you can't get around that part" (male, union).

Here, the respondent is grappling with the complexity of kindness, using his extracted understanding of kindness but also unsure how it can be enacted. The following two respondents highlight two examples of identity, for one, kindness is so obvious it doesn't need words, another has never thought about what kindness means. Their organizational roles are telling, one is in the role of service, her identity is to support and help and be responsive to the needs of others. She enacts a form of kindness through the structure of her role. The ongoing and social sensemaking inherent in the role of an administrative assistant shines through her kindness construction as does the enactment of her environment "Our sensemaking can be either constrained or created by the very environment that is has created. Similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy, this property maintains that the environment that has been created by the sense maker reinforces his or her sense of credibility" (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 185). This is juxtaposed with the quote that follows from a male senior leader who operationalizes his mathematics identity and the logic of opposites to articulate his interpretation of kindness.

> Kindness, probably one of the words that shouldn't need a definition. To me, we do things and we don't even think of them as being kind. We just do them because we're all people and we want to be respected and kindness, it comes together with respect… it can be on all levels, whether on support or just a smile. An act of kindness, support, understanding, they all go hand in hand. It should be very basic, shouldn't have to think

about it. (female, administrative, EC)

Well off the top of my head, I don't have one [definition of kindness]. So, a good thing in my world, in mathematics, is do the opposite, so I definitely know what meanness is. Meanness is a deliberate act to do something which brings a sense of negativity to something so kindness is the reverse. It's usually a deliberate act, it's not a random event, and kindness would bring a positive feeling to something, or group or animal. (male, senior leader)

The two responses below capture a dichotomous, seemingly contrary definition or

understanding of what kindness can represent: an identification with being kind as an intentional

act versus kindness as being unexpectedness or having an element of surprise. The response from

the male senior leader also highlights a key sensemaking point,

How will I know what I think until I see what I say? When I think about kindness I think about intention versus action. My definition of kindness is when someone is conscious of both their actions and their intentions. (female, union member)

There's some element of unexpectedness in kindness…or something that is above and beyond the call of duty…there's a certain amount of selflessness of giving something. Hard word to describe. (male, senior leader)

Below, we have two senior leaders, one uncertain on how to define kindness, the other is

crystal clear in her understanding. In earlier examples, "nice" was an anchor term that helped

workers explain kindness

In the workplace I don't necessarily think of kindness off the top of head when I'm dealing with scenarios. It's like the kindest thing I can do for someone I am responsible for is to show them respect and be a good listener but at the same time, give direction that in some cases they might not view as kind but by doing that I think I am being kind. (male, senior leader)

At its most basic level I would say that, it's the belief that you should always treat other people the way you would hope to be treated. You can add on to that but that's it at its most basic. (female, senior leader)

Those who related to the concept of kindness were able to see examples from their

parents, experiences with colleagues, actions they had taken in the workplace for others. During

my interviews with public servants, the sense they were making of kindness in their workplace

was retrospective in that their references came from their past.

For those workers who referenced their religious upbringing or parental influence and its

influence on their concept of kindness, kindness evoked a positive emotion. For those who

struggled with understanding kindness in the workplace as a concept, there were no emotional

connections, the conversation of kindness led to a conversation of respect, language with

emotional parameters they were comfortable inhabiting. The ways kindness was understood, as

powerful by one respondent or a word, *"I have never thought of before"* by another senior leader

provide cues to how kindness existed, was interpreted or actioned within their working days.

Cues for kindness were named – listening, being present, treating everyone equally,

helping colleagues out with workload, holding open doors and for the Premier, the stated belief

that there are times he just can't be kind. The conversations that took place about kindness, were

in and of themselves an example of ongoing sensemaking. "We rely on past experiences to

interrupt current event. Thus, sensemaking is a comparative process" (Helms Mills et al., 2010,

p. 184).

Of note were the interviews I had with Senior Leaders who had never given kindness a

thought to the deeply thoughtful responses of other Senior Leaders who value kindness, one

expressing *kindness as power*. As noted, the interview process was an interruption. But not just

to their daily work tasks but in many cases, an interruption to their organizational narrative – *"I*

don't think of kindness" says one, *"Kindness isn't a word I would use"* says another, or another,

"Kindness is not a word I have ever used."

As this was the first question, I asked each person. I set the question up to be as open as

they wished, how the understood kindness, defined it, lived it and believed in it. In retrospect,

this question seems to be clearly an exploration of the subjects' identities; however, at the time, it was merely an entry point into the interview subject. Now it is easy to see that by starting with this particular question, it actually touched on each sensemaking property as they did or did not identify with the concept of kindness. Often their identity as a kind person would be built on their family values, how they extracted cues from these experiences and teachings. This question tapped into their enactment of the concept of kindness, or not. What they spoke of, the way they shared their individual understandings of kindness highlighted their ongoing and socialized understanding of the concept. The parameters they placed on kindness spoke to what they accepted as being plausible. This was not expected, I did not plan to apply each property to each question yet, in asking this particular question it was possible to code responses through each sensemaking property. Specific examples from this question that led to the theme of unquestioned identity include, *"doing the right thing", "don't think, just act"*, *"how you show up for others", "way of being"*.

As I got deeper into the sensemaking analysis of the responses, the more I was struck by the word "nice" and its relationship to kindness as an enactment of a gendered construction of the identity of being female and being kind. The extreme example of the meaning of kindness for this male senior leader captures the feminization of the concept of kindness that was beginning to surface. "Nice" was language women used, not the men I spoke to. Earlier, a senior leader referencing the identity of his kind mother, equated kindness with absence of self and compared with his father's focus on tasks. His own identity, combining his mother's lack of identity is made plausible by his acceptance of being a mixture of these two influences. It is impossible to look away from this gendered construction of identity. "Kindness is somewhat of a subjective

experience, to be kind, is ah, in the context of labour management relations there is two

opposites, you can't get around that part." (male, union)

> I think of my mom when I think about kindness, just absence of self, what my mom has demonstrated through her life…I'll go back to my father –there's one right way, let's get the job done and so I am a combination between the two, so I miss opportunities for kindness. (male, senior leader)

Here, the respondent is grappling with the complexity of kindness, using his extracted

understanding of kindness but unable to identify with the concept of kindness and his work, it is

not clear to him how kindness could be enacted. His response makes me think that he is

operating under third-order control consisting of assumptions and definitions that are taken as a

given (Weick, 1995). That labour management relations can't be kind, or, in reference to the

earlier comment, that certain things at work aren't nice but one may still be able to be kind.

These "premise controls" that Weick explored (building on Perrow's work, on "unobtrusive

control" as a synonym for premise control), remind us that influences on sensemaking are often

implicit, tacit, preconscious, mindless, and taken for granted (ibid, p. 114). While Perrow and

Weick's argument centered on the three forms of control around decisions in organizations, I am

reading this within the context of workers who are making decisions to dismiss kindness. These

controls are unobtrusive and are all influenced by 'indirect' organization mechanisms such as

organizational vocabularies, (ibid, p. 115). Kindness was not part of these workers organizational

vocabulary.

The conversations that took place about kindness, were in and of themselves an example

of ongoing sensemaking. "We rely on past experiences to interrupt current event. Thus,

sensemaking is a comparative process" (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 184). There were

conversations with Senior Leaders who had never given kindness a thought to the deeply

thoughtful responses of other Senior Leaders who value the power of kindness. That such

extremes exist, "I don't think about kindness" and "Kindness is power" for two leaders each

leading hundreds and hundreds of workers is an invitation to take action in engaging in more

conversations on the concept of kindness for the health and well-being of workers and the

workplace. The interview process was an interruption not just to their daily work tasks but in

many cases, an interruption to their organizational narrative – *"I don't think of kindness"* says

one, *"Kindness isn't a word I would use"* says another, or another, *"Kindness is not a word I

have ever used."* As I listened over and over again to the interviews and read the transcripts, the

coding, that is, how I was able to "*label*, *separate*, *compile* and *organize* data" (Charmez, 2000,

p. 186) led to areas of theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212) where the workers

words were repeated enough that themes emerged.

> **Question - How are you kind to yourself?**

In asking this question I was looking for examples of how workers enacted their concept

of kindness, what actions did they take, what behaviours and thinking came into play. I wanted

to know if their concept of kindness was ongoing. I was also curious to know what (if) there

were barriers in being kind and doing kind acts? After asking the initial question of what

kindness meant, and the array of responses to that question, I realized asking workers how they

are kind to themselves would not simply be a compilation of actions or some type of kindness

recipe others could follow. I didn't expect this response: "*If you are really committed to the job it

is really difficult to be kind to yourself" (female, senior leader).*

This woman's commitment to her work meant she could not be kind to herself. I wonder

about the "enlargement of small cues" (Weick, 1995, p. 133) that made this decision plausible.

This could be viewed as another example of the absence of self. Reading Höpfl (2014) resonates,

"Conventional patriarchal representations of the organization reduce *organization* to mere

abstract relationships, rational actions, and purposive behaviour" (p. 96). Her response is a

response to what she sees as the organizational requirements of commitment. What were the cues

she interpreted around her, the ongoing sensemaking of her responsibilities and rational actions

to make work greater than her responsibilities to herself? The same question asked to a male

senior leader gave a completely different response: "I create conditions for myself to thrive and

to be myself" (male, senior leader.)

It is too easy to resort to clichés about women having to work harder than men to make it

to the top or whatever other gendered stereotype might fit when reading these two senior leaders'

responses. And yet. How is she so certain about what is required to do her job and how is he so

empowered to care for himself? We are constantly making sense of what is happening around us

but we isolate moments and cues (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 186). Would either of these leaders

be able to determine retrospectively how they came to make these decisions about self-kindness?

Could they isolate the moments and cues that created such diametrically opposed expressions of

self-kindness?

The dichotomy of these two workers responses to their understanding of what kindness to

self, meant, highlights not just the property of ongoing sensemaking but also plausibility, "We do

not rely on the accuracy of our perceptions when we make sense of an event. Instead we look for

cues the make our sensemaking plausible" (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 185). It also captures the

sensemaking that is enactive of the environment, "Our sensemaking can be either constrained or

created by the very environment that is has created. Similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy, this

property maintains that the environment that has been created by the sense maker reinforces his

or her sense of credibility" (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 185). What is striking about these two

distinct and different enactments of their senses of their work environment is the role of

individual interpretations of cues. In the responses below, the gender divide is less glaring but

still present. "This is a really good question because I personally spent a lot of years trying to

please others, so I wasn't kind to myself" (female, senior leader). "Kindness to me? Probably

less kind to me that I am too others" (male, senior leader).

In the first question asked, "nice" was equated with kindness. This question highlights

pleasing others as being equated to being kind for the female senior leader but not storied that

way for the male senior leader. "I don't know if I've spent much time on how to be kind to

myself as much as how to be kind to others. I don't have a good answer for that" (male, senior

leader).

This response again shows the act of being kind as action done to others for others, not

for himself. He has no judgement about this, it is presented as a matter of fact. Below, the two

women, neither in positions of leadership, show an identification with being kind to others. That

is, there are both structural expectations, the tasks of the job, forming and informing how one's

identity as kind to self, may be interpreted, enacted, extracted and seen as ongoing and as

limited. It is precisely because expectations can serve as strong filters that their formation and

activation are crucial for sensemaking (Weick, 1995, p. 146).

> I'm not 100% sure I do that. I bring kindness to others; I see that as my job. That I will be
> pleasant. I will be helpful. I will not be rude…I don't put myself first you know, and I
> don't know that I show kindness to myself. (female, administrative, union)

> Kind to myself? We always have a tendency to leave yourself for last, don't we? Not
> really thinking of yourself. I dunno, kind to myself? It's not really something I think
> about, nope not that kind of person. (female, administrative assistant, EC)

Over and over, kindness to self was not part of workers identity and was focused on and

by extracted cues: "*trying to please others so I wasn't kind to myself*" "*less kind to me that I am*

too others". The sensemaking was structured through their service to others. Also, there was

dismissal - *not really something I think about.* Another female, named kindness to self as being

"*it's okay to be selfish sometimes and kind of take care of yourself first,*" the notion comes from

the social and ongoing experiences she references, *"sometimes we have a lot on our plates, we*

tend to just dive in. Sometimes I forget to eat and go to the bathroom." This highlights what can

be named as absence of self, or embodied self. A younger female EC answers, *"I have no idea.*

I'm horrible (laughs) There are days I probably am horrible to myself. I don't know. How do I

show kindness to myself (sigh). I don't know."

The longing I hear in that response makes me oddly hopeful. She doesn't know how to be

kind to herself. She doesn't think about being kind. In fact, she even thinks she is sometimes

horrible to herself. It is the sigh. Her sigh speaks to knowing it could be, dare I say, should be

different.

When I discuss the barriers to kindness from the paradigmatic perspectives and delve into

ways forward in the following chapter, this young woman's voice will guide me.

Listening to interviewees, replying over and over that they didn't think about kindness to

themselves and that they were not kind to themselves I became more and more aware of my own

personal expectations not being met in these conversations. I began to see my expectations – that

kindness matters, that kindness has a place in organizations, that people 'should' be kind to

themselves or they can't be kind to others, were all part of my unconscious sensemaking that I

had not questioned nor articulated until this analysis work began

The comment from a male, senior leader was most telling, *"Deputies are bad examples.*

We are poor role models yet hold such power. But we try." His awareness of his power, his

impact, and his poor leadership in this area may be one of the largest barrier organizations face.

There were, though, several interesting and clear examples of self-kindness. For one

leader, close to retirement, when she looked back at the choices she had made, in retrospect, she

recognized kindness to self.

> To myself? (laughs) Oh that's interesting, how have I been kind to myself? Well, I have, this might sound kind of different, but I guess the way I've been kind to myself is not forgoing my own principles, not short-changing my own standards and my own code of ethics and conduct. (female, senior leader)

Two male senior leaders could name very specific actions they took. "I'm kind in terms

of my scheduling. I try to leave it free and open and interspace it with different activities. Allow

for a variety of physical and mental challenge and rest periods" (male, senior leader). "Always

find time for fitness, I guess that's kindness… I rarely take work home…put my blackberry

down and turn off the ring" (male, senior leader).

> The Premier was philosophical in his response:
> The best thing I can do for myself is to ensure it [any decision he makes] is rooted in what I believe is our collective best interest and not in, you know, not based on politics, not based on mean spiritedness and not based on anything other than and with all our information, that it is in our collective well-being. That way it allows, as a person who sits here, to be able to rest that your decisions were founded in principle and all the right things.

Here the terms, *principle*, *right*, *collective well-being* these are all ways "sensemaking by

means of manipulation involves acting in ways that create an environment that people can

comprehend and manage (Weick, 1995, p. 165). He is identifying terms and proving cues that

are plausible to explain his interpretation of his own belief in his concept of kindness.

The dichotomy of these two workers and their understanding of kindness to self, meant

for one, either they give to their job, not to themselves or they are empowered to work in a way

that has meaning for who they are and how they want to care for themselves. This highlights not

just the property of ongoing sensemaking but also plausibility. The example where the woman

does not feel she can be kind as it would interfere with her ability to do her job versus the man

who is confident in his ability to not only take care of himself but thrive, he is in control, the

female senior leader has "given" control to her job. These two workers and their understanding

of their work world also captures the sensemaking that is enactive of the environment.). What is

striking about these two distinct and different ongoing understanding of their work environment

and the role of individual interpretations of cues.

Question: How do you experience kindness to and from your colleagues?

This question allowed the informants to think not only of their conceptualization of

kindness in action, but also their reaction to kindness as they interpreted it. "I have a colleague

who is going through a difficult time right now so I sent a little note saying keep your head up"

(male, Senior Leader). "Last summer my mother passed away and the kindness from my

colleagues was unbelievable, the cards, it was overwhelming, so nice of them (female,

administrative assistant, EC)"

> We had a colleague the other day get a kick in the nether regions, you gotta support these
> colleagues… I've been whacked, all of us that are here long enough – you just get used to
> it. Some of the newer ones aren't used to it. You get them through. I went and bought a
> bottle of wine for one of my colleagues who got whacked. (male, senior leader)

In the examples above we can see the "organizations rules, routines, symbols and

language will have an impact on an individual's sensemaking activities and provide routines or

scripts for appropriate conduct" (Helms Mills et. al, 2010, p. 185). Cards and notes or a bottle of

wine are all part of the scripts these public servants followed and enacted as expressions of

kindness.

In the examples below, the ongoing sensemaking includes behaviors and decisions on

appropriate conduct and how each person identified their actions, enacted their identity with

behaviours that aligned with their concept of kindness. "I have a personal code which says, even

if I don't feel like it, I will say good morning to everyone on my team" (female, union). "I very

intentionally develop relationships with my colleagues. I reach out. I am consultative" (male,

senior leader).

> I don't like having the tough conversations, I have them almost every day but I don't
> think the other person has to leave feeling beaten up. I think you can be kind to your
> colleagues, and everyone in this department is my colleague. To discipline or reprimand
> someone you should be kind when you're doing that. (male, senior leader)

The personal code, one might say value, in greeting colleagues can be understood as an

identity (this is a kind act, I am kind therefore I will say hello) as well as a cue from her

upbringing, or possibly workplace role models. This can be compared to a comment from a male,

senior leader,

> I've had bosses, where you get on an elevator and the don't say a word to you right.
> Might still be kind but the perception of the employee is – what's wrong with him? But
> the thing is you know, the Deputy's they're just like anybody else…For some Deputy's
> they might not say good morning to folks in an elevator, not because they aren't kind just
> – they're quiet.

This identity, Deputy's being just like anybody else, was a curious comment I kept

hearing from men in power. One woman understands the value in greeting her team, another

senior leader, with a team of hundreds, at some departments, thousands, can excuse, make

plausible, a dismissal of the importance of this act because that leader is "just like everybody

else", "is quiet".

Similarly, the belief that tough conversations and disciplining and reprimanding

colleagues can be done kindly also speaks to identity, a decision this individual has made to do

something that is tough but in a way they perceive as kind. The third example shows how being a

relationship builder, being consultative, reaching out, are all actions taken to be in relationship

and enacting the cues he has decided mean kindness.

For the person below, she makes sense of her relationship building as a piece of her

identity - as a relational person, her enactment of what she believes to be kind, means talking to

people and listening to people. She is aware of her ongoing decision making about her

interactions to be not necessarily aligned with her organization' ongoing decision making about

interactions. I thought of one of the first lines in Weick's *Sensemaking in Organizations* where

he writes, "Sensemaking is grounded in both individual and social activity, and whether the two

are even separable will be a recurrent theme in this book because it has been a durable tension in

the human condition (1995, p. 5). Her sensemaking as an individual, to be involved in the social

activity of relationships, listening and being available appears to be incongruent with the

expected social activity of her organization's culture, driven by deadlines.

> I make space for people to come to me, whether they want to talk about work, or whether they want to talk about not work. I don't think I can count on my hands the number of times I told people you can't talk to me because I'm too busy. And it's funny because it comes up in interviews, what will you do when you have a deadline. I'm a very relational person and I also understand the benefits of someone talking through something, uhm, that I always try to create space for that because I know this deadline is important but this interaction with this person is more important. Sadly, I know people will disagree with me because I think a lot of times we think our work is our work but our work is people because it's people who do the work. (female, union)

In the two examples below retrospective sensemaking highlights these workers

interpretation of kindness they experience from others. For one, she understands people's

interactions with her as helping her grow, for the other, she references a time at work that was

highly supportive and uses her past experiences to understand her present experience. "I think

it's kind when people challenge me on my behavior because they want me to grow" (female,

union).

> Our work unit is broken and it's not functioning. But when it was highly functional, highly cooperative and highly respectful, the unit was tremendous. It meant all the pieces were working together, there was kindness, respect and cooperation and led to efficiencies... The kindness I do see around me is my immediate coworkers, where we do respect our work and each other…I will still answer questions, I won't hoard information or say I don't know, I will still be the person who responds, I will still be the person who will write the email, I will still be the person who will answer the phone, I will still give

direction and still be helpful, so that is kindness. I've not been rude to them or said I
don't know; I'm not going to stoop to their level. (female, union)

Choosing to 'not stoop to their level' reinforces the standard of kindness, kind acts that

this person values and enacts – answering questions, being generally responsive as she explains

ways she appears to not receive kindness from her colleagues, who don't respect her, don't share

information, don't answer questions, don't write emails, don't answer the phone, don't give

direction and are not kind.

I really believe we need to give each other space and I think in many workplaces, because
time is of the essence, and because we have so many competing demands, we aren't
mindful about letting, we aren't mindful of the grounding of others, and how easy we can
affect the day of another person with one remark or even with a look. (female, senior
leader)

For one, it is tangible actions; for another, the idea of giving space and being mindful of

the grounding of others. These cues, while different, nonetheless allow each worker to construct

their definition of how to be kind to others. One sees kind acts as completely plausible: of

course, you can share information, answer questions etc., even if there are those who choose not

to or who are "unkind". For the other person, it is the barrier of time, the belief that there is no

time, that the kind acts of giving space and the grounding people require are not plausible or

permissible within the constraints of the organization.

Another senior leader also referenced time as an issue, *"people get too busy to be as kind*

as you'd like to be" he continued summing up the public service as a *"very kind place."*

He shared a work experience, "…*meeting with staff who would be considered tough,*

cursing" but when he sat down with them, he said

*most of them were kind, although that wasn't the image they projected or wanted to
project. Some people see it as a character flaw. One person said to me, 'if you smile too
much people think you're stupid.'*

This leader reflected on that experience, validating the comment,

*That's true. People perceive kindness as weakness. I find that all the time. If you're nice
and kind, it can hold you back from management positions in a lot of cases. I've had
bosses think, before you actually work with them, that you couldn't make a tough
decision, 'cause they think, 'oh that guy's a nice guy.'*

Unpacking this discussion provided a number of kindness cues; again, the term "nice" is

used. In this case, "nice" was not an identity but a cue implying weakness. Kindness equals

weakness. While this leader identified himself as kind, he also recognized he wasn't as kind as

he would like to be, because of time, time being noted earlier as a barrier to kindness. Yet, in

others he saw active resistance to being identified as kind. The ongoing sensemaking for the men

he spoke to was that being seen as kind was a character flaw implying weakness. The leader who

was comfortable identifying as kind and that his enactment of kindness at work was a source of

not just identity, but also plausible, he could be nice and kind and smile and also make tough

decisions.

Women in my interviews were comfortable identifying as nice and kind. Kindness, as a

feminine characteristic, is reinforced with Phillips and Taylor's (2009) research, "…the end of

the Victorian period, kindness had been largely feminized, ghettoized into a womanly sphere of

feeling and behavior where it has remained…" (p. 40). This particular leader's embodiment, and

pride, in being kind, was notable as it stood out from the other ways men were unable to speak

about kindness.

Question: How do you experience kindness to and from your organization?

It is important to note the challenges involved in applying the topic and understanding of

the concept of kindness on an organizational level as so many of the public servants interviewed

had never thought of kindness in their workplace and actively resisted the use of kindness as a

way to conceptualize their work, their relationships at work (with themselves or their colleagues)

or their experiences at work.

There were many discussions about the individual kindnesses shown to colleagues versus the systematic structures that were encountered by those interviewed. Positional dynamics, union collective agreements, and power dynamics are all examples of how these public servant sense makers engaged in the enactment of kindness within the structures of a bureaucracy.

Tools were named as supporting kindness in the organizations. Tools like outside consultants or internal programs like Deputy Minister Awards.

> There's times when I rely on tool that our system has, we have 360 reviews or those things and people can sometimes poo poo that we bring in consultants but sometimes it's a kind tool because people find that it is a little bit easier, it's a bit of a distance away from the personal interaction. (female, senior leader)

> I feel our department does a lot to recognize our employees, I think that shows kindness towards them, we have Deputy Minister quarterly awards and out newsletter and that shows other staff what some of the staff are doing, giving them kudos and kindness towards them. (female, union)

The comment of outside consultants or various tools is plausible for the senior leader as she sees the external messaging providing a protective buffer to what is shared, that the impact on staff is made easier; she has made the utilization of these tools as a showcase of her actions, an enactment, of her kind leadership. For the staff member identifying the Deputy Minister awards as an example of kindness versus an enactment of well researched employee recognition programs, this can be understood if she identifies external validation as positive, if she has been socialized to value the most senior leader in her work as the key provider of this validation, i.e. her supervisor thanks her for her work versus the Deputy Minister giving her an award. One might be seen differently based on her own interpretations and previous experiences.

The following two comments recognize tools as well, such as, job flexibility and the employee family assistance program but the cues the first person recognized were individualized managers and their knowledge of supportive structures and their ongoing engagement in learning

about and utilizing supports. For the second person below, she recognizes a structure that is kind

and supportive but is grappling with her retrospective sensemaking of how much is too much

from an employer in terms of supporting staff. "Job sharing or flexible work hours, I think those

are very individualized, I think some managers know about them and facilitate them happening

and some do not" (female, union).

> If you compare with the private sector we have a kinder environment to work in like
> EFAP [employee family assistance program]. We've taken a step up, I kinda like think, it
> goes against my grain, goes to my old school thinking, employers shouldn't have to give
> you everything. (female, senior leader)

In this last comment, the leader sees her organization as being kinder but resists this and

her resistance can be interpreted as her organization being kinder means her organization is being

weaker. The sensemaking process may allow individuals to interpret cues, or features of a map,

in ways that support their belief (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 185) and the belief shared above

about the "kinder environment" that offers a support to employees runs contrary to this leader's

belief in what an employer should or should not give to staff.

The two male Senior Leaders quoted below have constructed kindness as pure and

engrained; the organization is oppositional to these constructs. "I think that senior leaders

struggle with this or at least I struggle with it when you have that balance between operational

expectations and requirements and accountability and the purity of kindness" (male, senior

leader).

> I suppose a good thing about policy is there's a process to follow I think it's effective in
> addressing issues after they've occurred, but not preventing. It's interesting because a lot
> of what you're talking about I don't think can be taught once you've reached a level of
> your working career, it's engrained in you from an early age. (male, senior leader)

For those that saw the organization as the people versus the organization as the structure,

acts of kindness were supported through what actions people chose to take. This enactment

highlights the ways people experienced their environment, and ways they felt constrained are

highlighted below.

The leaders below share how they experienced kindness enacted in individual ways, not

systemic ways. "I'd probably say our structures and policies don't show [kindness], our practices

might. It is a big bureaucracy and there's standardized policies and structures. It's often breaking

those rules or stretching them that demonstrates kindness" (male, senior leader).

> I had a boss who did her emails, she was a kind person and when she did her emails
> Sunday night, she didn't send any of them out, she saved them all as drafts and when she
> got to work on Monday, she pressed send. (male, senior leader)

In discussion the organizational rules and policies, this newly retired labour leader joked

at the beginning of our interview, *"Oh my god, someone's writing about kindness… I thought,*

"Oh Christ" but then as we continued talking, his comment below was striking, like a light bulb

went off during our conversation.

> You will not see the word kindness in harassment policies, you will see what harassment
> means, in a negative sense, in a respectful workplace, take a look at those policies, see if
> you see the word kindness. That is interesting, how do we deal with all the negatives.
> (male, union)

The organizational focus on the negatives, the extracted cues of the language and policies

on behavioural expectations, the ongoing sensemaking focusing on what was negative, the

identity of policies and the negative, were all plausible based on his working experience. Our

conversation was a disruption that reframed or potentially opened up new ways of thinking about

organizational anchors such as policies. Additionally, as he had just retired, was reflecting at

missed moments in his working experience that you don't "*necessarily think of moments of*

kindness but when you look back, and that was kindness, that was kindness, but you are too busy

to really see in the midst of it." Similar to an earlier respondent's comment on time, his

retrospective sensemaking of his experiences at work, that kindness was in fact present and

enacted, became plausible based on in his retrospective sensemaking, triggered by his retirement

and time for reflection.

The two respondents below both identify with the lack of kindness experienced in the

workplace. The first person identifies kind processes (fair hiring policies and access to

professional development funds) and struggled with how these cues for kindness were ignored.

She is noticing – filtering, classifying and comparing but her sensemaking is the interpretation

and the activity of determining what the cues mean (Weick, 1995, p. 51). The second person

identified the system as unfair as it did not allow for individuals to be seen, naming the social

nature of the structures as inhibiting kindness.

> I think it is unkind to not follow the rules and processes you set in place particularly
> when it comes to casual to term to permanent. I think it is unkind to say that you have fair
> hiring policies then not show accountability whether you are implementing them or not. I
> know so many instances of unkindness in terms of unfair distribution of professional
> development opportunities. (female, union)

> Systematically, corporately, the organization is not very kind. And respectfully, how I
> mean that is, probably under the guise of kindness and fairness, there is a blanket
> approach that is applied, which ironically, I think is anything but kind. You know what I
> mean? Rather than treating people as unique individuals, as whole people, they are once
> again objectified and treated fairly and consistently, which is not fair or kind. (male,
> senior leader)
> The final comment speaks to the organization, meaning, 'public service' as lost, that the

environmental cues and enactment of expectations are wrong and need to change. "The public

service, we have lost our way. We think our number one priority is to serve the Minister. We

need a broader vision that is beyond politics" (female, EC).

Here, the sensemaking process is contingent on interactions with others, (ibid, p. 185)

namely the public versus politicians and these cues come from her focus on certain elements,

while completely ignoring others (ibid, p. 185) in contradiction to the politics she sees.

Summary

By focusing on workers' understanding of what kindness means, how they are kind to themselves, how people experience kindness to and from their colleagues and how the organization where the interviewees worked was understood as kind or not kind, we now have more complex and nuanced understandings of the concept of kindness. This is one of the research contributions of this preliminary study of kindness, laying the groundwork for further advancement of studying kindness in management and organizational studies.

In the next chapter, the themes identified through this illustrative process of Weick's sensemaking properties, are used to confront barriers presented in each of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms. This discussion of barriers as well as possible ways forward are the next steps of this exploration of ontological understandings of kindness.

Chapter Six Constructing Kindness at Work – Barriers and Ways Forward

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the interviews and the sensemaking of the workers and their understanding of kindness were used to build themes. In this chapter, I take the themes:

- Kindness as an ongoing, social identity, rejected or embraced,

- Kindness is an action primarily enacted towards others,

- Systems and structures are unkind, and

- Kindness is a belief, plausible.

and engage with the metatheoretical assumptions which underpin theoretical statements (Hassard, 1991), within each paradigm, that is, contextualize the concept of kindness, through an ontological and epistemological examination of concepts of kindness from my case study and paradigmatic perspectives. In Hassard's (1991) case study, he used the paradigmatic work of

Burrell and Morgan (1979) as a map to explore four accounts of work behaviour. Similarly, this

study, by using Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms provides four differing perspectives on the

concept of kindness at work and introduces barriers to kindness and ways forward. Because the

four paradigms define fundamentally different perspectives for the analysis of social phenomena

(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 23), using these multiple entryways to delve into the concept of

kindness and themes from different ontological perspectives allows for a stimulating journey of

discovery.

Kindness from a Functionalist Perspective

  Social *s*ystems – Theme: unkind *s*ystems and *s*tructures.

  When Burrell and Morgan (1979) presented the functionalist paradigm, the language they

used came from theorists who framed organizations in terms of systems and structures. In this

section I will focus on two pertinent areas for this study of kindness, social systems theory and

theories of bureaucratic dysfunctions (p. 121). There are the systems that are codified by policies

and guidelines of expected behavior. The language of systems and guidelines applies to this

study. One of the themes that became apparent within this paradigm concerned the idea of

systems and structures within the workplace experienced as unkind:

> Conflict and grievances… it just seems like an antiseptic process. I can't show any
> personal involvement, I have to be very objective. I'll just take notes, [asking] and then
> what happened, and then what happened and in the meantime, you are feeling the hurt,
> the embarrassment, the anger and so on and so forth but you don't get to voice that. You
> don't get to be heard. That doesn't get to be heard, god forbid that I allow that to come
> into the room…can't deal with hurt feelings, there's no platform to deal with them, to
> acknowledge that somebody's been hurt. It's all about – did this really happen? Are you
> sure it went down that way? Having to justify yourself. (female, union)

> I have dealt with difficult people in government and sometimes I just come to the
> conclusion that that is how they are wired, and I think despite having some programs
> and policies and that type of thing in the organization I find at the end of it, it is very
> difficult to change people's hearts. When in government we have to follow a policy or

abide by a certain guideline, they are just doing it to adhere to that standard sometimes, whether it is genuine or not, that's a whole other question. (male, senior leader)

Taylorism continues to be reflecting in workplace to this day. "He sought to convert the process of management from an art form…to a 'true science', resting upon clearly defined laws, rules, and principles, as a foundation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.127). Organizations need to follow policies to guide and organize expected behaviours. Therefore, policies give us guidelines to follow and processes to follow. The open heartedness of kindness, a 'heart connection' cannot be written into this way of managing. The discussion on institutional norms is an example of a barrier to kindness. Kindness is not presently institutionalized within bureaucracy; in contrast, there are systems and process for grievances to be filed. By using the functionalist needs for structures and objective values and systems that manage outputs, kindness may in fact be perceived as a machine-like mechanism for organizational success. Always though, at risk, when making kindness understood as only a sentiment and then a rule, there becomes a need to quantify emotions.

Another person shared an oft quoted policy concern, "*Stop writing policies to the lowest common denominator.*" Thus, to imagine kinder policies or different policies, would require stepping outside the processes presently in place. Even the physical structure of an office environment can impede kindness, *"Office space is very grey, it's pretty depressing, fluorescent lights, grey walls."* Building office environments, structuring offices, cubicles and meeting rooms can help or hinder this desire for providing opportunities for expression, for silence and interaction in addition to productivity.

There are also obvious places where kindness research already exists in the functionalist arena. The term kindness is found or approximated, for example, in organization psychology in the self-kindness subscale from the Self-Compassion Scale (Lahtinen, et al., 2016);

organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988); organizational spontaneity (George & Brief,

1992); prosocial behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1993); and positive organization behavior

(Luthans, 2002). In these examples, the term kindness is linked to particular behaviours. For

example, George and Brief (1992) wrote about feeling good-doing good through a study of

organizational spontaneity. They built their study by homing in on spontaneity, one of the three

essential types of behavior (spontaneous, attracting and holding people in the system and

dependable role performance) which had been determined by Katz (1964) as being essential for a

functioning organization. Organizational Spontaneity takes the form of extra-role behaviors that

are performed voluntarily (voluntarily speaks to choice and presents the behavior as being

optional). The extra-role behaviours contributing to organizational effectiveness (George &

Brief, 1992, p. 311). Katz (1964) defines five forms of organizational spontaneity as 1. Helping

co-workers 2. Protecting the organization 3. Making constructive suggestions 4. Developing

oneself, and 5. Spreading goodwill.

In the organizations studied, employees consistently discuss the growing awareness of

psychological health and safety yet question managers' authenticity. And managers, in

discussing new expectations in relation to psychological health and safety used language such as,

I am not a counsellor and *That is not my job*. Staff have said, *"It feels like they [managers] are*

just ticking off a box." In defining kindness as *linking of self to other*, the act of such open

heartedness is not obviously aligned with the notion of ticking a box, or focusing on the bottom

line, or on outputs, or on productivity. This lack of authenticity, or lack of trust in the

authenticity of the manager, ties in thematically to the idea that both the system, as well as the

identity employees and managers hold and judge about the other, are either kind or unkind.

In present day, Nova Scotian public service discourse, there are lines drawn daily

between what is in place; what is structured, and what is changing. One obvious example is in the area of workplace flexibility. In one department, flexible work hours and flexible work options (working from home, working from a mobile location, working from another government office in another town, compressed work weeks and two-week not three-week earned day off cycles) are the norm. In another department, flexible work arrangements made for new mothers, anxious workers, workers who are also students, are kept off the record, informal arrangements versus openly accommodated supports built into the workday structure with the intention of supporting the health and well-being of workers. The secretiveness of these informal arrangements are a barrier to structural change; the system has the ability to respond in an intentionally kind way to individual worker needs. These informal arrangements are in direct opposition to the functionalist paradigm focus on actions that are tied to a reasonable, rational explanation. "The world of work is treated as a world of hard concrete reality characterized by uniformities and regularities which can be understood in terms of cause and effect (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 130). A place "concerned with analyzing society in a way which produces useful knowledge" (Hassard, 1991, p. 277).

      Theories of bureaucratic dysfunctions – Theme: Unkind systems and structures.

      Often, in addition to written policies and guidelines, there are also unwritten expectations of behaviours/invisible guidelines/a system of behaving, that dictate a culture for employees: "Part of the challenge of about being kind is trying not taking things in the workplace personal, key issues that may arise don't personalize them" (male, Senior Leader).

      This response fits into the stereotypical bureaucratic response of rule following and regulation so we don't have to think of people as people and their complex needs, "Man is no more than a machine" (ibid, 130). This means the new mother returning to work after her

maternity leave who drops her child off at day care at 6:30 before commuting for an hour to miss

the city traffic; the staff member going through a divorce who is distracted and has an accident

on the way to work; a person living with their ailing father and needing to take him to numerous

medical appointments throughout the work week, all these workers bringing their personal lives

into the workplace every day have no safe place – their normal lives are contrary to institutional

norms. These personal issues are denied a place in this objective-regulated perspective. This

objective-regulated way of working is in a way codifying and legitimizing "standards of

behaviour" that negate individualism.

Key features of bureaucracy, what Merton references as 'ritualism' (Merton, 1968) shows

behaviours is governed by an almost compulsive adherence to institutional norms (in this case

bureaucratic rules and regulations. (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 185).

Another Deputy Minister realizes, "*I am not positive I would get negative feedback.*"

This awareness of position and power as a barrier to "truth telling" highlights the limitations of

the organization (Merton, 1968, p. 252 in Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 185). Job classification

was also an issue for one union member, "A PR 20 (NSGEU job classification) should have a

larger scope of work that a PR 14 and there are many, many examples of people being in a

classification and being asked to do things that are so far below or above that it's disrespectful,

and it makes people feel, you feel churlish because you can't refuse or if you do refuse you are

made to feel like an unhelpful person." Again, we see Merton's "unanticipated consequences" of

regulation.

In the interpretation of kindness reflecting the ontological perspective of Functionalist

theory, two important points stand out based on the interviews and subjects' experiences of the

systems and structures in their organization. One, the resistance to kindness as an organizational

value, as a word to use in the workplace, as a way to think about work and working, *"I would*

never use the word kindness" states a male senior leader. Secondly, the acknowledgement that

the workplace is unkind, "*it is unkind to not follow the rules and processes you set in place*

particularly when it comes to casual to term to permanent. I think it is unkind to say you have

fair hiring policies then not show accountability whether you are implementing them or not"

says a female union member. Conflict is central to the theory of bureaucratic dysfunction

(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 208). This employee brings to light her conflicted work experience

and also her resistance to engage in the conflict.

Deputy Ministers and senior leaders in the public service did not use the work "kindness"

often. They seemed uncomfortable with applying the concept in a work context or did not

believe it had a place in the work they did. This fits into the functionalist acceptance of the status

quo, being objective and regulating behaviors based on how behaviors were regulated before.

The discussion with public servants on kindness to self typically led to laughter, extended

pauses, and then examples of how they were kind to others. This attention to individuals is

important in the study of kindness and yet absent in both the literature and numerous interviews.

Could care of oneself, individuals caring and being kind to themselves, be the key to social

solidarity, a new kind of Durkheim's "conscience collective"?

The importance of order – Theme: Kindness is an action.

Another connection to the functionalist paradigm is the importance of order. This was

apparent through the responses given to questions of kindness in their organization which were

filled with seemingly conflicting answers: answers including acknowledging the recognition of

kindness as a value and also the difficulty of fitting kindness into an organizational context. For

example, an active union member states: "Kindness is somewhat of a subjective thing, to be

kind, is ah, in the context of labour management relations there is two opposites, you can't get

around that part" (male, union member).

> *While a senior leader says, "I'm a tough nut, and I'm very upfront. I deal with issues right away and it's important for me to have a balance and understand that even though that's how I behave that I can have a really tough conversation and be totally fine and really good with people but I learned years ago I have a tolerance level that a lot of others don't have. I'm okay with that conversation but other people aren't; they are hurt or offended. (Female senior leader)*

> When the Premier asks, "*Why don't people hold the door open anymore?"* he is seeking

examples of his understanding of an ordered expression of kindness in society. A male, Senior

Leader conceptualizes kindness through a hierarchical structure of organizations: "I think

kindness in a culture is in some ways… starts from the top… You hope your boss treats you that

way, then you'll treat your employees that way right? So, it's a culture that needs to start at the

top." When this female union member reflects,

> "When I think about kindness I think about intention versus action… Kindness is when someone is conscious of both their actions and their intentions, whether it is a person or an institution when I'm doing self-reflection on my own behavior or events that I've been part of I ask myself what was my action and the intent of my action?"

The regulation of kindness – Theme: Kindness as action and kindness as identity.

Kindness is understood as a series of behaviours that regulate actions and interactions

between individuals. This theme emerged strongly from the interviews.

> Kindness is a way of being with people, it's respect and being helpful and just being nice in all of those old community definitions of the word nice. Recognizing people for their contributions, smiling in the morning and saying hello how are you, being good to your neighbours knowing what is going on in people's lives so you say and do what is appropriate to them in those circumstances. (female, union)

> Kindness is not passive aggressive, kindness is not ignoring people, it's not, not asking difficult questions because you don't want to get into it with people, kindness is not, not knowing the name of people you have worked with for 15 years, kindness is not, not smiling at the receptionist on the way in in the morning, kindness is not looking at the carpet as you walk past someone so you don't have to engage with them. (female, union)

> Kindness? I would say being respectful to others um, like you hope they do unto you. Respectful... treating folks with dignity, understanding... Not that it's not easy to be kind, it's just, maybe it's human nature, maybe you're a little more flippant with people you're in a rush or you're on deadlines, uh... it's less about kindness and more about "I need this tech thing", right? My style has always been, and I never thought of it as kindness, per se... for me it's more about respect and understanding for folks. But guess in some ways it is kindness for folks and it's more about who you are and your leadership style as well. I know I'd say if you're more collaborative as opposed to authoritative; there is more respect and kindness just by the way you operate. (male, Senior Leader)

> Kindness, you don't stop to think, you just act... and it can be on all level, whether on support or just a smile. An act of kindness, support, understanding, they all go hand in hand. It should be very basic. Shouldn't have to think about it. (female, administrative, EC)

The phrase, "*shouldn't have to think about it*" is important to observe. This language is a way to regulate expected behavior, it is understood, it is the norm, it is not a choice or an individual desire rather an understood expectation. This supports the theme of kindness as plausible; an unquestioned belief.

Framework of action theme – Theme: Kindness as identity, kindness as action.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) note this perspective is the most subjectivist boundary of the functionalist paradigm and in concert with behavioural symbolic interactionism has resulted in a fusion between positivist and idealist approaches to social science. Ontologically, in the tradition of behavioural symbolic interactionism, society is seen as being prior to self, but the individual is accorded a creative role in the production of self, or at least the impression of self, created as a result of performance management (ibid, p. 191). Social interactionism (SI) is the offspring of German phenomenology (Husserl, 1960; Simmel, 1950) and American pragmatism, emerging largely out of the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1934; 1977) and Charles Horton Cooley (1918). … SI emphasis on individual sensemaking, expressed through its detailed development of the role of self in the construction of reality (Prasad, 2005, p. 19).

This production/impression/management/development of self, links to the theme of kindness as an identity. A female, senior leader expressed this identity and performance management through the following comment, *"As I get older I'm more aware of it [finding a balance] and I'm more aware of like, it's okay to be selfish sometimes and kind of take care of yourself first."* What is enlightening about this comment is how *the self as worker* what she understood before as selflessness - she was worker, that is, hers*elf* was understood and defined as worker and her changing 'performance' to taking care of herself was constructed under the guise of selfishness.

Another woman in the union thinking about kindness as a culture expectation, *"It has to be an expectation, it has to be written as the way we behave. It has to be explicit, this is kindness, and if we have to teach people then maybe we have to teach people."* Here the self is in need of reconstruction, the role of the self may be in conflict with the role of the organization in creating a culture of care that names kindness as a requirement and therefore individuals might need to learn the role of a kind worker. Or be taught a set of behaviours that standardize or codify what is meant by "kindness", making the invisible explicit.

Barriers and Ways Forward from a Functionalist Lens

Institutional norms (or corporate culture) provide examples where barriers to kindness are greatest. Yet its absence from the institution of bureaucracy, may be the most logical method to move forward. That is, by using the functionalist needs for structures and objective values and systems that manage outputs, kindness may in fact be perceived as a machine-like mechanism for organizational success. The challenge would be to codify kindness as a set of actions, behaviours or policies that are measurable and achievable.

1. Taking the beliefs embedded in this managerialist point of view, "There is scarcely an organizational variable which has not been measured in some form and even correlated with itself in the objectivist search for 'significant' relationships which eventually will prove determinant (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 163) and finding significance. For example, the organization studied commits to an inter-jurisdictional, evidence-based, bi-annual *How's Work Going?* Survey. This engagement survey highlights employee engagement and productivity scores and resulting areas of concern are actioned through for example, specific training, increased communication or resource enhancements.

2. Integrating sensemaking into organizations as a tool to measure employee's perception of organizational actions and engagement. This ongoing sensemaking would allow decisions to be made more nimbly between formalized engagement processes such as the *How's Work Going?* Survey.

3. Introduce and develop kindness as a leadership competency. Presently there are HR policies that define harassment, bullying and respectful workplaces – what workplaces do not want. Adding behaviours and defining what kindness and caring could mean would enhance expectations for leadership.

4. Expand Occupational Health and Safety to include not only physical health but psychological well-being. This change can be seen in the organization studied which introduced a new Workplace Health and Safety Promotion policy to replace a decades old Occupational Health and Safety policy and includes the following as its policy objective:

> The promotion of workplace health, safety and wellness focuses on the *factors that are within the responsibility of the employer*. When every reasonable effort is made to work in a *caring* and collaborative manner *to protect employees' physical and psychological health*, there is a positive impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. This leads to employees feeling respected and empowered.

The Department is responsible for the health and safety of its employees and will make every effort to provide a physically and psychologically safe and healthy work environment. The Department is dedicated to the objective of eliminating (or mitigating when eliminating is not possible) the possibility of physical or psychological injury and illness, through alignment with the Corporate Workplace Health and Safety Promotion Policy.

The *success of this policy requires regular communication on the topic of health, safety and wellness* within the Department and the *maintenance of an open dialogue among all employees that will promote a positive health and safety culture* within the Department through employee engagement. *emphasis added

The use of such language as *work in a caring and collaborative manner* and

responsibility and *protect employees physical and psychological health* and *open dialogue* and

promoting a positive health and safety culture speak to an organization focused on wellbeing and

on productivity seeking a kinder culture through employee care. This attends to the barrier noted

of unkind systems as well as the plausibility of kindness and that kindness requires action and

ultimately could be understood as an organizational identity.

5. In April 2014, Nova Scotia adopted the National Standard for Psychological Health and

    Safety in the Workplace. To advance this initiative, Nova Scotia's PSC and the Nova

    Scotia Government and General Employees Union announced in April 2018 the creation

    of a New Office of Workplace Mental Health to promote and support mental health and

    wellness in government workplaces. The new office opened in October 2018 and is a

    three-year pilot project with a team of eight employees. The office has an annual budget

    of approximately $1.3 million, funded through the Employment Insurance premium

    rebate that the Province receives from Service Canada. The Office is centered around

    navigation services to help connect employees to appropriate mental health resources and

    help managers support employees at varying stages of mental health. The office number

    is 902-424-CARE and a toll-free number, 1-833-389-CARE.

    In this example, there is a systematic action being taken to finance a service

which highlights a response to unkind systems and processes as well as kindness as an identity

for the organization being valued through resourcing makes kindness as plausible.

6. Train employees, for example, the Nova Scotia Public Service Commission (PSC) has

    offered a training program for government staff since 2015, called The Working Mind:

    Workplace Mental Health and Wellness. This is an education-based program designed to

    address and promote mental health and reduce the stigma of mental illness in a workplace

    setting. The Working Mind is based on the Department of National Defense's Road to

    Mental Readiness program and was developed by the Mental Health Commission of

    Canada. It was funded in partnership with the NS Community College and the Capital

    District Health Authority. Thousands of employees have participated in The Working

    Mind and The Working Mind for First Responders, and the program continues to expand

    to support departmental delivery.

    In this example, the identity of the organization is broadening and attaching to the

concept of care for employees' mental health (ongoing identity) and actively engaging in training

and communication to reach employees and the employer (kind actions). This training could be

broadened to include MBA classes on kindness to enhance management and organizational

scholars thinking on this area.

Kindness from an Interpretivist Perspective

The interpretivist paradigm brings theorists of all schools of thought who tend to share a

common perspective, in that their primary concern is to understand the subjective experiences of

individuals (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 253). The individual, making sense of their

experiences and understanding of kindness brings into light their own social reality. Social

reality, although possessing order and regulation, does not possess an external concrete

form…for the interpretive analyst, the social world is best understood from the viewpoint of the

participant-in-action (Hassard, 1991, p. 277). Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 261) write of

interpretivist researchers seeking, "to show how the supposedly hard, concrete, tangible and

'real' aspects of organizational life are dependent upon the subjective constructions of individual

human beings." How then do the themes of kindness mix and mingle within this individualized

construction of kindness? In this section, the theorists, the themes and also individuals are

presented. This paradigm highlights four categories of interpretive theory: phenomenology,

phenomenological sociology, hermeneutics and degrees of solipsism.

Phenomenology subjective understanding of kindness – Kindness as an identity.

Kant and Husserl, "reality exists not in some tangible, identifiable outside world but in

human consciousness itself… how we order, classify, structure and interpret our world…

(Prasad, 2005, p. 13).

> These public servants sound like Husserl scholars:
> …we always have those times where we say, I'm going to be kind to you because I'm not
> going to tell you what I really think. But the person on the other side of the desk still
> doesn't see that as kindness. They don't understand your thought process either, right?
> They don't understand what's in your head and the message you really want to relay to
> them. But you think you're being kind by not telling them what you really wanna say to
> them. I think that we're all human, right, we're all individuals. Interpretation is always up
> to the individual. So, I can interpret something one way and you can interpret it another
> way, I may think I'm being kind and you could think I'm not being kind. (male, Senior
> leader)
>
> I used to think, kinda, not to get religious here right, but to do unto others through that
> work I realized it isn't that, because what I would perceive as kindness because of my
> upbringing and my cultural background may not be perceived as kindness to others.
> (male, Senior Leader).

These two senior leaders are grappling with their version of kindness and how it can be

misinterpreted. Their intention is to be kind and yet there is the awareness that it may not in fact

be interpreted by another as kindness.

When people defined kindness as an individual construct, their answers contained

comments such as, "understanding people and taking the time to know what's important to them

and what affects their life. "I guess kindness would be different to everyone, right?" from one

male Senior Leader and another female Senior Leader says, "I think we do kindness every day if

that's our bent but you wouldn't necessarily line it up with work. I'm very old school when it

comes to work."

The phrase, *if that's our bent* is a perfect example of how we bring *a priori*

understandings through the doors of the workplace. Someone else puts their *a priori*

understanding of kindness this way, "*To me, we do things and we don't even think of them as*

being kind."

> I guess for me at its heart, it's how you treat each other with respect and dignity and some
> sense of who the other person is. I guess you could say something to one person that is
> kind and say the exact same thing to another person and they might take it as unkind
> because they are in a different headspace or a different time in their life or have a
> different age, stage of life, different intellectual capacity. (male, Senior leader)

There is the subjective understanding of kindness, "while we are individually engaged in

acts of sensemaking, these acts are significantly mediated by the cognitive schema and language

that we obtain from our wider societies" (Prasad, 2005, p. 14).

What are the ideal types of kindness? Theme: Kindness as action.

Ideal types incorporate the 'spirit' which characterizes individual phenomena into a wider

generalized form (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). It is interesting to think about how ideal types in

organizational relations have developed based on stereotypes. There is the efficient and caring

secretary, the controlling but benevolent leader, the busy and committed worker to name three

ideal types which serve various purposes within a hierarchical bureaucracy. When an archetype

is named "kind", there is resistance, I heard this most often from the men I interviewed: *"I don't*

think about kindness" "*Kindness is not a word I use*" "*Kindness is….*" Which is in stark contrast

to the numerous ways women in the public service saw the ideal type of kindness: "I think it

means having respect for others, treating them how you would like to be treated and being

sensitive to their situations and their own challenges and being responsive and caring." (female,

Senior Leader)

> I would say that it means that you feel cared for, that someone's thought about your feelings, it's how someone makes you feel rather than, there's a quote that I love, I think it's from Maya Angelou – they won't remember what you say, it's how you make them feel. I guess, it's thoughtfulness, our neighbor plowed our driveway out I thought that was pretty kind or somebody just coming in and saying, seems like you've had a crazy week how are you doing? How can I help? (female, EC)

> One male, senior leader tied kindness to altruism.

> I was first going to just recite the golden rule do unto others as you want them to do unto you but that's not really kindness as much as it is respect. Kindness to me involves a certain amount of altruism like I'm doing it almost doing it purely for your self-interest not mine so it has a higher level of giving, kind of heady but it's an altruistic act, it's going beyond your interests to improve the circumstances of someone else. (male, Senior leader)

These references to kindness highlight the struggle to define how to be kind within an

organizational context. There are contradictory concepts of what kindness can mean. This aligns

with Weber's "ideal type" (Weber, 1978; Parsons, 1947) whether it is the notion of workplace

relationships, debate, discussion, feelings and actions. How one leader *can be totally fine* but

those on her team *are hurt or offended* emphasizes the subjective construction of experiences and

the subjective interpretation of a behaviour or set of actions.

Phenomenological sociology – Theme: Kindness as unquestioned belief.

Within this category, Burrell and Morgan distinguish ethnomethodology a term invented

by Harold Garfinkel who acknowledges an intellectual debt to Husserl, Schutz and Parson

(Burrell G. and Morgan, G. 1979, p. 249) and phenomenological symbolic interactionism and the

work of G.H. Mead. Schutz acknowledges the work of Weber and subjective meaning and goes

deeper into the phenomenon of the lived experience. Garfinkel takes lived experience to another

point; ethnomethodology is more concerned with *immediate*, *interactive* contexts in which

actions and conversations take place (Prasad, 2005, p. 67) connects with the theme of kindness as

action to others and for others as well as the theme of kindness as an unquestioned belief. The

ease for many respondents of expressing what kindness meant to them and the discomfort of

others is an example of this taken-for-grantedness of an under-examined subject.

Phenomenological symbolic interactionists are more concerned with studying the way in

which social reality reflects a precarious balance of intersubjectively shared meanings, which are

continually negotiated, sustained and changed through the everyday interaction of individual

human beings (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 253). One area in the study of kindness and *sustained*

meanings is how kindness and gender interact.

Feminine relationship to kindness and to power – Theme: Kindness as identity and

kindness as plausible.

"People see kindness as weakness" (male, Senior Leader)

Often, kindness reified as feminine, as female and as weakness adding another layer to

the complexity of being kind in the workplace. Reifications are crucial because they can turn us

into prisoners of our own social construction (Prasad, 2005, p. 16).

> I think there was at least when I started my career, I talked about the childless, single
> women being successful but also the women who could be like men, so they could show
> up in their power suits and be aggressive and not necessarily demonstrate kindness in a
> female way and be caring and nurturing and compassionate, that was not valued. The
> women who were successful were the women who could be just like men and now there
> is an understanding that female-based leadership shows up a little differently. (female,
> Senior Leader)

Kindness as female, as *absence of self, caring, nurturing, compassionate*. Women who were successful were *women who could be just like men* and a female leader noting her attachment to the identity of being old school, a term that references the past, the traditional, hierarchical, gendered way of working. From an Interpretive perspective, the ontological lens is about valuing and engaging in kindness to self and to others at work. It is valued and the value given to being kind comes from a personal, individual decision and belief which may or may not be valued by others in the same way. Nonetheless, there is a commitment from this perspective to make a place and a space for kindness in the workplace.

Another component of the phenomenological symbolic interactionists and Mead's contribution is the understanding of self and its implications for meaningful social action. …The human capacity to objectify oneself, that is, to "see" oneself in social situations is key to understanding the process of sense making and reality construction (Prasad, 2005, p. 20).

Hermeneutics - Themes: Kindness is plausible, an unquestioned belief.

Hermeneutics for Dilthey was essentially a methodology for studying the objectifications of the mind (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 236) and the hermeneutic circle. The notion of *verstehen* Gadamer added to hermeneutics seeing it as "a universal mode of philosophy" and subjective understanding (ibid, p. 238). Where Dilthey saw texts as the key element, Gadamer focused on language, language being an expression of the mode of 'being in the world' (ibid, p. 238). The theme of kindness as plausible was presented in a multitude of ways during the interviews and fits well within hermeneutics. Hermeneutic interpretation "frames human insight as a methodological resource rather than as a liability" (Hirshchman, 1990, p. 33). Some interviewees were quite specific on ways that they understood kindness to self.

When I think about how I am kind to myself, how do I create conditions for myself to thrive and to be myself, how can I be me, and be well and in my experience, that isn't something that is created for me, it's something I have had to create for myself… It starts in my office space… [it is] completely mechanistic and not human and certainly doesn't reflect individuals and so one thing in the psychical space, it's critical for my emotional, mental and spiritual well-being to create a place that is me, with plants, pictures and for me, inspirational kinds of saying, cushions on my chairs for my guest, I always have a lamp light, those things are really important…(female, EC)

Kindness to myself at work is having the freedom to work on the thing I want to work on and the time to work on them… Kindness in some ways is internalizing what I know to be healthy practices and being able to do that. So, if I need an afternoon to not do much because I have been so busy, I consciously do that when possible. (male, Senior Leader)

Having an uninviting physical space or a busy, booked schedule is understood as unkind, creating the opposite is kind, "our prejudices are unavoidable for our interpretations (Gadamer in Prasad, 2005, p. 33). These workers knew what kindness meant for their well-being.

I can have a good, a tough level of debate and discussion and that just be part of the discussion and be good, so the environment I create has to be respective of where other people sit and I need to understand that so I don't think everything is good and they're like holy cow. (male, Senior leader)

This person interprets understanding as kindness, tough conversations are valued but they worry about other interpretations of these discussions. Here kindness is questioned or rather kindness is clear for the speaker but the kindness in a work environment that has tough talks may not be so clear for others which makes the speaker seek validation of his interpretations of the work experiences.

The speaker below is struggling with not just the meaning of kindness but resisting its place *"I'm very old school"* referencing a divide between her being and her doing, her interpretation of work is different that her understanding of kindness/being kind.

Kindness to me has to be directed from one person to another person. It has to be some kind of overt act that recognizes another person. Mostly to me, kindness would be, uhm, (pause) I don't know, it could take any form, but you're just basically, mostly it's verbal, your primary way of showing kindness is verbal, recognition that something is going on in another person's life on a level that is sort of beyond work…I'm very old school when

it comes to work, I guess if you think about it that way work is where you go and give all that kind of stuff, I'm not saying kindness doesn't have a role. It's not something that would have been put into my language, as a kind of manager. There's a lot of words you can apply you know, I think kindness is an interesting one, that's one way of interpersonal relationship, in any relationship, so it makes people more real to one another. (female, Senior leader)

Solipsism – Theme: Kindness as an identity and kindness is plausible.

Solipsism borders both the interpretive paradigm and radical humanist. For the interpretive paradigm Burrell and Morgan simplify solipsism as the world is the creation of his [sic] mind (p. 239) and note it presenting a potential danger to social theorists who wish to develop social theories with a subjective emphasis (ibid, p. 239). Thinking of the theme of kindness as social, and an ongoing identity and the theme of kindness as action can tie to solipsism. Because the construct of kindness can be completely individual – how someone understands and acts "kindly" is determined by themselves for themselves which makes kindness possibly irrelevant or impossible from this perspective. Burrell and Morgan caution about the danger of solipsism and developing social theories from a subjective perspective as there is a risk "of being grounded on the 'reef of solipsism', of entering an entirely individual and subjectivist view of reality in which no meaningful discourse is possible (ibid, p. 240). More discussion on Sartre's 'reef of solipsism' in the following section on Radical Humanism.

Barriers and Ways Forward from an Interpretivist Lens

Interpretivism and kindness can be presented as concepts or perspectives that are grounded in social construction. An obvious barrier to kindness is the interpretation each individual holds in relationship to the concept of kindness, from a confident declaration of kindness as being powerful from one senior leader to another senior leader, shaking his head and speaking with sincerity saying, "I have never thought about kindness at work". Another barrier from this perspective is the misalignment of personal values, ("I value kindness") to perceived

cultural values or written organizational values, both potentially being enacted differently and

interpreted differently by employees, managers and senior leaders. This barrier can be

understood as a barrier of interpretation, based on individual, *a priori* understanding of the

concept of kindness.

And yet, this paradigm, with its social world focus allows kindness to be valued as an

ingredient in social construction, with a "focus on the 'lifeworld of social construction'" (Schutz,

1967 in Hassard, 1991).

Constructions of kindness in the workplace could include:

1. Individual needs being actualized such as flexible work options (start time and location)

   to meet the needs of individuals, space and time to enact self-care (i.e. meditation,

   exercise).

2. Performance goals as part of an annual development process become based on these

   individual needs so the plan is based on both personal well-being and growth (such as

   exercise and meditation noted above) as well as requisite training for expected work

   outcomes.

3. Attention to kindness at work for individuals through workplace opportunities for

   individual reflection, training and awareness could provide deeper attachment to the

   concept of kindness for employees.

4. Making self-care a role expectation would enhance our understanding of kindness in the

   workplace.

5. Networking opportunities: In the organization studied, employees brought together

   networks of like-minded workers. Two examples are the African Canadian women in

   Public Service (ACWPS) aims include ensuring equity of opportunity in employment,

promotion and professional development for African Canadian women in the Nova Scotia Public Service. It is guided by Nova Scotia Public Service and Afrocentric principles and provides a forum for networking, mentoring and validation of shared experiences[3]. Also, the Nova Scotia Service Disability Employee Network (NSDEN) which promotes an accountable and responsive public service that values people with disabilities, demonstrates innovation, and empowers employees to bring their whole selves to work (broadcast email to all staff, March 5, 2019). This highlights how employees "see" themselves and understanding the process of sense making and reality construction (Prasad, 2005).

Adding kindness to organizational and management studies from an interpretive lens would mean MOS scholars thinking, researching, writing, teaching, and presenting about the concept of kindness. This sounds simplistic or obvious, but it would have a profound impact on future theorizing and growth in management and organizational studies if kindness at work became a subject of inquiry in the ways say, popular culture or Anti-History, spirituality at work or airlines are presently studied.

Kindness from a Radical Humanist Perspective

The radical humanist paradigm moves away from regulation into radical change while still remaining subjective. This paradigm, like interpretivism is founded on the notion that the individual creates the world in which he [sic] lives (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 279). Radical humanism focuses on the essentially alienated state of man and follow two discourses that of a subjective idealist and objectivist idealism. This is paradigm brings thinkers who critique the

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[3] https://acwps.novascotia.ca/

status quo. There are four broad areas: Solipsism, French existentialism, Anarchist individualism

and Critical Theory. Within critical theory, Burrell and Morgan discuss Lukácsian sociology,

Gramsci's sociology and the Frankfurt School.

Critical theory – Themes: Kindness as identity, kindness as action (to self), kindness

is plausible.

Marx's influence reigns throughout Critical Theory, "all of the critical traditions are

deeply indebted to the spirit and philosophy of Karl Marx… 'philosophers have only *interpreted*

the world in various ways, the point is to *change* it'" (qt. in Prasad, 2005, p.109). Changes

brought by attention and value to kindness in the workplace could be quite radical. And could

begin with oneself. Consciousness is the driving force; it is the essence of radical humanism

(Mills, 1990). Thus, a revolution of consciousness calls for connection to self, making that

connection, "a norm for self-reflection which will strengthen and enable the change process to

continue" (Bradshaw-Camball, 1990, p 255). The change process based on three of the kindness

themes identified through the interviews: identity, plausibility, actioning what could become a

radical act – being kind to oneself.

The radical nature of being kind to oneself became clearer and clearer as I asked the

question, "How are you kind to yourself?" and was told over and over again: "I don't often see it

that I'm being kind to myself. I'm not sure what that would mean?" (female, administrative,

union).

Gramsci sociology.

I believe what Gramsci believed, that a 'philosophy of praxis' of the kindness kind,

"would contain in in itself all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integral

conception of the world [a kinder, healthier work world too] (Gramsci in Burrell & Morgan,

1979, p. 289). Gramsci's belief in the power of the individual, that consciousness is a "concrete

force for political end." (ibid, p. 289) disrupts "ideological hegemony… always seek to

legitimate its power through the creation and perpetuation of a belief system which stresses the

need for order, authority and discipline, and consciously attempts to emasculate protest and

revolutionary potential (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 289).

Lukácsian sociology – Theme: Kindness is action, unkind systems and structures.

This individual power, the power too of the proletariat again brings to light the individual

kindness decision making, kindness as identity and kindness as action as well as the potential for

kindness in systems and structures. Lukácsians seek to change the world; their epistemology and

methodology blend to form a body of thought which seeks not general laws for future

contemplation but practical methods for radically transforming society here and now (Burrell &

Morgan, 1979, p. 288). Practical methods of radically transforming society could begin with

kindness to self. Then, when thinking of the objective and subjective dimensions within social

reality and the class consciousness of the proletariat (ibid, p. 287) it becomes, individual workers

caring for themselves, beyond the sleep more, eat better, meditate care but rather care in relation

to the expectation of their job and their work, boundaries in relationship to the work days and in

relationship to technology demands, communication to include individualized needs, and work-

related concerns. Kindness could create the radical transformation Lukác longed for.

> I don't know what that is. (Laughter) I don't know how to answer that. I think I try to, I
> think I try to you know, in what I'm doing, no matter what it is, and how difficult it may
> be, I try to have a bit of fun doing it in the sense, I don't know if fun is the right word,
> but, you can't let the burden of responsibility just keep you depressed all the time…I find
> at the end of it, and I think the greatest thing someone can do to be kind to themselves is
> just make sure that you're making the decision for all the right reasons even if they are
> bad. Even if at the end of the day they're bad. (Premier)

This confusion and uncertainty of what an act of kindness to self means through all levels

of the bureaucracy feels important because it shows such a gap between worker as worker and

worker as human. This gap, this non-valuing, unclear, unappreciated relationship to self is shared

by many. As is the laughter before responding.

This resistance to kindness to self leads me to thinking about alienation. How is it that

these workers are alienated from themselves to such a degree that kindness to self is

incomprehensible? Not just an unexamined mystery or a new, novel idea but in this senior

leader's case, kindness is seen as being suspicious.

> Kindness to yourself, that's really interesting. I don't have any familiarity with that one.
> I'm too hard on myself. I've always been. I don't know what that means, I don't know
> what it encompasses. I would be suspicious of it – does it mean you forgive yourself for
> failure over and over? I'm a big cynic when it comes to really soft skills because some
> people can take advantage of them. (female, Senior Leader)

The concept of reification, "day-to-day productive activities create the social world and,

these activities and what results from them are seen as divorced from men [sic], independent,

objectified 'things' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 287). This then becomes the work of a kindness

revolution – when the day-to-day productive activities are questioned, when one becomes

married to self, to work and to others at work. The disruption of the de rigueur, ideological

hegemony in a bureaucracy - work over worker is what needs to be disrupted for true change. I

sense this kindness revolution at work begins with kindness to self and with the possibility of a

new "code" of behaviour that includes concepts like kindness.

When one observes the perceived belief systems within an organization and the lack of

questioning given to these systems, it can represent an ideological hegemony, the very definition

of domination and power (Weber, 1978, p. 942). A recent work example highlights this point.

The introduction of a corporate flexible work program was poorly communicated to the

leadership in one department (opinions shared with me). This disruption to the ordered work

times of employees plus the presenter of the new pilot program, the one who communicated the

change lacked a structurally recognized authority within the hierarchy of the organization meant

the proposal was rejected by a Deputy Minister leading a department of over 500 employees. The

outcome? Workers and managers now seek flexible work arrangements that are couched in terms

like "a pilot" or "short term" to remain acceptable. The biggest ideological break that could

happen in the Nova Scotia Public Service would be the realization that kindness to workers

translates to higher productivity. This mind shift would impact multiple expressions of

resistance, such as, the ongoing passive-aggressive protests at work through systematic sick time,

using work time for non-work-related activities, presenteeism (Gosselin, et al, 2013). With

attention to kindness, might all these daily, tangible forms of the proletariat revolution quietly

humming along within the walls of a structured authority and union strictures change?

Frankfurt school – Theme: kindness as action.

The Frankfurt School with multiple scholars (Horkheimer, Adorono, Marcuse, Benjamin,

Pollack, Lowenthal and Fromm and later Habermas) diving deeply into Marxism, "aimed to

reveal the nature of capitalist society for what it is… and set the basis for social change through

the revolution of consciousness (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 291). Prasad notes the Frankfurt

School never spoke with a unified voice nor did any theorists within the school claim to have

developed a systematic approach to cultural criticism (Prasad, 2005 p. 137) and continues…what

the Frankfurt School really did was to privilege the more *subjective* elements of Marx's writing

(p. 139). There are a number of interesting offerings from the Frankfurt School that can be

applied to this study of kindness.

First, in many ways, the ideology-critique of the Frankfurt School sets up the study of

kindness. If there is a belief in kindness as a human value, that kindness is a conscious act, good,

and inherently positive part of being human and expressing ones' humanity. This ideology, when

put into practice creates a lens of critique on the structures in organizations that are not

inherently kind or built with an intended consequence of kindness. Secondly, those who are

resistors to kindness may bring an *instrumental reason* to their thinking of its place at work. That

is, Adorno and Horkeimer (1972) concept which Prasad names as "among the more evocative

and radical contributions to radical theory (ibid, p. 143) taking a cultural view of formal

knowledge as being (a) detached from everyday human existence and (b) intended to *control*

nature, people and social arrangements (p. 144). When the control shifts to establishing

"alternative organizational realties and critiquing the present reality in light of the alternatives"

(Bradshaw-Cambell, 1990) then the kindness can be attached and valued in the workplace.

When someone says they are kind to themselves, *"It's a strange way to reference how*

I'm kind to myself - I referee basketball and my wife and I enjoy reading together." (Senior

Leader, male) his kindness is coming outside of himself, through an activity outside of his work.

The third area of kindness, or rather unkindness thinking in relation to the work of the Frankfurt

School comes from the work of Habermas (1984) and the theory of communicative action.

Habermas, believing the structure of language, its nature and use, provide a key with which to

unlock many insights into the fundamental mode of operation of different social formations

(Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 295). This attention to language connects to the theme of kindness

as unquestioned, the 'communicative competence' Habermas uses seeking a consensus, 'an ideal

speech situation' versus 'communicative distortion' with and without power speaks to the

choices workers and particularly leaders make to engage in kindness discussion or not. This

communicative action also can be seen through the two examples below on the theme of

kindness as identity.

Earlier, an excerpt was shared highlighting the gendered nature of kindness from a male

perspective. A male Senior Leader, sharing a story about a workplace review within a highly

gendered male workspace.

> To see those guys on the floor interact with their coworkers, you know, they're tough, they're cursing and then to sit down, most of those guys were kind, although that wasn't the image they projected or wanted to project. Some people see it as a character flaw.

> Like all identities, masculine selves constantly have to be constructed, negotiated and

achieved both in the workplace and elsewhere (Collinson, 2003, p. 533). This male senior leader

shares the decision he made about his identity.

> One person said to me, 'If you smile too much, people think you're stupid.' I had to make up my mind, years ago [to smile], I told my father, he laughed his head off, he said, 'you let them think you're the village idiot,' that's not politically correct, but he said, 'if you're happy you should be smiling.' (Senior Leader, male)

This alienation from kindness – whether it is perceived from a gendered identity

perspective or external judgement, generally highlights again the negotiations workers make to

be normed and that kindness is outside the norm. The practical action of radical kindness is the

work that comes after this dissertation is written.

This final example fits into the theme of kindness as action and also the "revolution of

consciousness" Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 291) write of the work of critical theorists in the

Frankfurt School.

> Some of the times when I think I am kindest to myself is when I wake up early enough that I can do some self-reflection or meditation, have a decent breakfast, not be in that rush, reactive state… I have been able to predetermine how I'm going to respond to whatever comes across my desk or respond to people. (female, union)

This decision – to predetermine how she will respond to her day, is a minor but nonetheless notable, "revolution of consciousness" as she makes the simple decision to structure her day and not enter the expected, allowed, encouraged even, state of rush and reactivity. This can be seen as a disruption.

Solipsism.

As noted in the Interpretivist section, solipsism borders both the interpretive and radical humanist paradigms. In the interest in this paradigm, the 'reef of solipsism' Sartre references is explored through the theme of kindness as unquestioned. The reef of Solipsism references the entirely individualistic and subjectivist view of reality in which no meaningful discourse is available. "My resistance to solipsism - which is as lively as any I should offer to an attempt to doubt the cogito - proves that I have always known that the Other existed, that I have always had a total though implicit comprehension of his existence, that this 'pre-ontological' comprehension comprises a surer and deeper understanding of the nature of the Other and the relation of his being to my being than all the theories which have been built around it." (Sartre, 1956, p. 338). Without the Other how then can a conversation about kindness take place in an organization, how can policies and cultures engage in kindness discussions? This area of study in both paradigms, while necessary to note, is less influential than the other areas of focus. Adding to the rejection of solipsism is Bukharin referencing it as "an insane philosophy" which is "contradicted by human experience at every step (in Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 337).

Anarchist Individualism – Themes: Kindness as identity and kindness as action.

Similarly, to the somewhat dismissiveness approach to solipsism, Burrell and Morgan note the work of Stirner and Bookchin and anarchistic individualism, and its 'total commitment to the rejection of all existing social institution" (1979, p. 301). They also note it provides a good

example of a philosophy of radical change emphasizing the importance of subjectivist factors

(ibid.). While not impossible, it is very unlikely for a public servant who works in a bureaucracy

and also seek the rejection of all existing social institutions. Yet the importance of subjectivist

factors does fit into the two themes of kindness as an identity, and kindness as an action for

others. When Burrell and Morgan reference, "practical action of a radical kind (ibid, p. 284) can

mean if, while at work, you the individual worker make time for – yoga at lunch, a walk in the

morning sunshine, phone calls with your child or spouse, Facebook time for a mental break, as

your interpretation of self-kindness. These actions could be perceived as a form of individual

anarchy.

French existentialism – Theme: Kindness as identity, kindness as belief, kindness as

action.

The existentialist work of Sartre provides an interesting entryway into exploring the

themes of kindness as identity and kindness as unquestioned. Being-for-self (pour-soi) and

being-for-others, brings consciousness, self-awareness which speaks to the numerous anecdote's

workers gave about their acts of kindness to others at work. Through such self-awareness and

knowing, knowing the power of kindness, kindness as identity, the value people give to being

kind kindness as action, being the knower and the known (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Sartre, 1956)

can represent kindness as a form of freedom. Making a rejection of kindness in fact a rejection or

a misunderstanding of being-in-itself, en-soi?

Bad faith versus freedom highlights the theme of unkind systems, the belief that the

systems within which we work cannot change or will not change. For one leader, the union

represented an unkind system that needs to change, "A lot of times I can't be kind if someone's

in the union, cause kindness and union don't go together…When you deal with any unionized

member, you're dealing with collective… you're dealing with a collective instead of an

individual. You have to be careful." This fits into the notion of bad faith on both sides of the

bargaining table. Whereas the belief that we do have the freedom to make choices, can in fact be

the ultimate act of kindness and yet the risk is perceived to be too great to act kindly to a staff

member at the risk of impacting the union system.

Turning to Simone de Beauvoir and her existentialist theorizing, I had hoped to find in

her work - language and theory, a space for kindness. "In the most primitive societies, in the

most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of duality – that of the Self and the Other"

(de Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxii). In organizational studies, in organizations daily, there are "ways of

seeing" that value the accomplishment of goals over the well-being of workers. This pursuit of

capitalism of consumerism of profit and production could be compared to de Beauvoir's othering

of women to men. If her feminist writing on women and men was replaced with productivity and

kindness or profit and kindness or efficiency and kindness, the ambiguity remains.

The more I study and think about and research and analyze kindness in the workplace, the

more awareness I have of its Othering; the ways it is silenced, ignored, denied and minimized.

> I think self-reflection and self-awareness is an uncomfortable thing for many people. I'll
> use myself as an example, [in my job] it is difficult because you are distracted, there is
> work to be done, there are other priorities that seem to be more important and we are in a
> culture where rush and ability to do many things seems to be rewarded more than doing
> few things well. The accountability is on the quantity of your accomplishments and the
> quality of accomplishments. I think that feeds into the world of kindness because it's not
> rewarded to be kind…I know that myself and other people respond better to people that
> are more grounded and self-reflective and calmer, however we don't see that, it should
> almost be institutionalized…people who are more reflective or pause are not going to be
> who'll be seen as the leaders in a very reactive environment. (male, EC)

To be different from the reactive culture is to be seen as Other. To kind of take care of

oneself is selfish, "I'm more aware of like, it's okay to be selfish sometimes and kind of take

care of yourself*"* (female, senior leader). There is something too, to de Beauvoir's work and the

"… transcendent position of 'what woman is,' attempting to locate the origin of her oppression

and defining her freedom, is frustrated because woman 'is not'. Man is Being, but woman… is

Becoming" (Grimwood, 2008, p. 210). And to take the idea of becoming, becoming kind,

becoming a kinder organization, led to one woman feeling oppressed. *"I don't know, I feel*

helpless, I feel completely helpless. I don't know how to help myself so I don't know how I

could help anyone else" (female, union).

By embracing kindness as a competency in the workplace, as a value, as an expectation,

then the energy of care and of kindness in the workplace becomes the antithesis of alienation. It

is connection. It is caring and it brings the individual's consciousness to the broader

consciousness of a team thus reinforcing the relational aspect of being a worker at work. Thus,

where Lukács saw alienation in the form of reification as something to overcome to release

energy and transform and reconstruct society (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 287), I see the power

of kindness as a disrupter to alienation. When energy is released through making connections it

is because of and through these connections that structures change through connection as a

collective. The dialectical debates amongst Lukács of subject-object can be laser-focused in the

study of kindness to a superstructure of kindness to self and kindness to others. Kindness to self,

the theme of kindness as an action highlight this. One respondent had a very quick response to

being kind to themselves. "Always find time for fitness." (male, Senior Leader)

Others interviewed found the question much more complex, recognizing their individual

resistances to normed behaviour, responding from a much more philosophical perspective:

> I guess the way I've been kind to myself is not forgoing my own principles, not short
> changing my own standards and my own code of ethics and conduct and carrying myself,
> in my own position at different levels, the way I would expect somebody in those
> positions to carry themselves, not take short cuts, my own personal standards of code of
> conduct – by living true to them is being kind to yourself. (female, Senior Leader)

To a very individual, physical response:

> I have, over the years, cut myself some slack. 'It's okay, you weren't as bad as you think you were.' And I try hard to take a deep breath. I am a person who needs to breathe. So, I think honestly, it's more around, the kindness I give myself at work, is having less judgement about the things that I do and how I do them. That's how I do it. (female, Senior Leader)

Barriers and Ways Forward from a Radical Humanist Lens

Radical humanism names alienation as inhibiting true human fulfillment. Here, in this debate of alienation of oneself with oneself, with others and alienation from cooperation and connection, the barriers to kindness appear solid and stuck. And to add the concept of kindness to the question of true human fulfillment leads to further questions. If kindness as a sentiment, as a state of being – open-heartedness and as an action – linking oneself to another I could imagine the human emancipation theorized about could in fact be actualized through embracing kindness. Is the barrier then an intellectual decision to separate oneself from one's heart? Stirner and his extreme beliefs add to this barrier in the obvious way of anti-government beliefs but curiously, is the crux of alienation of anarchy and of Othering not leading the pathway to the intellectual decision to separate oneself from one's heart? Would then, the ultimate barrier to kindness from a radical humanist perspective be the resistance and disregard to kindness to self?

In thinking about Poster's living a world of pain quote, kindness can be a balm to pain, with the belief that much can in fact be done to alleviate that pain. Applying this to an example of present workplace pain such as technology and its hold on workers' time in and out of the office changes notions of emancipation and what it meant and means.

This is the paradigm of change, of action, of emancipation. It is also the least developed of Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms (Hassard, 1991, p. 289). The potential for change is seen as dependent upon making actors aware of patterns of dominance (Mills, 1990). Within this

paradigm, dialogue is a metaphor for organizing and a method of inquiry and change (Hazen, 1994). Language I prefer is a revolution of consciousness. This revolution is built through individual micro-decision and organizational macro-decisions. The radical humanists base their ideas on the principle that there will be revolution or transformation through consciousness (Morgan in Mills, 1990).

Ways forward in an organization from this perspective could include the following:

1. Building a shared meaning of the concept of kindness: When kindness, the concept of kindness, is understood through the development and use of common language and interactions - we create and sustain a social world of intersubjectively shared meaning (Bradshaw-Campbell, 1990). This would mean constructing time into the workday for capacity building and discussing what kindness means in a bureaucratic system, what it could look like and feel like by talking to and with all employees, not only those in structural leadership positions to find out what would be needed to build in this freedom of thinking.

2. Existential training to focus on ways of using kindness to encourage both self-reflection and being kind – enacting kindness and making it plausible as an identity both individually and organizationally.

3. Building a norm within the structure of a workday where self-reflection is embraced and given time which will strengthen and enable kindness to take up space and be understood as valuable.

4. Research actions to improve health of workers, including both physical and mental health. Seek organizational responses that have positively impacted workplaces that value and support healthy workers and continue to study linkages between kindness and health.

5. Unothering Kindness where the suprastructure is not alienating rather the individuals

    inside the organization are intentional in their connecting through the above noted

    activities – building a shared meaning, training on self-reflection, normalizing and

    building space for kindness. These alternatives don't presently exist but could through

    action.

From a management and organizational studies perspective on ways forward I think of two

specific opportunities – ongoing collaboration with academics and organizations on subjects that

build a broader understanding to the concept of kindness. An example of this type of bridging is

seen with the call to the public for engagement in NS GovLabs: "We are looking for diverse and

open-minded people who aren't afraid to work outside of their comfort zone. We are looking for

fellows from all sectors: public, private, academic, community and interested individuals. Please

share widely with any family, friends or colleagues that you think would be interested." In this

example, the request was to take part in a fellowship. "A fellowship is a year-long commitment

to expand your understanding of the impacts and opportunities of Nova Scotia's aging

population, problem solving for complex issues, building and testing ideas, and developing a

community of like-minded individuals." The second management and organizational studies

opportunity is to continue gathering individual stories of kindness at work, to bring to the

research field, an understanding of what a revolution of consciousness means in the area of

kindness at work. This would disrupt the present inattention to this area of research.

Kindness from a Radical Structuralist Perspective

This final paradigm sits with radical humanism in the sociology of radical change but at

the objective end. This paradigm brings together theorists who offer a critique of the status quo

and are interested in more than understanding the world, they want to change it (Burrell &

Morgan, 1979, p. 326). Burrell and Morgan state, it is the work of Karl Marx during the second half of the nineteenth century that provides the intellectual foundations for this paradigm while also noting the many varieties of Marxism. There are three main approaches to this paradigm, Russian Social Theory, contemporary Mediterranean Marxism and Conflict Theory.

Russian social theory – Themes: Kindness as identity and kindness as action.

Within Russian social theory Burrell and Morgan note this thinking as unquestionably positivistic and naturalistic (ibid, p. 333) and have much in common with functionalist social systems theory vis a vis their subjective-objective structure. There are connections to kindness in Bukharin's thinking on harmony and cooperation as the primary modes of social organization as it ties to the theme of kindness and systems that are not kind. Here there is a place to imagine the upcoming disturbance, some may even reference as a catastrophe, funding for an Office of Workplace Mental Health for provincial government employees as well as adding psychological health as well as physical health into a new health and safety corporate policy. The system prior was not organized and now supports are in place to help employees navigate not just the mental health system in the province but navigate new conversations about their needs and supports within their working world. While the new support and new policy are not a 'totality shift' of enormous proportions with violent conflict, they are truly disrupting the status quo.

In citing the area of anarchistic communism and the work of Kropotkin, the kindness as identity and kindness as action to others and for others can be seen through this shared observation of experiences in Siberia making him believe "the natural attitude of man was one of cooperation and solidarity" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 340). It is striking nonetheless to highlight harmony and equilibrium and cooperation and solidarity within this social theory that

ultimately is based on the belief that these positive changes will only come about as the result of revolutions.

Contemporary mediterranean marxism – Theme: Kindness as action, unkind systems and structures.

This is referenced as "Marx's mature works" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 333) and brings in two schools of sociology, Althusser and Colletti. These two theorists bring into play attention to Marxism and for Althusser, his focus on the epistemological break of Marx and the shift away from philosophy to "the more mature scientific analyses of *Capital*" (ibid, p. 342). Althusser and his thinking about totality – that it is not the sum of each part, but each part is also whole (ibid, p. 343) is intriguing when thinking about the theme of unkind systems. His thinking placed within the context of an unkind system by which the structures of dominance rule over humanity "parts" or worker value "parts" to the 'overdominance' of worker outputs, not workers, of getting the work done, not caring for the worker. This leads to a super structural traditional workplace changing/transforming when a powerful enough 'contradiction' creates a socio-economic crisis. Althusser's thinking and in the organizations studied, the changing nature of the occupational health and safety policy in the workplace of this study may provide this contradiction Althusser proposed. That is, psychological health and care of the worker is being written into a policy. Caring now is expected. This expression of kindness to workers will have far reaching impacts if hazards in the workplace, i.e. vacancies, workload, conflict are not addressed, and employees believe there is a substructure of care to hear these previously ignored complaints. That is, a presently unkind system may change to be kinder. The consequences will be interesting to observe.

The second thinker, Colletti, unlike Althusser, brings the "two faces of Marx, that of philosopher and that of scientist" into his work naming this as 'opposition', scientific and philosophic. He brings these together as the theory of alienation and the theory of contradiction as a single theory with no acknowledgement or attention of the epistemological break Althusser uses in his thinking. "Marxism, for Colletti, involves revolutionary political practice – a strategy for radical social change which has an intimate connection with the 'life of the workers' movement (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 349). Within this work, the theme of kindness as action fits as a way to recognize the power of kindness to invoke social change by being connected to the life of workers. Though another perspective, from an interviewee brings the life experiences outside the workplace into the discussion, "we are looking at it in the context of interpersonal at work and in the workplace because I think that our societal unkindness also feeds into whether we are kind at work." The internal and external experiences of workers is an area that affects kindness in the workplace.

Conflict theory – Themes: Kindness is plausible, unkind systems and structures.

The key theorists Burrell and Morgan reference, Weber and radical Weberiasm, Marx, Dahrendorf and Rex bring issues of power, class, conflict and production into the forefront of this paradigm. Power is the anchor throughout this theory - in relationship to Weber's iron cage of bureaucracy, power and Marx's means and modes of production, power and Dahrendorf's focus on authority and power and Rex's action theory. The conflict of power and kindness allows for a deeper exploration of what kindness could mean at work.

The theme of unkind systems and the theme of kindness as plausible are worth noting here. When Marx writes of the means and modes of production and the forces of production the workforce is one of the references 'tools' it showcases the power of the people. When Rex writes

"power then becomes a crucial variable in the study of social systems" (Rex, 1961, p. 112 in

Burrell & Morgan, 1979) highlights the power of systems. When Dahrendorf writes of the

absence of order in individual societies based on "differential distribution of authority" (ibid, p.

351) and when Weber's concern is on domination and the "role of power in social life" the micro

experiences and expressions of public servants become amplified within a macro study and

structural analysis where kindness is unheard of. But what if it wasn't though. What if Marx had

written about the un-alienated worker and the lynchpin for this non-alienation was based on

connection to self and others outside of the focus of the objects of ones labour? The

unquestioned belief of externalized actions, labour being the essence of human life misses the

richness of what else could be understood as the essence of human life.

Understanding kindness can be conflictual is worth exploring further. One response to

discussing the concept of kindness was, *"I don't show a lot,* (I ask, would you consider yourself

to be kind), and the senior leader continues,

> Yes I would, but perhaps don't always absorb the clues when kindness is required, if
> you follow me… 'Come on we've got work to do' so sometimes I think damn, there's an
> opportunity here… Probably not as observant about identifying occasions where
> kindness would go a long way to support a colleague and support the team.

Kindness '*to support a colleague or the team'* versus *'Come on we've got work to do.'*

This comment captures both the alienation of worker, the alienation of the worker to his product

means not only that his labour becomes an object, takes on its own existence, but that it exists

outside him, independently, and alien to him, and that it stands opposed to him as an autonomous

power (Marx, 1964, p. 170). Additionally, the alienation of the worker, in this case the leader,

not only to the "work" to be done but the alienation to himself and to another human. Marx's

thinking about the distance a worker has/feels to the work he [sic] creates ties into the

observations during the interviews of the distance workers felt to themselves when asked how

were they kind to themselves and how they received and enacted kindness to others and their

organization.

In thinking about unkind systems, one senior leader struggled with individual kindness

and institutional kindness and recognized the conflict inherent in making systemic changes:

> Institutional kindness may require unkindness at the individual level to be implemented.
> Part of our problem is the classic Nova Scotia syndrome – we try to keep everybody
> happy. We whine and complain, and the media are always negative. This concept that we
> try and make everybody happy, we're not good at making tough decisions. 'Oh, you're
> being rough', we back off… But I have lots of hope. I think we are getting more nimble
> as a public service…our HR practices, people coming in and out more fluidly, the whole
> concept of a lifer in the public service, hire out of university, spend your 35 years. That's
> not the norm anymore but our policies are designed for that. (Female, Senior Leader)

During the interviews, public servants rarely deviated from a version of the

superstructure (Prasad, 2005) when they were responding to questions about potential visions of

kindness within the organization (aka the Status Quo). The following comments on kindness are

not exactly radical nor are they anti-organization, nonetheless, there is a recognition in one

response to think of the person versus the job only. "Part of the challenge of about being kind is

trying not taking things in the workplace personal, key issues that may arise, don't personalize

them" (Male, Senior Leader). Versus "I think it means having respect for others, treating them

how you would like to be treated being sensitive to their situations and their own challenges and

being responsive and caring" (Female, Senior Leader).

These are two Senior Leaders grappling with workplace issues. One leader resists being

in relationship and the other understands and values being sensitive and responsive and caring.

"Work is the principal source of human identity, dignity and inspiration (Prasad & Prasad, 1993).

An avenue for further exploration became apparent during a senior leader's analysis of the

concept of kindness at work and her understanding of conflict.

We need to behave and create a culture where people are positive. Now, it doesn't mean we don't have tough conversations, doesn't mean we don't disagree and we have to do disciplinary measures, and you have to do very difficult things. But, at the same time, like things are going to happen and anyone sitting in these seats are going to have to make difficult decisions and people are unhappy. I still believe though that you can do it in a way that is respectful and still value an environment even if you are disciplining staff. People still know it's an environment where they are valued. (female, senior leader)

The Radical Structuralist perspective would note it is not enough to observe, speak and write about kindness at work – the real work is to change the workplace to be kinder. This paradigm is built on a belief that the world can only change through massive upheaval, violent revolts, catastrophes and bloody revolutions. I find other ways of imagining a kindness revolution useful, Dame Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop offers her version of a revolution: "'Kindness doesn't have to be insipid or random to be effective. Far from it: deliberate kindness can be fierce, tenacious, unexpected, unconditional and sometimes positively revolutionary'

"Be brave and continue the kindness: start your own revolution today" [4].What might fierce kindness mean in the workplace? What does tenacious kindness mean for MOS? Both align with a radical rethinking of the concept of kindness.

Barriers and Ways Forward from a Radical Structuralist Lens

In the organization studied, the following are suggested ways forward in building a kinder organization and work experience.

1. A radical change in the workplace studied is the introduction of psychological health and employee well-being. This means physical incidents in the workplace (i.e. employee cuts themselves) and psychological incidents (i.e. workplace conflict) are reported and tracked

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[4] www.revolutioninkindness.org

through an online system that provides reports on incidents. This is a system-wide

disruption to silencing workplace psychological struggles.

2. Re-imaging the workday structure to engage in intentional kindness towards workers who

   1. Commute 2. Have small children or are primary caregivers to elderly relatives 3. Are

   pursuing studies or building other businesses. This would be based on the ongoing, social

   identity of workers individual needs and organizational responsibilities.

3. Worker's Needs – Smoke breaks, earned lunch hours and overtime are in collective

   agreements and workers can be quite diligent in adhering to these allotted times "off".

   What if exercise time was also written into the collective agreement? And/or meditation

   time? This means looking at individual worker needs.

4. A new program to help youth gain government work experience is entering its second

   year and has doubled in capacity. What makes this program radical is the students invited

   to join are not the typical MPA or MBA students rather, they are chosen based on their

   personal circumstances as offspring of social assistance recipients, as well as their

   academic and individual strengths. Thus, Nova Scotian youth and economically

   marginalized citizens are taking up space in a workplace that once only allowed summer

   students in specific degrees. These young students gain valuable work experience and

   providing new and unique perspectives inside government. This is a plausible act of

   kindness and the new process to expand on entry ways into government has positively

   impacted systems and processes too.

   When I think of radical structuralism, I look outside of the organization studied and

think of the leadership from powerful women, making and imagining change in times of dire

need. When I think of radical structuralism and management and organizational studies I turn to

Ferguson (1984) for the reminder, "Real social change comes about when people think and live differently" (p. 212). Thinking and living with attention to kindness can make real changes.

Summary

This chapter on constructing kindness at work has woven the kindness themes from the public servant interviews and Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms to better understand the concept of kindness. Each paradigm and its theoretical underpinnings provided an opportunity to engage in both the barriers inherent within each perspective and also the exploration of possible ways forward. Through this analysis and proposed responses, the lessons and learning become potential tangible actions the organization studied could undertake.

From a functionalist perspective, the barriers highlight unkind systems and structures. These same barriers also provide a number of ways forward as the organization can take action and identify with kindness through systems and structures. Of the six recommended actions, the reliance is on taking action to integrate kindness as a competency for leaders and more broadly into training to better understand the impact kindness as a value and the impact this could have in the psychological health and safety and well-being of employees. The systematic engagement process the organization embarks on every two years also provides a systematic review on areas in the organization that could benefit from further training for example or in some cases, delve more deeply into making sense of the engagement information through ongoing sensemaking.

From an interpretivist perspective, the barriers highlight how individuals do or do not identify with kindness, and how, through individual interpretation of the concept of kindness is seen as an identity, and action and plausible enactment in the workplace or disregarded. This leads to the importance of seeking ways forward where individuals engage in actions that support

their well-being such as flex time or adding self-care to their annual planning and development

forms and check-ins.

For radical humanists, the barriers to kindness might be constructed through the

existentialist separation/alienation of oneself to oneself, if so, then the most obvious way forward

is in a revolution of consciousness. As stated above, the basis for this paradigm is in

transformation through consciousness. This means actions that engage workers in activities such

as existential training and building self-reflection into the workday and normalizing the ongoing

construction of kindness in the workplace.

Enacting kindness from a radical structuralist perspective would mean breaking down

barriers and building ways forward in a much more aggressive manner. What flextime might

mean from an interpretivist point of view, i.e. a woman with small children is allowed to work

from home two days a week to cut down on her two hour round trip commute could become a

home office without being bounded to the office in any tangible way, a much more radical move.

To push the concept of kindness, in a radical structuralist way, as stated above, would mean

thinking and living differently

The possibilities explored in this chapter speak to concrete actions individuals and

organizations, scholars and leaders can take to take these words and ideas and make them into

opportunities.

<div align="center">**Chapter Seven Contributions, Conclusions and Action**</div>

Introduction

In this concluding chapter a summary of the main findings of the research and a

discussion of the contributions of the study, limitations of the study as well as areas for future

research are presented. The reason to study kindness in the workplace and the purpose of this

research is twofold. First, the notion of kindness is understood in different ways by different

people and, as I argue, has profound implications for workplace relations and behavior yet has

rarely been considered as an important aspect of organizational research. Second, by attempting

to understand kindness (and its absence) in workplace theory and behavior I was able to explore

barriers to its acceptance both in the workplace and in research, and to propose ways forward. I

have used a paradigmatic socio – psychological construction to argue that it is important to

encourage organizational leaders to explore the benefits of kindness as it impacts health and

well-being of both workers and the workplace.

The decision to study kindness and better understand its place, its purpose, and its

possibilities in the workplace created an opportunity to think about health and well-being

differently than what is traditionally offered (Kelloway & Barling, 2010). The traditional cookie-

cutter approach to employee well-being is being disrupted. The addition of psychological health

and safety and employee well-being standards in Nova Scotia's provincial government may be

the greatest shift in this evolution. This has been influenced by the development of a

psychological health and safety standard for Canada by Canadian Standards Association and

Mental Health Association (https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca). Attention to the

individual employee as a whole person as a part of the evolving awareness and attention to well-

being is represented in multiple ways in the organization studied. For example, all provincial

employees are offered training in mental health and mental health first aid in the workplace. This

training is based on, *The Working Mind: Reduce Stigma, Increase Resiliency, and Promote*

Workplace Mental Health a program of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This example

provides support for the claims of this study on kindness as it relates to health and well-being of

workers.

This dissertation has taken understandings about kindness through the ages and studied and problematized the multiple meanings given to the concept of kindness as it relates to workers in a large organization. I believe the analysis and outcomes generated by this research are useful in multiple ways. The process of taking an understudied concept and inviting an in-depth study into the meaning and value given to it by workers provided the opportunity to explore how kindness matters in the day to day workplace experiences of people employed in an organization.

The first theme highlighted the retrospective sensemaking workers gave to their conceptualization of kindness and the ways they assessed their enactment of kindness based on their personal understanding of the term. The second theme highlighted the enactment of their construction of kindness. The interviews allowed for both a retrospective analysis of kindness in their working world as well as ongoing sensemaking in ways these workers did and did not experience kindness. The extracted clues each interviewee shared about kindness in their organization built the third theme of unkind systems. The fourth theme, that kindness was an unquestioned belief, was derived from the social sensemaking and identity decisions of respondents. Applying these themes to the work of key Management and Organizational Studies theorists has given a unique twist to the construction of kindness at work. We know more about the multiple meanings of kindness and organizational and management studies through this research. This knowledge leads to opportunities for action: in organizations when focusing on worker well-being, in business school classrooms when teaching about organizational health of both systems and workers, and in providing an entry point for further studies and ongoing research in the area of worker well-being.

Theoretical Contributions

    Adding kindness as an area of focus in organizational and management studies.

    The ontological and epistemological perspectives of kindness interpreted through the four

paradigms of Burrell and Morgan is a contribution to kindness theorizing in organization and

management studies. By exploring the multiple meanings given to kindness and using various

theoretical viewpoints the complexities of kindness in the workplace are better understood. In

taking the themes from the experiences of workers and integrating these kindness themes into

each paradigm, the various constructions of kindness are built on solid theoretical footing that

will stand up to further exploration. This exploration can take numerous avenues, from further

development of kindness competencies in leaders to studies about kindness and gender, kindness

and psychological health and employee well-being, and kindness as a radical influence on a

culture of care. Depending on the researcher, the possibilities of building on the themes of

kindness from this study could be almost endless. Suddaby (2014, p. 408) warned against

theoretical fetishism, 'where the theory becomes an exercise in writing and interpretation but is

detached from the empirical world." I offer the idea of kindness as love in action as a starting

point to build on our thinking about the construct of love in the workplace and also the

relationship of kindness and love to health and well-being at work.

Contributions to the Literature

    While other academic fields have engaged in thorough and ongoing research, debate and

analysis of kindness, the field of management and organizational studies has yet to follow suit.

This study of kindness as seen through Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms provides new

thinking about kindness on a macro level. This contribution will enhance further research in this

understudied area and provides a starting place for ongoing study of its complexities and

nuances.

The ultimate intention of this work has been to infuse, expand, grow, nurture and make

accountable a space and place for contemplating and exploring the multiple meanings of

kindness in my organization and in the study of organizations generally. It offers a

"transformative redefinition" (Alveeson & Deetz, 2000) with the intent of creating alternative

organizational realities based on prior insights and critiques (King & Learmonth, 2014; Wickert

& Schaefer, 2015). This research is a contribution to this goal.

As a public servant, I aspire to make my working world a better place. I see kindness as

love in action being key to individual, relational and organizational health. This path to greater

kindness combines kindness and love with Heidegger's *asein*/presence/being-in-the-world

(1962). It expands the perspective of kindness research to include feminist researchers and the

Buddhist philosophy of loving-kindness. When hooks writes of a feminist revolution, she writes

of love and leadership, of action and transformation. I imagine the impact on the managers,

directors, executive directors and Deputy Ministers in Nova Scotia's public service and their

daily influence on 10,000 Nova Scotians. Leaders need "… and have the ability to show love and

compassion, show this love through their actions" (hooks, 1984, p. 163). Thus, a broader

contribution includes the study of love in organizations, kindness as love in action. This research

is also making a contribution towards to importance of continued research and study of love

(hooks, 2000; Kahane, 2010, Tasselli, 2019).

Methodological Contributions

This research has made two specific methodological contributions. One is the use of

sensemaking to explore the meaning workers give to kindness. The second contribution comes

from providing a bridge between the sensemaking of individuals and the theorizing of

organizational and management researchers, in this case, through the exploration of kindness

themes.

Taking the concept of kindness and using Weick's seven sensemaking properties to

explore workers' understandings and stories of kindness builds on Weick's 2005 call for more

empirical studies using sensemaking. Interpreting the words and ideas of public servants about

their sensemaking and construction of kindness through each of the seven sensemaking

properties allowed for rich, complex and new thinking about kindness at work. I used the

sensemaking process in asking public servants: 1. What does kindness mean to you? 2. How do

you define kindness to yourself at work? 3. How do you define kindness to and from your

colleagues at work? and 4. How do you define kindness to and from your organization? By

listening to the public servants and hearing what they shared of their experiences and

understanding of kindness, I was able to utilize the properties as an interpretational tool to build

themes and develop new insights. This process suggests possible direction for further kindness

studies in organizational and management studies.

The fusion of Weick's sensemaking and Burrell and Morgan's paradigms created a

unique methodological process which led to multiple understandings of the same phenomena. By

approaching the study of an understudied area with attention to present day workers and their

agency in the conceptualization of kindness at work and linking this study to a broader

contextual understanding of historical thinkers, the outcomes create a useful template to engage

in other studies. This methodological approach bridges theory and practice in a creative way

which can help inform future studies.

Limitations of the Study

I spoke to thirty-two members of a 10,000 plus workforce and these informants brought

to light experiences that were shared, understandings that were unique and others that resonated

with other workers. How much more there was to learn from speaking to thirty-two more public

servants or sixty-four more is moot. Nonetheless, I remain interested in hearing from more of

Nova Scotia's public servants about their beliefs and experiences and interpretations of kindness.

Choosing to study workers in the public service confined the working experiences to a specific

bureaucratic structure. Expanding the study to the private sector and organizations of differing

sizes may have led to wider experiences of kindness at work.

I believe asking people to keep a journal was a good idea. I often felt uncomfortable

asking busy people to do more work. It could have been a pre-interview reminder instead of a

request after an hour-long interview. If I had set this up prior to the interview, I believe there

would have been greater participation and I sense more could have been shared and learned.

Basing my analysis on the work of Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms was both a strength and

a limitation of the study. The four paradigms provided rich bounded areas of focus but were

missing diversity and feminist theorizing and an intersectional understanding of organizations.

These gaps, though, provide opportunities for further research on kindness.

Future Research

Kindness research in organizational studies is new; future research possibilities are

plentiful. As I sought inspiration for more radical academic research, I found kindred spirits in

the work of Emma Bell, Susan Meriläinen, Scott Taylor and Janne Tienari and their engagement

with an ethic of care and Critical Management studies (2009). "…(A)n ethic of care could

provide an alternative to the liberal individualism and rational self-interest that characterize

normative engagement within academic communities [organizations] and could open up spaces

for different forms of organizing within CMS and beyond [Nova Scotia's Public Service] (Bell et

al., 2009). One of the more obvious entryways is creating a stream in critical management

studies to capture the complexities inherent in the new working world of mental health,

employee well-being and the ethics of care. Gender and kindness is another focus area for further

kindness research, gender not as "a possession or attribute of people working in organizations"

but in order to "consider the ways gender(ing) is an outcome or a co-production of organizing

processes (Calás et. al., 2014, p. 20). Based on the interviews and the ideas and experiences

workers shared, gender(ing) and kindness merit further investigation.

Creating a Culture of Care - Kindness in Action

I take part in engagement and strategic planning in my workplace. This means ongoing

discussion on how to support change. The exchange below took place during a departmental

planning meeting on an engagement action plan with senior leadership. "I want to create a

culture of care." I said. "I want to create a culture of productivity." an Associate Deputy Minister

responded.

This minor exchange in the middle of a meeting captures the essence of my work. It is

this juxtaposition of beliefs – that to be caring, to be kind, to value kindness at work is somehow

contrary to productivity. This exchange captures the seemingly profound disconnection between

kindness and work. It also highlights the potential, and the need, for ongoing work in kindness

research to bring a clearer understanding that kindness in the workplace is a support for the well-

being of workers which in turn can impact the well-being of the organizational outcomes. The

present confusion between productivity and kindness in my workplace is not unique.

> The engineering image we carry of ourselves has led to organizational lives where we
> believe we can ignore the deep realities of human existence... we can ignore that people

need love and acknowledgement; we can pretend that emotions are not part of our work lives; we can pretend that we don't have families or health crises or deep worries. In essence, we take the complexity of human life and organize it away. We want a story of simple dimensions: People can be viewed as machines and controlled to perform with the same efficiency and predictability. (Wheatley, 2007, p. 19).

The struggle to embrace the employee as both worker and human being with complex needs and issues is creating a tension that we as a larger society are only beginning to grapple with. The Post Traumatic Stress Disorder legislation being reviewed in Nova Scotia House of Legislature is one example of a reckoning that work can make people unwell (https://novascotia.ca/ptsd). The global *#metoo* campaign responding to systemic sexual harassment in the workplace is evolving into another reckoning of workplace dysfunction (http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/). As noted in Chapter Six, Nova Scotia's Public Service Commission introduced in April 2018, changes to the Occupational Health and Safety policy adding psychological health and safety guidelines for public servants. The changes became official on April 1, 2019. Embedded within this new policy is the naming of psychological hazards including work overload, unhealthy collegial relationships and lack of role clarity. Within these changes is the terminology and recognition that employees bring their "whole self" to the job.

> The invention of organizations is one of humankinds' greatest achievements. Organizations are essential in passing on the hard-won knowledge from one generation to the next. Few things long-lasting can be accomplished without them. Thus, the fundamental choice is not between having or not having organizations; rather it is with regard to the kinds of organizations we choose to create. The fundamental choice is whether we will have organizations that promote human health and development, or organizations that promote sickness and dysfunction. (Mitroff, 2003, p. 375).

I see the benefits of engaging in kindness at work to promote and positively affect the health of organizations individuals and in the case of the public service of Nova Scotia, the wider public.

Even when organizational theorists claim to be free from values, they invariably imply

and contribute to value commitments through the construction of partial views of reality (Astley

& Van de Ven, 1983, p. 270). I have never claimed to be free of valuing kindness and this belief,

this "knowing" of the value of kindness is both a gift and a burden: a gift because I see the

possibilities of another way of organizing that can meet people at different places and respond in

different ways, and a burden because my belief can conflict with the beliefs of others. Thus,

through my analysis, through this whole project, I have held in tension my driving passion for a

healthier, kinder workplace and my commitment to listen and hear with respect and openness

what others believe, feel, say, think and do.

The sensemaking properties discussed throughout this dissertation hold that identity and

understanding are created retrospectively. So, it is with the physical, mental and spiritual health

of workers. How public service workers walk through the doors of their office buildings, climb

into transportation trucks, travel to inspect work sites, or visit children in homes, matters. How

they slept, what they have eaten, the conversations and interactions they have had all contribute

to who they are and how they are at work. There is little space given to this understanding of

psychological health and the interrelation it has to safety. But this is changing. This attention can

be seen in the school system through the recognition that students bring their lives with them to

school seen in breakfast programs, school supply collections and after school care. These life

circumstances have an effect on how they perform. A colleague, grappling with numerous staff

absences understood as mental health absences as opposed to the straightforward broken

leg/surgery type of absences, wondered about a workplace that recognizes workers in the way

classrooms recognize learners. That is, students with specific learning challenges are provided

with an Individualized Program Plan (IPP). This standard assessment of a learner's capacity

creates an environment that supports their learning and allows expectations to be adjusted. What

if our workplaces engaged in that kind of assessment?

Ways Forward

This research connects the words of workers with words of organizational theorists to

build a deeper, grounded understanding of kindness in the workplace. The emergent themes of

kindness developed first using Weick's seven sensemaking properties and then more thoroughly

explored using Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms and identified barriers as well as ways

forward, has led to a more nuanced understanding of the concept of kindness. My personal

understanding of kindness has also developed. I understand kindness differently now than when I

began my research.

It was paying attention to individual experiences at work combined with the historical,

theoretical grounding of management and organizational studies that led me to develop a new

conceptualization of kindness at work, one built on the backs of Burrell and Morgan, Weick, my

literature review and my interviews and work experience with public servants. As any dictionary

states, we understand kindness in terms of the qualities of being friendly, generous and

considerate. Phillips and Taylor's definition of kindness added open-heartedness and the linking

of self to others. To bridge what I perceive as a gap in defining and writing about the concept of

kindness and a gap I perceive in organizational theorizing about kindness, I would add love.

"Love is usually avoided because it calls for a full expression of the self, something conflicting

with the normative authority of organizations" (Tasselli, 2019, p. 1074). My concept of kindness,

is the enactment of the generative power of and love, combining power *for* and love *to* (Kahane,

2010). I hold on to the radical humanist belief in "the ability to change society through changing

consciousness, by changing the way people think, see, and understand the world (Morgan in

Mills, 1990). To continue this work means paying attention to "…the intimate connections between subjectivity and alterity in organizational life (Tasselli, 2019).

The way I now conceptualize kindness is *love in action*. Love in action means enacting kindness, being kind to oneself and others. It requires being in relationship with oneself and with others, an ongoing, social identity of kindness. Kindness as love in action at work means being aware of, and responsive to, one's physical and emotional needs and caring about the physical and emotional needs of others which will impact systems and processes to reflect and respond to cues for kindness. *Kindness is love in action*, is much more powerful than holding open a door or buying a colleague a coffee.

We bring our humanity into the workplace; humanity that is touched and molded by an almost infinite combination of individual, organizational and cultural experiences and interactions. This research, and the new way I offer to conceptualize kindness as *love in action* is an attempt to broaden the conversation from what is currently, and simplistically, understood as an enactment of kindness (holding open a door) to a new dialogue that will allow us to embrace the authentic connection to self and others from a place of love and care. Kindness as love in action will allow the reconceptualizing of structures and systems in order to respond fluidly and flexibly to support individual and organizational health and wellbeing.

I feel that we are on the cusp of creating a new shared understanding of and a new way of thinking about kindness in the workplace. The shift, starting in my own organization with the creation of the Office of Workplace Mental Health for example, has created new spaces to have conversations about mental health, how we can take care of ourselves and our workers. This means organizations and workers thinking about, understanding and enacting an increasingly

holistic approach to kindness. When kindness as *love in action* is embraced individually and

organizationally, systems will make space for our humanity.

Love can fill many roles at work. In can represent kindness as the heart of an

organization. The key to kindness and creating a culture of care comes from an individual and

organizational commitment to making actual, person to person connections that come from the

heart, combining intellectual and emotional work strategically not surreptitiously. Love is an

energy that is at once invisible, mystical and powerful. It is a cocktail of ancient neuropeptides

and neurotransmitters (Young, 2009, p. 148).

Love and the study of love evolved from my kindness research and requires further study.

I am aware of a skepticism that comes into play when one insists on bringing emotions into the

discussion. This can be related to a dismissal of the feminine, the intangible, the unknown.

"Awakening to love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination"

(hooks, 2000, p. 87). And yet, love and power are intricately woven together. This duo exists in

our psyches, our beliefs and our organizations.

There is more work to be done. When the concept of kindness is embraced as an

expression of self-love and enacted love towards others in the workplace, the conversation

changes to being one where kindness is identified with a new kind of enacted power. There is no

question that any solution requires dialogue, joint effort, context dependence and

transdisciplinary thinking (Weick, 2001, p. 271).

Researcher Reflexivity

I have been influenced by Ann-Marie Slaughter's TED Talk[5] and her rallying cry for a

culture of care. This is a radical act in my workplace. I use the phrase "culture of care" on a

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[5] www.ted.com

regular basis. I add it to text in divisional reports, add it to handouts; I mention it when

presenting to new staff at our departmental orientation. It is a radical concept in my world

because care seems antithetical to bureaucracy and yet I remain committed to continuing the

conversation.

My understanding of kindness, *kindness is love in action*, comes from a place located

along the edge of being both a radical humanist and a constructivist seeing the world through

interpretivist eyes. My belief in the potential and possibilities of kindness in organizations is

grounded in awareness of the need to translate this belief into the multiple languages spoken by

organizational theorists and workers. To speak of kindness as love in action to a functionalist

requires building measures and validating findings (higher engagement, less missed time,

increased productivity, decreased use of short and long-term leaves). To speak of kindness as

love in action from a radical structuralist perspective requires a revolution, one in the making

already in the organization studied, with forces gathering at the front line to support mental

health, worker well-being and seeking ways for employees to have a voice in their daily working

lives.

Future Research

I observe these changes in my organization, my province, and across the globe and feel

heartened and hopeful. This research has not been a study of the ills and issues of unkindness at

work. The intention of this research has always been to look at what could be, what might be, if

leaders, workers, HR professionals, policy writers, hiring managers and elected officials were to

embrace the possibilities of kindness and imagine it embedded as a cornerstone of workplace

culture and enacted as a lived value. "If heedful interrelating is visible, rewarded, modeled,

discussed, and preserved in vivid stories, there is a good chance that newcomers will learn this

style of responding, will incorporate it into their definition of who they are in the system, and

will reaffirm and perhaps even augment this style as they act (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 367).

Attention to employee well-being means attention to kindness – to self and to others.

The Power of Kindness

Such boundless depths and variety that my apprenticeship bears no other fruit than to
make me know how much there remains to learn (Michel de Montaigne, The Essays).

This journey started because I was curious about kindness at work. I remain curious

about kindness at work. I hope this study of kindness in organizations can be part of a larger

conversation, encourage further academic research and provide practitioners with useful tools to

engage with workers in a revolutionary way where *kindness is love in action* is explored and

integrated into the workplace. This could have far reaching consequences for bureaucracies and

beyond through integrating kindness as a value and opportunity to disrupt and dismantle

unhealthy workplaces.

Appendix A

Consent Form   Thomason

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802
One University. One World. Yours.

Creating a Culture of Kindness in Nova Scotia's Public Service
SMU REB # 15-004

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Hello
Thank you for your interest in participating in *Creating a Culture of Kindness in Nova Scotia's Public Service*. This research project is part of my PhD dissertation. I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Jean Helms-Mills and we have no financial interest in conducting this research.

You are being invited to take part in an interview. If you are also interested in writing about your work experiences in relation to a culture of kindness you may participate in a one week diary study as well. This invitation is completely voluntary and will not affect your work status.

The purpose of this research is to gather provincial government workers stories, experiences and ideas on how to create a culture of kindness.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada states, "The workplace is now recognized as an important influence on mental health…between 10 per cent and 25 per cent of workplace are characterized by conditions and environments considered to be mentally injurious."

Health and being emotionally, physically and mentally healthy can be understood as a personal decision. It can also be influenced by the relationships at work with colleagues, supervisors and others as well as the organizational values, culture, policies and programs in your workplace.

This research is open to any public servants employed with the province of Nova Scotia.

By deciding to take part in this research you will be asked to meet with the researcher for an interview (lasting approximately 60 minutes) as well as completing a week long journal for those interested in writing about their experiences, to make note of any reflections, further experiences and ideas about the research topic.

These interviews will take place at a time and location of your choosing, your office, meeting room at your workplace or other preferred location. The notebooks, for those who choose to participate in this written component will be collected after a two week period of time. The researcher will arrange to either pick up the notebooks or have the notebooks returned through inter-departmental mail. The individual interviews will cover such questions as:

1. What does kindness mean to you?
2. How do you define kindness to yourself at work? Please give examples.
3. How do you define kindness to and from your colleagues at work? Please give examples.
4. How do you define kindness to and from your organization i.e. how do you feel the structures/policies/practices in your department "show" kindness?
5. What do you think would build a culture of kindness in your workplace? What actions would leaders, co-workers and you need to take to create this kind of culture?
6. What does a healthy organization look like to you?
7. Presently, employee engagement is on the mandate of every provincial government deputy. In your department what do you think employee engagement has to do with kindness?
8. What do you think is inhibiting quality relationships at work? What can we do about this?
9. Are there any other thoughts about a culture of kindness you would like to share?

Again, there is no need to prepare in advance.

The benefits of taking part in this research will be numerous. You will help inform and impact a broader understanding of kindness in the provincial government and have input into defining what organizational health means to you. Also, this work may be of benefit to the public service through the potential to impact the culture for employees who work for the government of Nova Scotia.

If you choose to take part in the research but feel uncomfortable or unwilling to continue at any point in our work together you are completely free to not answer a particular question, decline to continue in the discussion or exit the whole research project. There are no risks anticipated from your involvement in this study. If however you wish to receive support from our Employee and Family Assistance Program, they can be reached at 1-800-777-5888.

You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw after an interview or completion of the diary study, your information will remain within the study unless you request that it not be used. If you do decide to withdraw you can contact the researcher by telephone or email (contact provide on page 1). If any changes happen during the course of the study, this information will be communicated to you.

There is an ad on TV that you may be familiar with, "We want your information, not your name." That is the same for this project. You are being asked to share your experiences at work. Your ideas, stories and experiences will remain anonymous. Any personally identifying information will be removed. Demographic information (how many women and how many men and age ranges) will be asked to gather an overview of the participants in this research but will never be linked to what has been said or discussed.

The information gathered is intended to be of service to the government of Nova Scotia. When the interviews are complete and the notebooks have been gathered, only my supervisor and I will have access to the information. The information will only be presented (i.e. in the dissertation/senior management/provincial employees/Public Service Commissionaire) in an aggregate format to protect your identity. I also plan on sharing this information, as appropriate, through conferences and journal articles.

To protect your privacy, I will keep the notes from our interview/your notebook. This information will be stored for no more than 5 years as per the regulations of the Saint Mary's University. If you are interested in the study results you are welcome to attend my dissertation defence or contact me directly for a summary of the findings in the spring of 2016.

At any time you wish, you are welcome to contact either myself or my supervisor to discuss the study. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Consent Form   Thomason

Please note:

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this research. If you have any questions or concerns about ethical matters or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at ethics@smu.ca or 420-5728. This research has also been approved by Deputy Dave Darrow, Clerk/Secretary to the Executive Council.

Signature of Agreement

Creating a Culture of Kindness in Nova Scotia's Public Service

I understand what this study is about, appreciate the risks and benefits, and that by consenting I agree to take part in this research study and do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can end my participation at any time without penalty.

I have had adequate time to think about the research study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Participant

Signature : _____   Name (Printed) :_____ Date :_____

                                                                            (Day/Month/Year)

Researcher
Signature : _____   Name (Printed) :   Michelle Thomason   Date :_____
                                                                            (Day/Month/Year)

Please keep one copy of this form for your own records.

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