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# Children's understanding of kindness

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Children's Understanding of Kindness

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A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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In

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## Abstract

The purpose of this project was to explore the understanding of the concept of kindness from the perspective of children. Fifteen elementary students were interviewed by the researcher about what kindness means to them. Through the use of grounded theory, themes were identified by searching student responses for common phrases and key words. Interviewing children about their conceptions of kindness without comparing the responses to adult responses will give a better indication about how children develop definitions and rules pertaining to kindness. This will inform future research and programs pertaining to elementary aged students understanding of the concept of kindness.

(Keywords: kindness, interview, exploratory study)

### Children's understanding of kindness

Schools around the country have implemented positive behavioral intervention programs with the intention of building desirable character traits in children and providing positive supports for them in the school setting. This is an offshoot of positive psychology and the desire to create a more positive environment in schools for children. However, these programs tend to use language which, while designed to be at a level for children to understand, often does not define or explain its terms. The *Character Counts!* framework, a commonly implemented positive behavioral intervention program, is made up of six values which are used to “instill a positive learning environment for students and a ‘culture of kindness.’” This program emphasizes six pillars of character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship (The Six Pillars of Character®). The first statement describing the Caring pillar is “Be kind.” It is a simple statement and no explanation accompanies it. This evokes questions such as: what does a culture of kindness represent to the students in these schools? What does being kind look like, feel like, mean to children who are told on a frequent basis to be kind? It is necessary to know how children are defining this term to assist in determining the success of program implementation. Gaining an understanding of what children define as kindness will likely lead to betterment of programs which emphasize its importance.

School wide positive intervention programs are supported by the community and the parents in the schools because they want their children to become positive members of the community. A recent report by the Harvard Graduate School of Education stated that parents and teachers believe that teaching children to be caring is a main priority for

them (Weissbourd, et. al., 2014). However, in a survey of over 10,000 middle and high schoolers it was found that school-aged children do not prioritize caring. In fact, these students felt their parents did not prioritize caring in their day to day lives, either. Most of the students in this survey, 80% of the 10,000 surveyed, believe that their parents and teachers have a greater amount of concern for the students' achievement or overall happiness rather than how caring they may be. It is believed that the frequency of the messages the students receive from their teachers, as well as their parents, about achievement and happiness may overwhelm those encouraging them to become a caring member of society. It may be that from what teens are told, and take in, from their parents and teachers, they believe that to be successful in life people should do whatever they need to in order to win, even if it involves cheating. The reason these findings are troubling is that the negative view of others ways of moving through the world seems to be negatively impacting students' own standards of ethics (Weissbourd, et. al., 2014). In order to create an environment in which the desired behaviors and perceived importance of behaviors match, schools have, as mentioned above, implemented character programs which often have ways in which they can translate to home as well as school. The researchers suggest another way to bridge the gap between expectations and perceptions of what character traits are most important to students, we must listen to children and get their feedback about what values they believe are important (Weissbourd, et. al., 2014). We need to ask children in order to understand their perceptions, not only of what is important to them, but also the way those things are conceptualized. These authors mainly discussed the prosocial traits of caring and fairness but similar to the character values in school programs, kindness is mentioned as a part of caring. Consulting with

students to better understand how they perceive kindness is important in order to adjust the message to best encourage their growth as valuable members of society.

Parental influence on children's values and positive behaviors may have an impact but the intrinsic motivation to help others may affect how much influence parents truly have. Warneken and Tomasello (2012) studied 24 month old children's helping behaviors. The researchers were interested in whether children are intrinsically motivated to help others or whether an adult in the room influenced their choice to help. In order to study this, an examiner was in the room with the child and their parent or with the child alone and acted as though they required help. The examiner acted as though they were unable to reach an item which had purposefully been dropped in view of the child. It was expected that the child would exhibit helping behaviors. The child's parent was instructed by the examiners to either actively encourage the child to help, sit in the room passively without encouragement, or was absent from the room entirely. Each child who participated was given several opportunities to exhibit helping behavior. Once the child had exhibited helping behavior five times the examiners moved on to the test phase for which the parent was absent throughout. During the test phase the child was asked to help an examiner despite the presence of desirable toys and activities that had been provided as distractors. No significant difference was found in any of the initial phases when the parent was encouraging, present, or absent and children still helped at high rates during the test phase where the parent was absent from the room for the entirety of the process (Warneken & Tomasello, 2012). This research indicates that children's helping behavior is not dependent on parental involvement either directly or indirectly. This is somewhat inconsistent with the previous article that had determined parental beliefs and actions

help to model their children's behaviors. It raises questions about whether prosocial behaviors like kindness are actively taught to children or whether intrinsic motivation is what drives acts of kindness. Once again, it is important to further the scope of the current research on kindness and prosocial behavior by interviewing children as to their understanding of these concepts. Understanding how children think of the kindness and what motivates them to be kind in their own words will assist in knowing how to approach future research and programs.

Research has determined that children who engage in prosocial behaviors are more often well-liked by their peers and in turn, those who act in a prosocial manner are more likely to state they have satisfying friendships (Layous et. al., 2012). Layous, Nelson, Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, and Lyubomirsky (2012) assigned children between the ages of nine and 11 to either perform and record three acts of kindness each week or to visit three places per week over the course of a four week period. It was believed that encouraging prosocial behavior in preadolescents would boost both their general sense of well-being as well as how they were perceived socially. Pre and post intervention, students were administered the *Satisfaction with Life Scale*, *Subjective Happiness Scale*, and *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule*. They were also provided a roster of their classmates and asked to circle the names of those students they would like to spend time with. Students were told they could circle however many names they wanted to on the roster. Students in both of the intervention groups showed a significant increase in positive affect, with marginal increases in life satisfaction and happiness. No significant difference was found between the two intervention groups for any of these areas (Layous et. al., 2012). All of the students in the study increased in the number of times their name

was circled on the roster by their peers, indicating that more students were interested in spending time with them. It was noted, however, that those students who were assigned to perform acts of kindness significantly increased the number of peer nominations they received. On average, they gained one and a half friends indicating that acts of kindness were advantageous to their social standing. Overall, this indicates that engaging in kind acts benefits those who perform the acts by increasing both popularity and a sense of well-being. Teaching children to be kind is something which can benefit them both internally with well-being and socially through more positive perceptions from their peers.

What kindness is to children has been looked at in a developmental sense in order to understand how the concept of kindness matures in children as they get older. Baldwin and Baldwin (1970) used a kindness concept measure of their own design with children in school from kindergarten to eighth grade. Each child was presented with 10 pairs of stories and images. After each of the stories was presented the children were asked to select which story and corresponding image they believed to be kindest and to then explain the choice. These responses were then compared to the responses of 110 undergraduate students who had also completed the same measure. Significant differences were found between all of the age groups for each of the 10 situations. No linear development of the concept of kindness could be determined. The researchers also determined that the concept of kindness does not follow an even progression of development for all children; at some ages children picked the opposite story and motivation than what would be expected (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970). Interestingly, those children who attended parochial schools demonstrated more mature understandings of

kindness than those children enrolled in public schools. These results support the idea that a concept of kindness is developed through the course of socialization, and as children age they take on the social structures which mirror those of the adults around them. The researchers believe that when a child is young kindness is a more global concept in which there can be many different reasons to be kind to someone else, but as they age the children begin to see some of the motivations to be kind as obligations. As an adult, kindness is viewed in a more pure sense and is the desire to benefit another person simply to benefit them (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970). The researchers acknowledged that this study does not examine the relationship between the judgments of what kindness is and the actual performance kind acts. More research should be done in this area through interviews and observations in order to better understand how children acquire an understanding of kindness. Gaining knowledge as to how children define kindness will better help those who are attempting to measure it and its acquisition.

Another study was conducted using the Baldwins' *Kindness Concept Measure* by Brown, Matheny, and Wilson (1973). The researchers administered the measure to 16 pairs of twins, as well as the *Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence* (WPPSI) during the same time period. The majority of the responses given by the twins on the measure of kindness were in agreement, however, in the pairs which had disagreements, the WPPSI results were analyzed for within pair differences. Twins with responses least similar to adults' on the kindness measure scored lower on the cognitive measure, in particular on the verbal and performance subtests (Brown et. al., 1973). At least one parent of each set of twins was interviewed as well. For each of the discordant pairs, parents reported that the twin who scored lower cognitively was more

temperamental and was less able to sustain attention than their co-twin. This study indicates that those children with higher cognition are more likely to be similar in their understanding of the concept of kindness as adults (Brown et al 1973). Results in this study are not surprising. It is expected that those children with higher levels of cognition would have a greater level of understanding of a concept. However, this study examined the concept of kindness with an adult perspective imposed upon children rather than gathering information about their own understanding of the concept. Further research is needed in order to better understand what kindness means to children rather than comparing their responses to those of adults.

### *Measurement*

Kindness is understood to be a prosocial trait. As stated previously, kindness is often valued by figures of authority in children's lives as further evidence of the broad social desirability of and social value of kindness. Shryack, Steger, Krueger, and Kallie (2010) researched the *Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths* (VIA), a measure which has been used to look at specific traits which are believed to be virtues which are socially desirable and valued across cultures. The virtues measured on the VIA inventory are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Each of these virtues breaks down into more specific details of what is being measured, such as: the humanity virtue measures social intelligence, kindness, and love (Shryack et al 2010). Adult twins were recruited for this study from the Minnesota Twin Registry. Four hundred twin pairs were identified and sent surveys by mail with a 42% response rate. Results obtained from the adult sample found that males were more likely to endorse self-regulation while females were more likely to endorse love of learning, kindness, love,

teamwork, appreciation of beauty, and gratitude (Shryack et al 2010). Highest average endorsements were found on the measures of honesty, fairness, and kindness. Further research should be done with children on the VIA inventory in order to determine their responses and if it is a possible option to be administered to them. Understanding how children conceptualize these concepts, such as kindness, included in the VIA will better inform how to measure these in the future.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants for this study were 15 fifth grade students from an elementary school in rural Virginia whose parents consented for to their children to be interviewed. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning a code to each child recruited instead of the use of their name. The majority of the 15 students interviewed were female and Caucasian (F=10, M=5; Caucasian=14, Hispanic=1). All students were between the ages of 10 and 11.

It is important to note that all participants were exposed to lessons administered monthly by a school guidance counselor on particular words of the month. Caring and kindness were the words at the core of the guidance lesson for the month of December during the 2016-2017 school year. The guidance counselor could not recall the exact program she had adapted the lessons from as it has been adapted over the course of several years of administration. The basic framework for these lessons consisted of the guidance counselor reading a social story with a visual cue and then an activity for students to participate in which illustrated the point of each story. The story read to

students for the lesson on caring and kindness was about a child the same age who witnessed someone in need of help and deliberated what to do as helping would take effort and may not be a desirable task for the child. The students were then placed in groups to brainstorm ways in which people may be mean or rude. The students then wrote what they had come up with on a large piece of paper in the front of the classroom in pencil. The same groups of students then brainstormed ways in which they could demonstrate kindness or caring and wrote those terms in marker over top of those representing negative things. Each class of fifth graders was left with a poster of words representing kindness and caring erasing things they considered to be the opposites. These posters were hung in the hallways outside of the fifth grade classrooms for the month of December.

Students in this elementary school also participated in a “Random Acts of Kindness Week” during the month of February. This week was orchestrated by the guidance department. Each class was assigned another class in a separate grade in which they had to complete a “Kindness Mission.” For the majority of classrooms this involved depositing a treat of some sorts in the other classroom while the other students were not there. Teachers and bus drivers were provided “Caught You Being Kind” slips in which they wrote down when they witnessed a student being kind and how it impacted them. This was read to the students and then given to the guidance counselors to put up for display in the hallway. Those students who had received a nomination on one of these slips was entered into a drawing to win a small prize. Teachers and bus drivers were also encouraged to offer their own small incentives. A kindness pledge was recited each morning with the pledge of allegiance and a kindness quote was displayed each morning

as well. The student council association also created posters to encourage kindness which were placed in each of the hallways around the school. This information is included to note that those students who were interviewed by the researcher had previous exposure to instruction pertaining to kindness which may not take place in other schools.

### **Materials**

Materials were an interview designed by the researcher pertaining to how children understand and define kindness. The interview was based on the researcher's review of the literature on the subject. A group of students within the previously determined age range was asked a similar set of questions by the researcher in order to determine how children would respond to these types of questions. No identifying information was collected during that time but it allowed the researcher to eliminate questions which were not well understood by students, note questions which may need further elaboration, and edit key questions to allow for a more open response style. The interview can be found in Appendix I. A letter to parents describing the project in layman terms, a demographic questionnaire, and an assent form for students was also utilized. These can be found in Appendices II, III, and IV respectively. The researcher also used an audio recorder to capture student responses verbatim prior to transcription.

### **Research Questions:**

How do children understand and define the concept of kindness?

How do children learn kindness?

What is the experience of children both when they are kind as well as when someone is kind to them?

Is a child's understanding of kindness influenced by certain contexts?

### **Procedure**

Parents were contacted about study participation during the first semester of the school year through a letter, consent form, and questionnaire sent home in order to obtain informed consent. Interviews began during the second semester of the school year and were completed by spring break. Students were pulled from their resource time so as not to interrupt any instructional time. It was originally stated that they would be pulled for no more than 30 minutes which was well maintained as each interview took no more than 10 minutes.

After consent was obtained from parents, and prior to the start of the interview, the interviewer obtained child assent through an initial greeting and explanation of the study. The assent form can be found in the Appendix IV. Once assent was provided the researcher administered the interview questions to each child who has parental consent and has agreed to participate. The interviews were recorded via digital audio recorder which only the researcher had access to. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and deleted from the recorder promptly.

### **Results**

The interview questions were designed with the research questions in mind. Each question in the interview is considered to be related to one of the four research questions. The breakdown of which questions apply to which research question or domain can be found in Table 1. Grounded theory was used to identify repetitions and key words in the context of each student's response. This was determined to be the most effective way to

approach the data collected as well as one of the most typical approaches for qualitative data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

**Table 1: Breakdown of how interview questions apply to proposed research questions**

Definition	Context	Experience	Learned
Tell me about kindness. What do you think it is? Give four examples.	When do you have to be kind?	How do you feel when someone is kind to you?	Do you talk about kindness at school? At home? With your friends? Anywhere else?
What makes it easier to be kind?	When is it okay to not be kind?	How do you feel when you are kind?	How do you talk about kindness in these places?
What makes it harder to be kind?	Are there people you have to be kind to? Are there people you don't have to be kind to?	What is the kindest thing that has ever happened to you?	Who tells you to be kind?
What does kindness look/feel like?	How do you know when someone is kind? How do you know if you have been kind?	Tell me about someone who is very kind?	Does anyone or anything remind you to be kind?
		What happens when people are kind?	

The interview consisted of 17 questions in all. Clear concepts emerged within a majority of the questions. The first question students were asked had the greatest amount of consensus with 80 percent (n=12) answering that kindness is helping others. Students also described kindness as “being nice” with 60 percent (n=9) including that phrase in their responses. Most students also used these terms when describing what kindness looks like with 46 percent (n=7) stating that kindness looks like helping and 26 percent (n=4) stating that kindness looks like being nice. When describing what kindness feels like, 73 percent of students (n=11) said that it feels good. Of those students who provided further

elaboration on this question, the next most common response at 20 percent (n=3), was that kindness feels like being appreciated or supported. Interestingly, all of the students used positive words to indicate how kindness makes them feel. Less frequent responses include: two students each reported that kindness feels joyful or happy and like they are doing the right thing respectively. Other students individually stated that kindness feels like relief, life changing, like their heart is expanding, like they are doing the right thing, warm, and helpful. All of these descriptions are interpreted in a positive manner so it could be stated that 100 percent (n=15) of those students interviewed reported that kindness feels positive. Students were asked what makes it easier for them to be kind and although there was no clear consensus 26 percent (n=4) stated it is easier to be kind to friends; 20 percent (n=3) stated it is easier to be kind around good people; and 13 percent (n=2) stated it is easier to be kind because they know they will not get in trouble. Students were also asked what makes it harder for them to be kind. The most frequent response was that it is harder to be kind if someone does something mean to you (33 percent, n=5). Two students each, or 13 percent, stated that it is harder to be kind when it is a sacrifice, and if they are having a bad day, respectively.

In order to understand children's experience of kindness, the students were asked how they feel when someone is kind to them, 60 percent of students (n=9) reported that it makes them feel good. Students often elaborated with 20 percent (n=3) also reporting that kindness makes them feel happy as well as respected or appreciated. The majority of students, 60 percent (n=9), reported that when they are kind they feel good. This response was often accompanied with 33 percent (n=5) of students stating that when they are kind they feel helpful. When asked to describe the kindest thing that has ever happened to

them, 26 percent (n=4) of students interviewed described receiving help from a friend. Twenty percent of those interviewed (n=3) stated that the kindest thing that has ever happened to them is getting a gift or a surprise. An additional 20 percent (n=3) described being allowed to do an activity as the kindest thing that had ever happened to them. Overwhelmingly, students described friends as someone in their life who is very kind (73 percent, n=11) with the next closest consensus being 20 percent (n=3) who named their parents as very kind people. When asked what happens when people are kind, 40 percent (n=6) stated that other people around them are kind too. Although it would seem as though this is a majority of the responses, students generally elaborated when answering this question and there was a close range for the number of times key words and concepts occurred. For example: 33 percent (n=5) each stated that there is more happiness or that the person who was kind feels good respectively. Four students, or 26 percent, stated that when people are kind they gain friends, while 20 percent (n=3) stated that when people are kind they may get rewarded.

In exploring how children understand the context in which kindness occurs they were asked when they have to be kind. The majority of students, 33 percent (n=5), responded in a prosocial manner stating “always.” Other students provided more detailed responses with 20 percent (n=3) each stating that they have to be kind when someone is feeling down, when they are with their friends, and at school. Students were asked when it is okay to not be kind and the most frequent response was “when someone is mean to you” which occurred in 53 percent of responses (n=8). The next most common response, 20 percent (n=3), stated that it is never okay to not be kind. This is again a very prosocial and expected response. Students were also asked if there were particular people they did

or did not have to be kind to. The majority of students, 53 percent (n=8), stated that they had to be kind to people in school. The next most common answer for students interviewed as to who they had to be kind to was their parents (46 percent, n=7). Most students, 40 percent (n=6), stated that there was no one they did not have to be kind to. However, 26 percent (n=4) stated that they did not have to be kind to mean people or people who were mean to them. When asked how they know when someone else is kind, 33 percent (n=5) stated that they know someone is kind because they are happy or smiling while 26 percent (n=4) stated they know someone is kind because they are helpful or helping someone else. This statement was qualified by those interviewed to indicate that they were able to tell that this person's happiness, smile, or actions were genuine kindness due to a range of other factors which showed no discernable theme.

In order to understand where the participants were primarily learning their definitions and understanding of kindness several questions were asked. When asked if they talked about kindness in particular areas of their lives, 60 percent of students (n=9) stated they talk about kindness in school, 53 percent (n=8) stated they talk about kindness at home, 53 percent (n=8) reported talking about kindness with their friends sometimes, and 53 percent (n=8) stated they did not talk about kindness in any other contexts. When asked how students talked about kindness in these places, 40 percent (n=6) stated that they talked about kindness in school when the guidance counselor came in to their classrooms for a monthly lesson; 53 percent (n=8) reported that they talk about kindness at home when their parents tell them to be kind; and 40 percent (n=6) stated they talk to their friends about kindness when they see someone else being bad, bullying, or generally being mean to others. Students were also asked who tells them to be kind. The majority

of students listed multiple people but most commonly (66 percent, n=10) students interviewed said that their mothers tell them to be kind. The next most frequent person reported was their fathers with 46 percent (n=7). This was closely followed by teachers with 33 percent (n=5) reporting them as people who told them to be kind. When asked if anyone or anything reminds them to be kind, most students (33 percent, n=5) reported that nothing or no one reminded them. However 20 percent (n=3) of students reported that seeing others being kind or seeing someone in need of help, respectively, reminds them to be kind.

Demographic information was also collected to better understand all of the contexts in which students may be learning what kindness is or incorporating information about what kindness means to them. All but four students were reported to participate in extracurricular activities (Boy/Girl Scouts: 1, Other Service Activity: 1, Sports: 9, Music Lessons: 3, Church/Youth Group: 4, None Reported: 4). Although four students reported participating in church activities, only two specifically stated that they talk about kindness in that setting. However three students referenced religion as an influencing factor in who they have to be kind to and reminders to be kind.

## **Discussion**

### **Summary**

#### *Definition*

In terms of defining kindness, all students used positive language to describe what kindness is, what kindness looks like, and what it feels like. This demonstrates that those interviewed understand and define kindness as a positive trait. More specifically, the most common terms with which students defined kindness were helping, good, and

“being nice.” This understanding is a simplistic definition, nevertheless it is consistent with the definition posited in developmental research by Baldwin & Baldwin (1970).

### *Experience*

The same themes apparent in those to do with definition were also present in the interview questions which asked about the student’s experience with kindness.

Experiencing kindness was also reported in only positive terms. Those interviewed stated they feel good, happy, and respected or appreciated when someone is kind to them. When they are kind the students reported feeling helpful and good. Happiness and feeling good are themes which continued to occur in student responses across interview questions. The appearance of these themes of helping and positive emotions throughout students’ responses indicate that these are fundamental to their understanding of the concept of kindness.

An unexpected theme which emerged in during the interview process was one of reciprocity. This was noted in the students’ answers when asked what makes it easier for them to be kind. The most common responses were when they were with friends and being around good people. The responses were similar to those given when students were asked what factors make it harder to be kind. The most common response student had to this question was that when someone is mean to them they find it hard to be kind. In terms of experience, students reported feeling respected and appreciated when someone is kind to them which encourages the idea that kindness is perceived in terms of reciprocity. Along the same lines, the majority of students reported that they know they have been kind based on the positive reaction of others. This indicates that these students are perceiving kindness as an experience which is dependent on give and take. When asked

what happens when people are kind, the most frequent response from students was that other people are kind in return. A less frequent response given by four of the students was that when people are kind they get more friends. These two responses also represent the sense of reciprocity that kindness appears to have in this group of students. The responses indicate that students expect kindness in return for kindness and that kindness is repaid with friendship or support. The developmental research reviewed as a part of this research touched briefly on older children determining motivations for kindness as obligations (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970). Student responses in this study may have been influenced by a sense of obligation but the responses which indicate the students find it easier to be kind to their friends or people who are kind to them in turn does not appear to fall into the same category as an obligation.

Three students indicated that when they are kind they may receive a reward which seems to contradict prior conclusions found in this literature review. Other research has suggested that children at this age have more intrinsic motivations for kindness. Intrinsic motivation was evident for the majority of student responses, however, 20 percent indicated that rewards motivate kindness. This could be due to various influences including how kindness is encouraged in this school as there was a week during the school year during which student who were “caught being kind” were rewarded with recognition on a main hallway. This sort of system may be keeping the idea of a reward in the definition of some of the participants.

### *Learned*

Students most frequently reported learning about kindness at school and at home. At home, the participants most frequently reported learning about kindness from their

parents, particularly in the context of typical sibling disagreements. This is consistent with the literature review which indicated that parents are invested in encouraging the value of kindness in their children (Weissbourd, et. al., 2014). Participants most frequently reported that they talked about kindness in the school setting when the guidance counselor came in to discuss the word of the month. Kindness and caring were the words for the month of December at this specific school.

### *Context*

During the interview the students most frequently reported that they had to be kind to people at school. This may be due to the context in which the questions were being asked, a school setting, or because school is the context in which students most often report learning about kindness, or it is the context in which they are most often present. The guidance counselor's lessons were reported by the students as well. From their descriptions those lessons were more explicit in a description and definition of kindness than their descriptions of simple interventions from parents telling them to be kind to their siblings. The themes of helping and happiness continued when exploring whether the context impacts the ways in which students experience kindness. More specifically, students reported that they know others are kind because they are smiling, happy, and helping or being helpful. In general, student responses indicate they are gaining a large part of their knowledge pertaining to their understanding of kindness at school.

### *Implications for School Psychologists and Practice*

The positive view that students appear to hold of kindness being primarily defined as helping, being nice, doing good, and causing good feelings are encouraging indications

that children continue to develop prosocial understandings of kindness. This is not an unexpected finding but it is important to know the basis of how students understand a concept in order to build upon it and encourage growth. Although kindness is generally understood in undefined terms rather than concrete definitions, having students describe their understanding sheds light on where their understanding truly lies rather than comparing it to adult understanding of the concept. Since the majority of students interviewed reported learning about kindness explicitly in the school setting, this could be a major area to impact their growth and prosocial learning. This study and studies like it in the future can hopefully help shape positive behavioral intervention programs to better meet the needs of students.

It was particularly interesting that three students responded that when someone is kind they might get rewarded. As discussed above, this may have been due in part to how the particular school teaches and reinforces kindness; however, this may also be a part of how children this age understand kindness and is something to consider when implementing programs. Extrinsic rewards may also be something to consider weaning out of programs at a younger age than is being done now to help establish a more intrinsic motivation for kindness.

The theme of reciprocation which was shown in the student responses was one which was unexpected. As kindness is typically talked about in terms of helping others with no expectations of benefit to the self this is not a response which had been previously considered. However, this may be a missing element from programs currently in place to encourage kindness. Although it may not be the ultimate goal of programs or the understanding of kindness, it is a piece of how students this age are defining kindness

and it was a theme which occurred across research questions. Being able to address this explicitly with children will hopefully help to encourage growth of their understanding.

One way to address the component of reciprocity with children may be through a guidance lesson similar to the one discussed previously. Students frequently identified guidance lessons as a context in which they learned about kindness indicating this is a setting in which active learning and understanding is taking place. The same framework as the previously discussed lesson could be used: a social story and an activity to illustrate the concept. The story should be one which depicts a child of similar age faced with several situations in which they may show kindness to others and several different responses to the kind acts. Addressing the range of reciprocation that students expect, as well as reciprocations which they may not expect, can help to expand their understanding of the experience of kindness. The story should include reactions from others as positive but also reactions which students may not anticipate such as indifference or no discernable response to the protagonist in the story being kind. The students could then engage in a mindfulness exercise as a group in thinking about where they feel kindness in their bodies, what they visualize when they think about kindness, and how they would react in each of the situations of the story. More tangibly, students could illustrate the reactions they expect to accompany kindness. It would also be productive to discuss with students as a group what makes it easier and harder for them to be kind as well as who they should and should not be kind to. Themes from their responses to the discussion could be written up to provide a visual reminder for students.

Alternatively, the interview questions could be adapted for an intervention group setting. Either on its own, or accompanying groups on mindfulness, social skills,

friendship building, and more could add in a meeting in which kindness is discussed. This discussion would likely center around the experience and context of kindness but it may help to provide good insight to student understanding as well as a topic of conversation that often goes unaddressed directly.

### *Limitations and Future Research*

The major limitations of this study lie with the subject pool. It is skewed in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. Of the 15 participants 10 were female and five were male, 14 were Caucasian and one was Hispanic, and all students were between the ages of 10 and 11. Without further research these results are not considered to be generalizable to fifth grade students in other areas. Also all those who participated were first volunteered by their parents. Despite the fact that each student was given the opportunity to decline participation only one did so. There may have been pressure from parents to participate which could have impacted the responses given. Along the same line, at least two participants told the researcher that they had specifically asked their parents to participate. Due to the entirely voluntary nature of this study it may be that the group was more inclined to have more prosocial traits and thus more inclined to answer in a certain manner. The size of the subject pool is another factor which limits the extrapolation of results. A small group of no more than 15 participants was determined to be necessary due to the time constraints of the researcher's internship position. Understanding of two specific interview questions is also considered to be a limitation of this study. A majority of those students interviewed needed the questions "What does kindness look like/feel like?" to be elaborated upon before they would answer. When students responded with confusion to these questions the researcher would elaborate with "When you think about

kindness what do you see? When you think about kindness what do you feel?" Students were then able to more easily respond but this lack of initial understanding may have adversely impacted student responses. Future interviews should edit these questions to either start with the elaborated questions or in another way to make them more approachable and easier to understand for students.

In the future the researcher would like to replicate this study in other settings with more participants, especially more diverse groups of participants, to determine if those themes which emerged in this research are consistent. Although no true differences in gender can be understood through this sample alone as it is dominated by female participants, it is interesting to note that associating kindness with "doing the right thing" was only done by the male participants in this study. This would be another area to explore in future research. A gender difference has not been researched as far as previous literature shows but it would be a point of interest due to the different social expectations for males and females which impacts their expression of emotions and social traits.

There can be no determinations made from this study as to the effect of extracurricular activities as the majority of those interviewed participated in activities outside of school, particularly sports, which may indicate a similar experience. The same should be stated about any determining factors based on ethnicity as well due to a non-diverse cohort of participants. However there were at least three students who specifically referenced Christianity in their responses, one making religious references throughout the entirety of his interview, which is something that had been considered in previous research. Previous research compared responses between students in a public school setting to those in a private parochial school setting (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970). There

were too few students who provided answers from this lens, and never within the same questions, to make any sort of extrapolation from the responses. However, this would be interesting to consider for future research. If students who are regularly exposed to religious activities identified similar or different themes as compared to students who did not participate in religious activities.

The researcher interviewed the students about their definitions of kindness but did not examine student's kind acts or how the student was perceived by their peers. This would be an added factor to understanding how children understand kindness. Children may be able to define the concept but their actions may not be reflective of that understanding. In future research an understanding of how students are perceived by their peers may add a layer of understanding to student responses. Asking students to record acts of kindness may also help to gain insight into not just their level of understanding but also how well they are incorporating that understanding into everyday life.

Due to the potential for more prosocial students to volunteer to take part in this study, it would be interesting to interview students who are maybe less naturally prosocially inclined. Future research could interview the first 15 students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. The definitions and understanding of kindness for these children may be very similar but it could also differ greatly from those responses recorded in this current research. Alternatively, the disciplinary record of any students interviewed in the future could be collected and included as a part of their background information used to inform researchers as to student experiences.

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## Appendix I

1. Tell me about kindness. What do you think it is?
2. What makes it easier to be kind?
3. What makes it harder to be kind?
4. What does kindness look/feel like?
5. How do you feel when someone is kind to you? What about when they are not kind?
6. How do you feel when you are kind?
7. When is it okay to not be kind?
8. Are there people you don't have to be kind to?
9. What is the kindest thing that has ever happened to you?
10. Tell me about someone who is very kind.
11. What happens when people are kind?
12. Do you talk about kindness at school? At home? With your friends? Anywhere else?
13. How do you talk about kindness in these places?
14. How do you know when someone is kind? How do you know if you have been kind?
15. Who tells you to be kind?

## Appendix II

Dear Parents,

I am the school psychologist intern at \*ELEMENTARY SCHOOL\*. I am contacting you about the option for your student to participate in a research project. This research is simply a 30 minute interview with your student about what kindness means to them. Your student's answers will be used to write my thesis project and complete my graduate program in school psychology through James Madison University. Participation is completely optional and has no effect on your student's grades. I am not collecting or using any identifiable information in this research and the information of all students who choose to participate will be kept confidential. I am planning to use an audio recorder to capture student responses in order to be sure I get them word-for-word. I am also planning to promptly transcribe the responses, within the same day I interview the student, and then delete the recording from the interview. I would talk to them during school hours but not during instructional time. This means I would only pull students from resource class or ask them to eat lunch with me. I may also pull them from recess if there happens to be a day when the weather is too poor to go outside and recess time is spent indoors. This would be a one-time meeting and I would not have to pull students from these activities again. There are no direct benefits or rewards offered to the students for participating but I am hoping that the information I gather will allow school professionals to gain a better understanding of how students think about kindness as well as to develop programs and lessons which are better able to encourage kindness in the school setting.

Along with this letter I have included a consent form. If you are interested in allowing your student to participate, please return the signed and completed form. I am looking for 15 students to participate. The first 15 students to return the consent form will be the ones who are selected. Please feel free to contact me by email at \*SCHOOL EMAIL\* with any questions.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Coalter, M.A.,  
School Psychologist Intern, \*SCHOOL SYSTEM\*  
Ed.S. Candidate, School Psychology, James Madison University

## Appendix III

### **Consent to Participate in Research**

#### **Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Elizabeth Coalter from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to interview children in order to gain information about how they define the concept of kindness. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her education specialist thesis.

#### **Research Procedures**

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview and sociometric measure that will be administered to individual participants in their school or at the religious institution where recruited. Children will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to their definitions and understanding of kindness. Responses will be audio taped in order to ensure accurate collection of data.

#### **Time Required**

Participation in this study will require approximately 30 minutes of your child's time.

#### **Risks**

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

#### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to the participants in this study however the data collected may benefit the field of school psychology and lead to future research studies or programs which are better tailored to student's understanding of the concept of kindness.

#### **Confidentiality**

The results of this research will be presented at the James Madison University graduate psychology symposium and may also be presented at a conference at a future date. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers including audio recordings will be destroyed.

#### **Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Elizabeth Coalter

Department of Graduate Psychology

James Madison University

coalteer@dukes.jmu.edu

Tammy Gilligan

Department of Graduate Psychology

James Madison University

Telephone: (540)-568-6564

gilligtd@jmu.edu

**Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject**

Dr. David Cockley

Chair, Institutional Review Board

James Madison University

(540) 568-2834

[cocklede@jmu.edu](mailto:cocklede@jmu.edu)

**Giving of Consent**

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent for my child to be audio taped during the interview. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant Guardian (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant Guardian (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



## Appendix IV

**CHILD ASSENT FORM** (Ages 7-12)IRB # **170147****ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEFINITIONS OF KINDNESS**

I would like to invite you to take part in this study. I am asking you because you are a child in either third or fifth grade at this school

In this study I want to know more about what kids your age think about kindness. To do this study I will ask you some questions about kindness. I will also give you a piece of paper to write down the names of your classmates and how you feel about working or playing with them. I will also record your answers to the questions I ask to make sure I get your answer word for word.

Participating in this study will not hurt you in any way. There is no risk to participating and your grades will not be effected in any way. No one but the interviewer will know your answers. If any of the information you give is shared your name will not be included and no one will know you were involved with this study. The reason I am doing this study is to learn more about how kids understand what kindness is and what it means to them.

Your parents have been asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can stop at any time.

If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to have your parent reach out to me.

**IF YOU PRINT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.**

---

Name of Child (printed)

---

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

Elizabeth Coalter  
School Psychologist Intern  
James Madison University  
email: [coalteer@dukes.jmu.edu](mailto:coalteer@dukes.jmu.edu)

Appendix V

**Table 2: Student Interview Responses**

<i>Definition</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Learned</i>
<b>1. Tell me about kindness. What do you think it is? Give four examples.</b>	<b>7. When do you have to be kind?</b>	<b>5. How do you feel when someone is kind to you?</b>	<b>14. Do you talk about kindness at school? At home? With your friends? Anywhere else?</b>
Helping	When anybody is feeling down and they can't get through	Happy that people are helping me so I won't do something wrong	Sometimes, Yeah, A little bit, Not really
Put yourself before others, do the right thing, help	Always	Respected	Sometimes, Yeah, Sometimes, No
** Christian emphasis** Doing something nice for someone else even if it means sacrificing something for you. Doing the right thing at the right time	You should always be kind, especially when it honors God.	Good	I don't know, Sometimes, Occasionally, Not sure
Helping	When someone is hurt, with your friends, or if an adult tells you to	Glad	Yes, A little bit, Not really, Not really
Helping, being caring, not hurting, loving you	When someone is hurt, or not feeling good, with disabled people, and younger siblings	Thankful when people help me and I usually play with them at recess. Supported and liked	Yes, Usually, Sometimes, No
Friendship, good stuff, others will help you	When you have to decide whether or not to be friends with someone	Great and like I'll do something kind back to them	Yes, Yes, Yeah, No
Nice, opposite of being rude	When you have more than other peoples and they don't have enough	Good and it makes me want to be nice to other people which makes me happy	Yes, Yes, Yes sometimes, At church
Being generous, nice, helping	It's always the right choice but I try harder when my friends are having a bad day and I need to not tell them I've had worse.	I feel good but sometimes I don't even notice it or I can tell people don't really mean it.	Yes, Yes, Occasionally, Over the phone with my mom or nana

Using manners, being nice to new people	When someone asks you a question or if they need your help	Grateful	Sometimes, Sometimes, Yeah, Pretty much everywhere
Being nice, showing respect, helping others	If somebody needs help	Good because I know they respect me and like me as a friend	Yeah, A little bit, Yeah, No
Being nice and helpful	At school, to all people really	Good because I would want them to help me if I needed it	Yes, Yes, Yeah sometimes, Not a specific place but it can come up
Being nice, helping others	To family members, friends, other students, teachers	Happy and it fixes any bad emotions I might be feeling	Yeah, Kind of, Yes, No
To be nice. People helping others.	When people are kind to you	Good	Yeah, Yes, Yes, No
Something to do for someone else to help them	Around elderly people, when you're at school to not get in trouble	Appreciated and good	Not so much, A little bit, Not really so much, Sometimes
Being nice and helping others, something everybody should do	All the time	Good because it means they like being my friend, how I act, how I look, and don't care about anything else	Not on a regular basis but sometimes, No not really, Sometimes, Sometimes at church,
<b><i>Definition</i></b>	<b><i>Context</i></b>	<b><i>Experience</i></b>	<b><i>Learned</i></b>
<b>2. What makes it easier to be kind?</b>	<b>8. When is it okay to not be kind?</b>	<b>6. How do you feel when you are kind?</b>	<b>15. How do you talk about kindness in these places?</b>
Because you know you won't get in trouble for it and you won't have regrets	When you know they can get through, or if there are a lot of other people are helping	Happy for myself and the other person because they got help and I helped them	School: Last week we did something about kindness with the guidance counselors Home: If you be kind to someone they'll be kind to you – basically you'll both benefit Friends: If someone's feeling down we do something for it Other: N/A

<p>Being around good people</p>	<p>When someone is being mean to you – sometimes you can be kind but if you need to defend yourself then you can</p>	<p>Like I helped out in the situation and I did what some others didn't do</p>	<p>School: It's more like I think it in my mind if someone's doing something not right Home: My mom and I talk about how you always have to be kind to people Friends: Rarely because we're mostly just playing but if we see somebody doing the wrong thing we'll talk about it and get out of the bad situation Other: N/A</p>
<p>When you know that it honors God</p>	<p>Never, unless there's an evil diabolical guy who's trying to rule the world. Although the Bible does say to love your enemies. But its maybe okay to not be kind to someone evil</p>	<p>Good because I know that it honors God</p>	<p>All: Like it's a good thing, because it is</p>
<p>When I'm with my friends or with someone new who I don't like in any particular manner</p>	<p>If someone has done something bad to a person or to you, I guess it's okay to be not as kind to them as someone getting hurt by them</p>	<p>Better, like I've done something better</p>	<p>School: The guidance counselor talks about it with her words of the month and there are posters up in the hall. She writes the ways to not be kind and we came up with different ways to be kind and erased the ways to not be kind Home: My parents will say you have to be kind to your siblings instead of hurting them Friends: not really because we're all kind to each other Other: Not really</p>
<p>Because when you're kind you get a weight lifted off your shoulders and you're not holding in any secrets and you have another friend</p>	<p>When someone is mean to you. You don't want to be mean back to them but you also don't want to be kind because that's just telling them to bully you more.</p>	<p>Like if I was a plant, I feel like I've sprouted more and I feel like another seed has been planted so I can have another plan. It just feels so good to be kind</p>	<p>School: With the guidance counselor. I like to listen to what she says because it affects my heart Home: When my brother and I fight my mom will sit us down and ask us what we think kindness means. Friends: Sometimes when someone is trying to make them do something that</p>

			isn't nice and how we can teach kindness to the other person. Other: N/A
It's easier to be kind by doing the right thing and having fun while doing it.	When there's really bad bullies and nobody else is around you and they hurt your feelings so you can kind of hurt theirs back a little bit	Really really really good and I'll do more kind stuff to them	School: saying kind words, not mean ones and if you do say sorry Home: I say if somebody was kind to me and that I'm going to be kind back to them and to other people Friends: I don't really talk about it like that but I use kind words and try to be kind to others Other: N/A
Having a positive attitude and being around positive people	It's never okay to not be kind. When people aren't kind to you you're supposed to be kind back to them even if you don't want to because maybe they'll start to be kind	Happy, and like the people that I'm being kind to have a good impression of me and they're going to want to be nice to me and other people are going to want to be nice to me	School: With the guidance counselor Home: At dinner we talk about how you're supposed to stick up for your siblings, other people, be nice to people. You don't ever want to hurt somebody, you don't ever want anybody to hurt you and if they do you need to tell and then you need to start being kind so they don't do it again. Friends: Yes but it's not one of our main discussions because we are kind people. If someone's mean to us or someone else we talk about it and how we can make it better
I don't think kindness can be easy, you just have to do it. It's easier to be kind when I feel good.	Sometimes you don't have to be kind because it's wrong like when your friends are doing something you know they're not supposed to.	That's when kindness makes you feel the best because you might get a reward for it and even if you don't get a reward it still makes you feel good because you know that you just brightened up someone's day	School: With the guidance counselor and her lessons as a class. We talked about what it means and gave examples Home: With my parents about how to be kind but only when I get in trouble at school and they say "that's not how we raised you" and maybe I'll get a punishment Friends: Only when

			someone's not nice and we talk about how to be nicer Other: Over the phone with my mom or Nana when I've gotten in trouble
To talk to grownups when you need help	When someone is asking you to do something that will be harmful to you or bad	Warm	School: If someone did something really nice and someone is really using their manners and speaking up and doing their work I notice Home: Pretty much the same Friend: It's the same with them too Other: N/A
It's easier because you don't have to worry about getting in trouble or worrying about hurting anybody	If somebody is being hurtful or mean to you	Good because I know that I just helped somebody	School: With the guidance counselor like ways to appreciate other people Home: Through other people and other kids – to show them respect both in school and outside of school Friends: We talk about people who have gotten bullied and how to be kind to them and show respect to them Other: N/A
When somebody needs help	If someone threatens you or something	Like a nice person	School: Usually when a friend is not acting normal or something. We talk about how usually their nice and we'll tell them that they're acting different and ask them to be nicer. Home: When my siblings and I fight, mom will tell us to stop and be nice to one another Friends: It's the same as when I'm at school Other: N/A
It's easier to be kind to people you know really	I don't know I haven't been in one of those situations yet	It feels nice and like I'm standing up for other people	School: When someone is being nice to me I tell them about my backstory and I

<p>well and that are already my friends</p>			<p>tell them they're nice and kind                  Home: I tell my mom if I'm kind or someone is kind to me and I tell my brother                  Friends: I don't know                  Other: N/A</p>
<p>I'm always kind, it's easy for me.</p>	<p>When people are mean to you and they're bullying you</p>	<p>Good</p>	<p>School: When me and my friends see nice things we always tell each other like people being nice to each other                  Home: I don't talk about kindness that much at home. It's my parents talking about how bullying people can really hurt them and lead to bad things.                  Friends: We just tell each other when we see nice things.                  Other: N/A</p>
<p>When people are kind to me back its easier to be kind to them</p>	<p>It's okay to not be kind when you're by yourself and not thinking good thoughts</p>	<p>I feel good about it</p>	<p>School: Not so much but I am really kind at school. I talked about it more when I was in younger grades and my friends were kind of being mean to other people                  Home: Sometimes when we're out at stores and someone does something that helps me I talk about how nice it was. Since my mom and dad are divorced they sometimes talk mean about each other and I point it out a little                  Friends: We don't really anymore</p>
<p>It's easier to be kind because it helps you get friends and it helps people like you</p>	<p>I don't think there's any time that you don't have to be kind</p>	<p>I feel really good inside like I did something good</p>	<p>School: the guidance counselor comes in and talks about kindness but not on a regular basis                  Home: not really                  Friends: Sometimes when they're sad or something like that. We mostly just show them that we still want to hang out and be</p>

			<p>their friends</p> <p>Other: well sometimes when I go to church with my aunt and uncle they'll talk about kindness and what Jesus wanted and didn't want</p>
<i>Definition</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Learned</i>
<b>3. What makes it harder to be kind?</b>	<b>9. Are there people you have to be kind to? Are there people you don't have to be kind to?</b>	<b>10. What is the kindest thing that has ever happened to you?</b>	<b>16. Who tells you to be kind?</b>
Sometimes you're not sure if the person will like what you're doing or if they will be angry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- My friends</li> <li>- You don't have to be kind to everybody like strangers because you don't really know who they are</li> </ul>	My best friend helping me and reassuring me and acting the same as me to support me	All the adults and myself
Trying to fit in with other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- My mom, dad, teachers, friends, and anybody that trusts me</li> <li>- No, not really</li> </ul>	Mom and dad taking me and my siblings on trips and protecting us	Teachers, mom, dad, and relatives
When it's a sacrifice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Bible says that the greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself so really everybody I guess</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>	God sacrificing himself for me	God and the Bible
If somebody did something I didn't like it would be harder to be kind to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New kids at school to make them feel welcome</li> <li>- You don't have to be kind to anyone unless you're specifically told to be by an adult if you're a child</li> </ul>	My parents letting myself do stuff like band	Adults mostly
Someone might not agree with what you're saying and you could lose friends that way	Homeless people, a disability person. I like to be kind to all people except for mean people unless they change and start to be nice	My friend defending me when I was being bullied for being short	Teachers, guidance counselors, my mom and dad
When you choose the wrong path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles, teachers, parents, other kids</li> <li>- Strangers and sometimes pets because they might do</li> </ul>	Going to school and learning how to read and write	Myself and my mom sometimes

	something you don't like and you have to train them		
If people aren't very kind to you and if people don't treat you nice or if you don't have a positive attitude and aren't around people with positive attitudes	- My siblings, my dad, my mom, the teachers, students, other people – there's nobody that you don't have to be kind to - It depends on what it's about. It's okay to not be mind to somebody, or people, if the problem keeps happening and it's their fault	Getting pets as a surprise from my parents	My mom
When I'm having a bad day or when I know my friends are doing something wrong but I don't want to tell them I don't want them to do it.	- Adults, my teachers, my parents, my principles, kind of everyone but I don't always when I get frustrated  - No	When my friends at my old school all gathered around me and cried and gave me hugs when they found out I was moving away	Nobody
If you ask a student and they give you the wrong answer	- Grownups - If someone's kind of being mean to you, you almost don't have to be kind to them	Getting to be a part of an event which teaches you how to stand up to a person and talk to them and show your animals	My mom and dad
It's hard to do things for people and it can be challenging sometimes	- Adults and other people like that - Maybe but most of the time not because it's always good to be kind. But if someone is being mean or hurtful you don't have to be kind to them	When I was hurt and my cousin went and got help for me	My parents, my friends, and family
If somebody was hurt and crying it would be hard to communicate with them and I wouldn't really know how to help them	- Family, kids at school, anybody you really talk to - No, well sometimes I'm not nice to them but I'm supposed to be. If people are mean to me I wouldn't want to do anything nice for them	My friend came over to my house to hang out with me even though she wasn't feeling good	Adults
If you're being bullied by someone you don't want to be kind to them so it makes it hard to be kind to them	- My parents, my brother, my little cousin, my other cousin, and the teachers - Strangers if I don't know	When I was in kindergarten I didn't have any friends but someone stood up for	The guidance counselor, my mother and teachers

	them and pets that are not my pets unless they don't have a tag on them	me and we've been friends ever since	
Sometimes when people are mean it's kind of hard to be kind to them but not that hard to be nice back	- My mom, my dad, my family relatives, and people in my school - No	People giving me compliments like about how they like my hair and wish they had hair like me	My parents
When they're not listening to you at all or not nice in any kind of way	- My parents, my sister, people at school. My step-brothers, everyone in my family, and people who like open the door for you - Not necessarily, even when people are mean to you, you should always be kind back to them	When my sister opened the door for me for the first time ever	Teachers, when I go to a nice restaurant my parents remind me to be kind, anywhere there's a lot of people it reminds me to be kind.
Because sometimes people don't really like you or the way you look so it's hard to be kind to them	- You have to be kind to everybody not just a certain person - There's no one that I don't have to be kind to	My parents giving me a surprise or present.	The teachers and my parents and the guidance counselor too
<b><i>Definition</i></b>	<b><i>Context</i></b>	<b><i>Experience</i></b>	<b><i>Learned</i></b>
<b>4. What does kindness look/feel like?</b>	<b>11. How do you know when someone is kind? How do you know if you have been kind?</b>	<b>12. Tell me about someone who is very kind?</b>	<b>17. Does anyone or anything remind you to be kind?</b>
It looks like friendship It feels like joy and relief	- When they're going straight to help and they're not doing it for any reason other than being kind - The other person starts smiling a lot and don't bring up being upset anymore	My best friend because she helps me a lot	When other people are kind it reminds me to be kind too. The adults also show me and remind me to be kind
Looks like other people doing the right thing, putting themselves before others, and doing what it takes to help others Feels good, life changing	- When they choose to do the right choice - When I choose the right choice and I don't just walk by the situation, I hop in and do the right thing	My friend, he's supportive and always sticking with me. He's really fun and nice.	The posters in the hall or just seeing someone in need.

<p>Looks like many things like giving something to somebody or doing the right thing for them Feels good</p>	<p>- Sometimes you can tell right away but sometimes it's something that's for the best even if you can't see it at the moment. It could be someone giving you something to help you - Usually by the impact it has on people, it usually makes them more cheerful</p>	<p>God. My best friend because he helps me in situations where I'm confused.</p>	<p>When I read the Bible and remember the Bible</p>
<p>Looks like somebody helping someone in a way Feel glad they're helping me in a way</p>	<p>- They'll help you or let you do something - When I've helped someone or let them use something of mine</p>	<p>My friend because she makes things out of her sewing supplies and then gives them to her friends</p>	<p>Not necessarily</p>
<p>Looks like helping someone if they drop something or need to borrow something Feels like your heart gets bigger and you don't have weight on your shoulders and you have friends to support you</p>	<p>- I know when I look at their face and they have a true smile. - When I help someone and see that they smile</p>	<p>My friend who protected me when I was being bullied.</p>	<p>In my family we talk about being "Helpers and healers not hurters" which is what I keep in my head to help me be kind to other people. And my friend who always smiles and reminds me of how happy you can make someone if you're really kind.</p>
<p>Looks like friendship and fun and being nice to a lot of other people Feels like you've done the right thing and you have a good feeling that you can do it</p>	<p>- When they're smiling and laughing - When you make someone else laugh and you laugh at the same time.</p>	<p>My friend, she's really nice because she barely gets mad at anybody if you say the wrong thing and she's really funny and makes lots of people laugh</p>	<p>No, not really</p>
<p>Looks like a smile, good laughs, hugs, high fives and stuff like that Feels good because you know that people are being nice to you and not mean to you</p>	<p>- You can kind of see it in their facial expressions and the actions they do and you can ask the other people they're talking to - Other people tell me I've been nice or they smile and are very happy</p>	<p>My best friend, we always get each other gifts and have sleep overs and make each other things</p>	<p>When I see someone do something nice to someone and their face just lights up with excitement it makes you want to be kind to other people</p>
<p>Looks like when you're helping someone or the tiniest things that make a big difference to someone. Feels good because you</p>	<p>- When they're ready to listen or just give me a hug - I usually don't know when I'm kind. I hope I'm</p>	<p>My friends because even if they're mean to me, it just feels so nice having someone that's there for me</p>	<p>A lot of things like books I read and my friends helping me or when someone is kind to me</p>

know you're doing the right thing.	kind but I don't really notice it		
Looks like people sharing and talking and not just on their electronics and not talking to people and not interacting Feels warm and I feel good	- When they use their manners or ask for something politely - I can feel it because I feel good	The people who work in the office at school and the guidance counselor and everyone else who works here	Seeing people do something wrong tells you that you should not do that and you should do the opposite thing
Looks like helping people with their needs and things like that I feel good because you know you're helping somebody and making them feel good by helping them	- Because they're not disrespecting you - If you get somebody to smile or they show they're very happy	My parents because they're always doing stuff for me.	When I think about my family and seeing people that are hurt it reminds me to be kind and to try to bring up their spirit
Looks like helping someone when they need it and giving advice when they need it Feels good	- Nice people are usually happy so I can tell by how they look - People tell me thanks for helping and I can feel it	My step-mom because she acts more like a mom and does things for us that she doesn't have to	If I see the principle or somebody who kind of tells me to be nice. So adults or people who are in charge of stuff
Looks like picking up something for someone, talking to them and just being nice Feels great, it's nice to have someone you know that cares about you and you care about someone else.	- When they say nice words to you, play with you, and do stuff with you. - I know I've been kind if they use nice words and say thank you and I was doing something nice for other people	My friend who is nice to her little sister and big brother and she's the nicest person I've ever met	No
Looks like not making fun of people Feel happy because it feels good to be kind to people	- They smile when they say things to be kind when - I know I've been kind when people are kind back to me	My friends, all of them, because they're not mean to me, they're always nice, and they give me compliments	No
Looks like people helping each other Feels nice when someone is kind to you, feel appreciated	- If they're nice to you and are speaking nicely to you and doing stuff that helps that's nice too - When you're kind to someone you get this feeling like you feel good about what you did.	My parents because they help me with things	When someone is mean that reminds me but you should always remember to be kind

<p>Looks like being nice to somebody and not leaving them out. Feels good because badness feels like if your heart is stone but if you're kind it makes your heart soft</p>	<p>- By their attitude and how they talk and look at you. Nice people have a higher voice and are more open and inviting - Other people's reactions to what I do tells me if I've been kind</p>	<p>My friends because they always hang out with me and talk to me and don't ever leave me out</p>	<p>Not really, it just comes to my head</p>
<p><b>Definition</b></p>	<p><b>Context</b></p>	<p><b>Experience</b></p>	<p><b>Learned</b></p>
		<p><b>13. What happens when people are kind?</b></p>	
		<p>The room, atmosphere, goes up. Like there's more happiness.</p>	
		<p>The person they're helping feels good because they know someone cares and will help if they need it.</p>	
		<p>Usually the people that they are kind to are also kind</p>	
		<p>Sometimes they can get rewarded or they can just feel better by themselves</p>	
		<p>When people are kind, they feel like they've sprouted, they feel good, and they have more friends</p>	
		<p>They go to other people and be kind to them and then you start being kind to other people</p>	
		<p>It makes everything better. It makes people want to be nice and do nice things for other people. It makes other people want to be kind.</p>	
		<p>Great things, like my friends being nice for me</p>	

		and showing that they care about me	
		They sometimes get a reward	
		If they were bad before it could bring up their spirit and they might be nicer and more kind to other people	
		People are nice to them and treat them nice and they're more likely to get something and make more friends	
		They stand up for you	
		Kindness is the opposite of meanness and when people are kind they get along better because they're nice to each other	
		They get along very well	
		People don't get left out and don't feel bad inside which is good because Jesus didn't like badness. People feel good and everyone is happier	