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COMMUNICATING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS: UNDERSTANDING LISTENING AND SENSECHECKING AT WORK

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By
Leanna Hartsough
Lexington, Kentucky
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Lexington, Kentucky
2022

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

COMMUNICATING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS: UNDERSTANDING LISTENING AND SENSECHECKING AT WORK

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations made workplace changes, which added an additional challenge to employees' communication. However, mindfulness may help members strengthen their workplace interactions. Mindfulness is an intentional open awareness to the present moment (Shapiro, 2009). The theoretical framework of collective mindfulness includes organizational mindfulness, which is mindfulness from a top-down approach and mindful organizing, which is a bottom-up approach to mindfulness at work. This dissertation extends research on collective mindfulness by including listening, individual mindfulness aspects, and sensemaking to examine how collective mindfulness members make meaning of changes due to COVID-19. I observed 26 meetings and interviewed 23 employees in an automotive organization in the East Coast of the United States (U.S.) that conducts annual leadership and communicating mindfully training. Findings indicate that (a) employees communicated collective mindfulness as they managed conflict through open discussions to solve problems, (b) employees communicated individual mindfulness practices of listening to form collective mindfulness by conducting their annual leadership training and creating open learning environments, (c) employees made sense together through a new term called sensechecking, and (d) employees made sense of changes due to COVID-19 by appreciating their company's support and by being resilient. Sensechecking is an extension of sensemaking, in which employees check with their teams to understand how their message is perceived and ask their teams to make meaning collectively. The results of this dissertation also expand on the theoretical components of collective mindfulness by adding the following: focusing on the bright side of situations, building trust among employees, and making operations more efficient. Organizations may adopt trainings that teach employees how to mindfully communicate to create collective mindfulness. Additionally, employees may learn how to engage in the sensechecking process to strengthen team communication at work.

KEYWORDS: *Organizational Communication, Collective Mindfulness, Listening, Sensemaking, Sensechecking*

Leanna Hartsough
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4/28/2022
Date

COMMUNICATING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE MINDFULNESS:
UNDERSTANDING LISTENING AND SENSECHECKING AT WORK

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Date

DEDICATION

To my parents, Heidi VanAuker and Andrew Hartsough. Growing up, I heard countless stories of the challenges that you both faced at work. Many of these challenges consisted of dealing with difficult management and communication issues. Although these frustrations at work came home, they also inspired me. Both of you inspired me to work hard like you do. Your experiences encouraged me to explore ways of creating positive work environments for happier lives.

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First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my partner, Adam Hanshaw, my family, and my friends for all their support and kindness throughout my dissertation process. I was hesitant to post anything about my research on social media, but the few times I did, I unexpectedly received an abundance of support and care from my family and friends. Although it would not be the purpose of my posts, they would say exactly what I needed to hear as I went through my dissertation. I didn't know I needed to hear what they had to say until they said it. For on social media and when I talked to friends and family in-person, on zoom, or on the phone; when I was stressed, they empathized. When I was excited, they celebrated with me. When I was uncertain about situations, they provided certainty and reason. Also as part of my family, my lovely dog and kitten, Annabelle and Meeka, would always be there during my writing breaks, which kept me smiling and in a good mood throughout the process.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my outstanding advisor and committee members. When I was exploring advisors, I sent Dr. Jennifer Scarduzio my dissertation proposal and the next day, she sent back wonderful constructive feedback. I read through the comments and automatically knew she was going to be my advisor. She finds the time to review and provide feedback on every section, possibly even every sentence that is written in this dissertation. Dr. Jennifer Scarduzio and my other committee members I chose, Dr. William Howe, Dr. Chike Anyaegbunam, and Dr. Ronald Hustedde are truly considerate and helpful individuals. After graduation, I will likely consider them as part of my friends and family, as they have reflected what I described in the previous paragraph. I also appreciate my outside examiner, Dr. Anna

Hoover, who chose to dedicate her time and effort to review my dissertation and to be a part of my dissertation defense.

My dissertation setting is in a car dealership, which brings back warm memories of a close family friend, Shelly Carlile, who worked in a car dealership. Shelly acted as a second mother to my brother and me and she sadly passed away in 2012. I want to acknowledge Shelly and her husband, Joe, and children, Ben and Jake. My brother and I were lucky to have grown up with the Carlile family, and we appreciate my parents for meeting and becoming so close to Joe and Shelly.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and recognize my fellow camping community, who have enhanced my passion for cultural immersion. I would like to give a special recognition to one of our members, Kevin Little, who sadly passed away during the time that I was writing my results section of this dissertation, and his wife, Laura Little. Laura introduced me to our camp community, and she has gone through so much to support her husband while he was sick for a couple years. Shelly Carlile and Kevin Little will be forever remembered. My warmest wishes go to Joe, Ben, and Jake Carlile and Laura Little.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations tend to operate in environments that are complex, dynamic, interdependent, and under time pressure (Renecle et al., 2020). It is vital for workers to be aware of what is going on, communicate with each other, and to learn and develop continuously. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a vast number of organizations have switched to virtual settings (Feintzeig, 2020), which adds an additional challenge to members' communication. The new online workspaces and other organizational changes may hinder communication and/or foster new ways of communicating in organizations (Tredinnick & Laybats, 2020).

An organization's collective mindfulness, which is both mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness (Yadav, 2020), and employee's listening may strengthen communication, both online and in-person. Administrative leaders may recognize that mindfulness could possibly help prevent these challenges and/or may strengthen organizational development. When leaders decide to promote mindfulness with a top-down approach, organizational mindfulness can be fostered in organizations (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). The top-down approach is when administrative leaders or individuals at the top of the organizational hierarchy communicate with the employees below them in the hierarchy. This communication flows down the level of hierarchy. Furthermore, administrative leaders may decide to train their employees on mindfulness to help spread it in their organization (Martínez-Córcoles & Vogus, 2020). When frontline workers are trained in mindfulness or how to communicate mindfully (Huston, 2015), this may develop mindful organizing as a result/training outcome. As a result of training and top-

down communication, mindful organizing may strengthen listening, mindfulness, and communication practices.

Collective mindfulness research, such as Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001, 2007) high reliability organization (HRO) model, does not explain how communication practices develop mindfulness. Many of the collective mindfulness research has been on leadership and organizational practices rather than specific communication practices (Renecle et al., 2020). Novak and Sellnow (2009) argue that communication practices in collective mindfulness enactment and sustainability would extend the mindfulness framework and help to reconstruct and renegotiate workplace communication practices. This dissertation will expand research on organizational mindfulness in a top-down communication approach and mindful organizing in a bottom-up communication approach by exploring how they work simultaneously to foster a culture of collective mindfulness at one automobile organization called Genuine Auto[1]. It will also explore the individual communicative aspects of Eastern mindfulness, specifically listening. Since workplace settings are adjusting to a hybrid approach (Tredinnick & Laybats, 2020), this dissertation also uses sensemaking to understand how members that engage in collective mindfulness to interpret unique changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this dissertation explores a new concept, called sensechecking, to extend research on sensemaking.

During a pandemic, when changes and uncertainty are frequent in the workplace (Tredinnick & Laybats, 2020), it is beneficial to understand how mindfulness plays into communication at work. Individual and collective mindfulness at work may impact how coworkers communicate together and how they understand what is going on together. This dissertation will examine collective mindfulness within an organization that

conducts leadership training, which includes a mindfulness training to strengthen listening, for about ten members per year. Therefore, some of the members in this study's organization have taken leadership training and/or may take the leadership training in the future. This dissertation will explore if individual mindfulness and listening may develop collective mindfulness. This dissertation seeks to understand the role each of the following has on collective mindfulness: (a) communicative aspects of listening at work and (b) sensemaking at work.

1.1 Specific Purposes

Given the need for research to continue exploring communication, training, and developmental aspects of collective mindfulness in organizations, the purpose of this dissertation is to integrate mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness. Furthermore, it seeks to understand how the organization enacts and sustains collective mindfulness through listening and explore a new type of sensemaking called sensechecking. Sensechecking occurs during the co-construction of meaning between two or more employees and is related to the social property of sensemaking. This dissertation is designed to identify strategies for organizational leaders, trainers, and coworkers to enact and sustain collective mindfulness through workplace listening and to understand how members make sense of changes at work. This dissertation will connect: (a) organizational communication research with the theoretical framework of collective mindfulness and sensemaking, and (b) the general communicative aspects of listening in organizations.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of collective mindfulness, individual practices of mindfulness—particularly listening, and sensemaking in organizational communication

literature. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methods used to explore this dissertation's research questions. Chapter 4 and 5 will present the results of the dissertation, outlining the findings of the observations and interviews. Chapter 6 will present: (a) a discussion of the findings, which will elaborate on the theoretical and practical implications of the results, (b) limitations, and (c) directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review begins by examining collective mindfulness. Next, literature on individual aspects of mindfulness in communication at work, such as listening, is examined, and connected to collective mindfulness. Finally, it discusses how sensemaking and collective mindfulness are connected in relationship to organizational communication changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three research questions are provided based on the review of literature.

2.1 Mindfulness in Organizations

Mindfulness in organizations has been viewed from both Eastern and Western perspectives and it has been studied individually and collectively as a social process (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). The Eastern perspective of mindfulness connected back to Buddhist philosophy (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). On the other hand, the Western perspective of mindfulness originated with safety processes in HROs (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Furthermore, scholars have defined mindfulness in a variety of ways.

For example, Shapiro (2009) described mindfulness through an individual lens and explained that mindfulness is "the awareness that arises out of intentionally attending in an open and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment" (p. 555). Shapiro and Carlson (2009) added that individuals are caring when they are mindful. Both Eastern and Western perspectives explained how individual mindfulness has strengthened interpersonal relationships and mental, physical, and behavioral health outcomes (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Individual mindfulness tends to be defined in the Eastern perspective and collective mindfulness is more in line with the Western

perspective (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Indeed, researchers explained how the Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness in organizations may be combined for growth opportunities, such as clearer thinking and better decision making (Weick & Putnam, 2006).

Collective mindfulness was first studied in HROs to understand how members avoid making errors in high stress situations (Weick et al., 1999). The term evolved to include the Eastern perspective of understanding how members pay attention and avoid going into autopilot (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). On the other hand, the Western perspective recognized the consequences of what can happen if teams are not mindful, or engage in mindlessness (Renecle et al., 2020). Mindlessness is a repetitive and unelaborated way of living due to cognitive commitment or application of a predetermined mindset (Haigh et al., 2011). If teams go into "auto pilot," and engage in mindlessness, they operate without awareness of full explanations, rely on a single perspective, and depend on only doing what has been completed in the past (Renecle et al., 2020). Rather than engage in mindlessness, research has determined it is preferable for organizations to be mindful.

At the organizational level, mindfulness research explored how aware members were of the impact they have on each other (Hales et al., 2012). For example, groups may mindfully interpret experiences, mindfully decide on actions, and collectively connect ideas and experiences of individuals (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). People who are mindful—individually and collectively—tend to focus on the present moment. The ability to be mindful at multiple levels allows employees to be calmer, have more compassion, and be more aware of what is happening at work (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Most past research does not integrate a top-down and bottom-up approach to mindfulness and instead studies

them separately (Nwankpa & Roumani, 2014; Vendelø & Rerup, 2020). However, the next section explains the combination of these constructs as the theoretical framework of collective mindfulness.

2.1.1 The Theoretical Framework of Collective Mindfulness

Mindful behavior allows groups/organizations to collectively learn from mistakes and consider alternatives (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness are both theories that are considered "collective mindfulness" (Yadav, 2020). However, some scholars such as Renecle et al. (2020) defined collective mindfulness and mindful organizing together yet do not mention organizational mindfulness. Other germinal scholars on this topic, such as Weick et al. (1999), did not specify the difference between mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness. In this dissertation, mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness will be used together as a broader theoretical framework through the term collective mindfulness.

Collective mindfulness is the daily engagement of organizing as social processes to sustain attention to the given context and comprehension of interferences (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Collective mindfulness is also described as occurring when individuals in organizations come together to create collective intelligence (Novak & Sellnow, 2009). Collective intelligence is defined as the ability for employees to become more comprehensive and reliable together (Novak & Sellnow, 2009). When collective intelligence forms, there are natural interactions that occur, and there are ways for these interactions to be more reliable and comprehensive, or "intelligent". More specifically, collective mindfulness in the Western perspective consists of anticipating, detecting, and responding to unexpected events in organizations (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).

The theories of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness originated in the late 1900s. Schulman (1993) first recognized that mindful organizing is made up of communication in the workplace. Furthermore, Weick et al. (1999) conceptualized organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing based on the Western perspective of mindfulness, which describes mindfulness as information-processing. The Western perspective of mindfulness is rooted back to Langer (1989), who indicated that when people are mindful, they notice distinctions, use past events to create new categories, are appreciative of context, and provide alternatives in the decision-making process. Besides defining types of mindfulness, Morgeson and Hofmann (1999) explained how organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing complement each other.

Mindful organizing is the social/collective process of individual interactions, which leads to organizational mindfulness from a bottom-up process (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). The bottom-up process or approach explains how frontline workers or individuals at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy communicate with their managers or leaders. This communication flows up the level of hierarchy, sometimes to the top of the organization. Additionally, organizational mindfulness reveals how organizations attend to detail about threats that may emerge and then illustrates how they act accordingly in response.

The bottom-up process, the enactment of frontline workers, and the fragileness of the process are three features of mindful organizing (Gajda, 2017). First, frontline workers are important in the mindful organizing process because they are likely to first notice warning signs of problems (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Second, mindful organizing is a fragile and dynamic process of continuous actions and reconstruction. Each time organizations are enacted, there are slight changes/differences. Third, mindful organizing

exists as a collective enactment (Gajda, 2017) and develops organizational norms through workplace communication (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

The communication and shared accomplishments of mindful organizing forms the broader overview of how things operate from moment to moment in an organization (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Mindful organizing may occur during conversations at work, during meetings, and through emails. When people work together, they may facilitate social influence and learning through offering work-focused interaction. Because of the bottom-up approach, mindful organizing is important when there are operational issues. For example, Toyota used an organizing approach, where frontline workers were mindful of both existing processes and opportunities to work together on existing processes in new ways (Rerup & Levinthal, 2014). One study discussed how Toyota workers were taught mindfulness strategies in routine production by alternating their models of cars they made to create more awareness and less routine in the process (Adler et al., 1999). Being mindful of these processes and opportunities taught employees to be aware of operations and detail relating to their work (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001).

Furthermore, Weick et al. (1999) described five-processes that are integral to mindful organizing and introduced the theoretical foundation of organizational mindfulness. Scholars such as Sutcliffe (2011) and Cantu et al. (2020) termed the same five processes as “HRO organizing principles.” Additionally, Novak and Sellnow (2009) indicated that the components are for collective mindfulness, which include mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness. In other words, scholars were talking about the same five processes but calling them the processes of different terms (i.e., mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness, HRO organizing principles, and collective

mindfulness). This can be confusing because there are multiple terms for the same theoretical foundation, and it is the reason why this dissertation combines the framework for a clearer understanding. In this dissertation, the five components describe the theoretical framework of collective mindfulness (mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness combined), which are: (a) preoccupation with failure, (b) reluctance to simplify interpretations, (c) sensitivity to operations, (d) commitment to resilience, and (e) deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001).

Preoccupation with failure is when individuals concentrate on and discuss possible work-related threats (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Reluctance to simplify interpretations occurs when individuals develop understanding through asking frequent questions about assumptions and going through reliable alternatives. Sensitivity to operations is the integration of understandings to awareness of current detail. Commitment to resilience is the recognition of, analysis of, ability to cope with, and ability to learn from setbacks. Deference to expertise is when people make decisions based on expertise rather than relying on superiors. Importantly, all five of these components bind the culture of an organization together with mindfulness at the core (Cantu et al., 2020; see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Culture and the Five Components of Collective Mindfulness (Cantu et al., 2020)[2]

Collective mindfulness, mindful organizing, and organizational mindfulness have been conceptualized and studied in different ways. McPhee et al. (2006) emphasized that mindful organizing is a social process. Moreover, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2007) developed and validated a nine-item scale to assess collective mindfulness and safety organizing, which Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) described as mindful organizing. Additionally, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2007) found that lower levels of mindful organizing are linked to frontline workers' fragmented perceptions of continuous behavior.

Extant research explained that organizational mindfulness is how managers and administrators' structure and practice acting, thinking, and organizing in a mindful way (Ray et al., 2011). Mindful organizing began filling the need from limitations in Ray and colleagues' organizational mindfulness scale development, which include the bottom-up operations. Therefore, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) developed an expanded model of

mindfulness to demonstrate how, “organizational mindfulness enables and is reinforced by mindful organizing” (p. 723). Based on this model, Figure 2.2 exemplifies a simple version of how organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing combined are conceptualized as collective mindfulness in this dissertation. Most recently, scholars came up with floating from the phrase “floating an idea” when the researchers observed an HRO, the U.S. National Weather Service (NWS) forecasting teams, to understand their HRO organizing principles (Roeder et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, the HRO organizing principles are the same five theoretical components of collective mindfulness. Floating is an informal communication norm and an extension to the HRO organizing principles because employees defer to experts or their team’s expertise, then either gather feedback or veto an idea.

Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested that scholars should explore if organizational mindfulness leads to earlier and complete adoption of distance learning. They suggested this was possible because organizational mindfulness may lead to innovation. In addition, mindful organizing may lead to other positive outcomes because it provides social support and additional resources that help strengthen work experiences and performance. Factors that can enhance mindful organizing include (yet are not limited to) leaders’ actions, socialization, training, and technology use (Kudesia et al., 2020).

Although one of the processes in collective mindfulness is preoccupation with failure (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012), people can be mindful by thinking about positive outcomes too. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested that mindful organizing may rebalance processes, allow for flexibility, focus on interaction and qualitative analysis of

signals, and develop positive outcomes amongst organizations. Other positive outcomes of mindfulness include higher reliability, increased job satisfaction, and better performance (Renecle et al., 2020). Additionally, Ray et al. (2011) and Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) indicated the importance of studying organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing within all the hierarchical levels, as it contributes to organizational well-being. When mindfulness operates at all organizational levels, strategic and operational outcomes may be reliable. Since organizational mindfulness relates to top administrators and mindful organizing relates to frontline employees, organizational mindfulness develops context for mindful action through stable structures/practices that shape organizational culture and employees' actions.

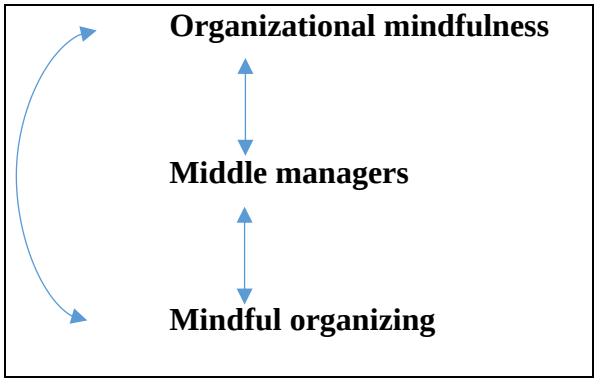
Organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing come together when leaders receive real-time data from frontline workers and the leaders create structure for the frontline workers (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). The combination relates to middle managers, as they communicate organizational mindfulness strategies to frontline workers. Therefore, the combination of organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing, or collective mindfulness, captures the communication of mindfulness at each hierarchical level of organizations. Leaders signal the importance of mindfulness through organizational mindfulness, then employees may act more mindful. In this dissertation, since the owner of Genuine Auto uses a top-down approach for organizational mindfulness, the employees may develop mindful organizing. In addition, employees' mindful organizing may form a feedback loop up to organizational mindfulness to reinforce structures and refine processes and routines at the top hierarchical levels. This leads to the first research question:

Research Question 1: How do employees in an automotive organization communicate collective mindfulness?

Table 2.1 Collective Mindfulness Theory Definitions

Theory	**Definition**
Collective mindfulness	The daily engagement of organizing as social processes to sustain attention to the given context and comprehension of interferences (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).
Mindful organizing	The social/collective process of individuals interaction amongst each other, which leads to organizational mindfulness from a bottom-up process (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).
Organizational mindfulness	The process of organizational members attending to detail about threats that may emerge then act accordingly in response from a top-down process (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

Figure 2.2 Collective Mindfulness



This chapter has reviewed literature from the collective and macro perspective of organizations. However, mindfulness and communication in organizations may be explored on the individual level as well. Next, the body of research on how an individual's mindfulness practices may contribute to organizational communication and collective mindfulness is discussed.

2.2 Individual and Collective Mindfulness

Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) began exploring how individual mindfulness influenced organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing. They suggested that scholars should examine how widespread individual mindfulness must manifest to start forming organizational mindfulness. Kudesia et al. (2018) expanded on how individual-level mindfulness and team-level mindful organizing relate. They found that mindful organizing was associated with effective problem solving, mindful organizing predicted individual mindfulness, and individual-level mindfulness was associated with team membership satisfaction. Renecle et al. (2020) indicated that the difference between individual mindfulness and mindful organizing is that individual mindfulness occurs in

the minds of individuals as an intra-psychic process and mindful organizing emerges as a collective process of team interaction.

This dissertation will seek to connect the Eastern and Western perspective of mindfulness as it has been explored in some research. For example, Weick and Putnam (2006) connected Eastern and Western perspectives of collective mindfulness by (a) acknowledging that when people make distinctions (Western view), they usually focus their attention on the present moment (Eastern view) and (b) focusing on organizing, such as being aware of impermanence and continuously changing with the flow. One of the communicative Eastern perspective practices of mindfulness is an individual's practice of listening (Huston, 2015). The next section explores how organizational member's practice of listening may contribute to collective mindfulness.

2.2.1 Listening as Individual and Collective Mindfulness

This section will detail how mindfulness and listening connect in organizations to develop collective mindfulness and how the development of organizations' members listening skills may in turn foster collective mindfulness. First, it is important to understand how listening is defined in communication. Listening is an important communication function that may also be understood through the physiological, psychological, and sociological framework (Wolvin, 2010). These perspectives enhance the communication principles of listening. The International Listening Association (ILA) also recognized these different perspectives of listening by defining listening as, "the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Bently & Bacon, 1996, p. 1). The communicative aspects of

listening are centered around the notion that it involves message reception, processing, interpretation, and feedback (Wolvin, 2010).

In terms of the physiology, listening occurs through a cognitive process when people receive verbal or nonverbal messages (Wolvin, 2010). If it is through verbal communication, the sound goes through an audio-logical process to hear the message. With nonverbal communication, listeners receive visual stimuli (e.g., body language, facial expression, and eye contact). Whether receiving verbal or nonverbal messages, the full physiological process of listening is extremely complex and beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, it is important to recognize that the process involves individuals' sensory capabilities, including both sound *and* vision.

Messages are interpreted after listeners go through the initial auditory, visual, and attention process. In the interpretation process, the message fits into a particular linguistic category in the brain to understand meaning (Wolvin, 2010). Interpretation may occur automatically or through in-depth systematic analysis of the sender's message. Listeners' perceptual filters and linguistic category systems uniquely decode verbal and nonverbal messages. Therefore, messages may be consistent with the sender's intent, misinterpreted, or changed, depending on listeners' semantic meaning perception. Meaning can be shaped through listener's values, attitudes, beliefs, evaluation of whether something is good or bad, active/inactive, and strength in these factors/perceptions.

Additionally, how messages are processed psychologically depends on length, speed, goals, intentions, and implications of the senders' messages (Wolvin, 2010). After this psychological process, listeners may respond to messages, which is a sociological and communicative process called listener's feedback. The sociology of listening also

explores cultural differences in listening and community aspects of listening. To be a competent listener, one must know what to do and why, want to engage in communication, and demonstrate good listening habits.

Listening may be categorized into cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Wolvin, 2010). Receiver apprehension is another component to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of listening (Beebe & Frei, 2018). Receiver apprehension is the fear associated with misinterpreting messages, not processing messages, and not cognitively adjusting to messages that others send. Preiss et al. (1990) performed a meta-analysis and found that receiver apprehension is linked to anxiety and tends to alter listening and information processing ability.

Communication scholars have categorized receiver communication into listening styles (Beebe & Frei, 2018). However, listening styles are not static and they are adapted to listening goals. Indeed, Bodie et al. (2014) found that listeners are more fluid in their listening styles rather than having one style. Some of the listening styles that may be adapted include but are not limited to relational-oriented, task-oriented, analytical, and critical listening (Beebe & Frei, 2018). Relational-oriented listening is listening based on feelings and emotions. Task-oriented listening involves listening to find out what actions need to be taken. Analytical listening occurs when someone listens for detail and pays attention to facts/evidence. Critical listening is listening for evaluation and assessment and focuses on finding contradictions and/or inconsistencies.

Other types of listening defined in the communication discipline include dialogical listening, empathic listening, active-empathic listening, and mindful listening (Wolvin, 2010). Dialogical listening is a type of listening that occurs when the receiver is

fully engaged with the information received. Dialogical listeners are genuine, have empathic understanding, have positive regard, are present, have mutual equality, and are supportive psychologically. Listening effectiveness in dialogical listening is determined by the speaker. Meaningful message interpretation requires listening with empathy. Empathic listening is when listeners attempt to understand the "why" behind the sender's message.

Bodie (2011) described active-empathic listening as the listener's active and emotional involvement that is perceived by the speaker yet happens within the listener's cognition. Mindful listening is a way of authentically listening with compassion, empathy, and respect (Randerson & Pillai, 2020). Respectful interactions are a part of collective mindfulness (Vogus & Iacobucci, 2016) and listening is a respectful interaction. Therefore, members' listening may be connected to collective mindfulness.

Furthermore, Gärtner (2013) indicated that one of the characteristics of collective mindfulness is active listening. Mindfulness impacts leaders' connection with followers through listening (Chaskalson et al., 2020). For example, leaders may actively listen to employees who are voicing their opinions. Since organizational mindfulness is a top-down approach (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012), this research suggests that listening may impact organizational mindfulness and leaders may actively listen to the employees they manage. Active communication among organizational members is a vital component for enhancing mindful organizing (Renecle et al., 2020). If members do not think others will listen to them, they may not share ideas, suggestions, or provide feedback. Therefore, organizational members' listening skills help foster mindful organizing.

Indeed, Walkinshaw (2020) explained how when two mindful individuals are in conversation, they tend to be aware of what the other is saying for active and acute listening. Dhiman (2020) explained that when leaders practice mindfulness, they strengthen their awareness, focus, and attention to be able to deeply listen to others and respond without initial reaction. Therefore, when individuals are trained to be mindful and strengthen their listening skills, they are collectively learning. This may lead to collective mindfulness and deeper listening abilities amongst members.

In other research, Wolvin (2010) summarized that listening models assume that "the listener is engaged in the communication with the speaker" (p. 19). However, listeners may vary in their degree of attentiveness. Therefore, it may be challenging for employees to pay attention if information does not seem relevant. Individual mindfulness practices may help strengthen attention when listening and listening and mindfulness helps people focus (Dhiman, 2020) through awareness. For example, Brown and Ryan (2003) explained how mindfulness can enhance open and receptive attention to and awareness of what is happening in the moment. In conversations, mindfulness helps people be aware of subtle tone and emotion. Therefore, when someone is talking in the moment, mindfulness may help people listen to others by being open and receptive to what they are saying.

In addition, strong communication practices are needed for mindful organizing, and organizational members' listening skills decipher how members express opinions, ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and general feedback (Renecle et al., 2020). People who disclose issues may notice and acknowledge listeners' behavior in conversation, which can influence judgements (Bodie et al., 2014). However, if people in conversation are

nonjudgmental and share collective mindfulness, disclosers may be appreciative of listeners rather than judgmental. Therefore, in the next section, I discuss how listening may relate to the theoretical components of collective mindfulness.

2.2.1.1 Listening and Collective Mindfulness Processes

Individual mindfulness and listening may align with the five processes of collective mindfulness in many ways. For the first process of collective mindfulness, preoccupation with failure, organizational members are collectively mindful when they pay attention to and discuss what has not worked in the past (Renecle et al., 2020). This requires a degree of listening to what others have to say about what has not worked and learning from each other to share and understand past mishaps. Collective mindfulness in organizations allows employers and employees to cognitively process changes in events and acknowledge the possible negative consequences of changes at work (Dernbecher et al., 2014).

The second process of collective mindfulness, reluctance to simplify interpretations, indicates that organizational members are collectively mindful when they acknowledge multiple sources of information rather than having narrow minded interpretations (Renecle et al., 2020). To capture all the detail or workplace operations, members may listen openly and deeply when they engage with others. When members know they will be listened to, they are also more likely to share their interpretations so that the organization may expand on the interpretations.

For the third process of collective mindfulness, sensitivity to operations, organizational members are collectively mindful when they stay updated on events occurring on the frontline, which happens through interaction and collective story

building (Renecle et al., 2020). Listening to others in interactions, storytelling, and learning from these interactions may strengthen sensitivity to operations. Indeed, research has stated that "engagement adds to the creation and maintenance of a better, more accurate picture of the bigger system" (Renecle et al., 2020, p. 184). During the COVID-19 pandemic, workers may need to be sensitive to operations because of the sudden changes to the work setting (i.e., switching to hybrid) and revised safety policies.

The fourth process of collective mindfulness, commitment to resilience, explains that organizational members are collectively mindful when they can bounce back from setbacks (Renecle et al., 2020). This requires attention to capabilities, knowledge, and resources to strengthen their responses in the future. Learning lessons and listening to others can provide valuable knowledge and resources. Positive learning climates may help foster resilience. In addition, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) indicated how individual mindfulness and collective mindfulness can come together because employees can commit to resilience through individual mindful practices of analysis of past errors to develop actions for the future.

For the fifth process of collective mindfulness, deference to expertise, organizational members are collectively mindful when they understand member's expertise areas (Renecle et al., 2020). This requires listening to members who have expertise in the necessary area/s. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested that deference to expertise assists with concentration in individual mindfulness when people make decisions based on the person who has expertise and can focus on what is happening in the moment without getting distracted. Moreover, Jucks and Bromme (2012) explored how individuals are more adaptable when they know information about their partner. The

adaptability of employees allows them to reflect on other's knowledge. This dissertation argues that awareness of coworker's knowledge relates to collective mindfulness because knowing what others know can foster more deference to expertise. Members may then begin to collaborate and co-construct collective mindfulness through communication.

Overall, this section argues how the individual practice of mindfulness through listening connects to collective mindfulness. This dissertation will explore how an organization may use individual mindfulness practices to strengthen their listening and develop collective mindfulness. Therefore, this leads to the next research question:

Research Question 2: How do employees communicate individual mindfulness practices of listening to develop collective mindfulness?

Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested that scholars should explore how mindful organizing may enable growing capabilities and organizational learning. The next section details how this collective organizational learning also relates to sensemaking. Sensemaking is used as an additional theoretical framework related to member's perceptions of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3 Collective Mindfulness and Sensemaking

Like collective mindfulness, sensemaking may help understand the creation of co-constructed organizational culture. Sensemaking occurs through shared experiences, such as telling stories and understanding experiences, which form and sustain cultures in groups and organizations (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Weick (1995) explained how the sensemaking process has seven characteristics, which include: (a) identity construction, (b) retrospection, (c) sensible environment enaction, (e) socialization, (f) ongoing process, (g) focus on/by particular cues, and (h) subjective nature rather than concrete

accuracy. These characteristics define sensemaking, describe how it works, and explain how it can manifest in organizations. The characteristics relate to this dissertation as identities may form within an organizational culture, employees may look at the past to perceive current situations, the environment may contribute to how employees make sense together continuously, and employees may be mindful of changes in communication with coworkers.

Weick et al. (2005) also explained that there are three processes of sensemaking: enactment, selection, and retention. Enactment is when individuals go through the process of noticing and bracketing. In connection to mindfulness, enactment could happen when individuals or groups openly notice what is happening in the moment and begin to bracket the situation. Selecting occurs when the possible meanings begin to narrow down to a plausible story. The connection between selection and mindfulness may occur when individuals or groups start to build a story around the situation through curiosity. Retention is when the story becomes more solid because it is related to past experiences, connects to identity, and is guided to action and interpretation. Retention and mindfulness may connect when individuals or groups nonjudgmentally and proactively begin to identify their definition of reality by using past experiences and by working with others openly and respectfully.

Sensemaking is intricately related to organizational culture. Galvan (2014) explained how culture is like a web, which has shared meaning, understanding, and sensemaking. Examples of organizational culture include company logos, brands, and norms. When individuals immerse in a particular culture, or “web,” they need to understand what holds the web in place. Strands of the web are made up of shared

interpretations within companies and organizations spin their own webs through communication.

The way organizational members communicate creates culture (Fassett & Rudick, 2018) and how they communicate with each other creates shared meaning, understanding, and sensemaking (Galvan, 2014). Hoelscher et al. (2016) explain how understanding organizational culture requires a sensemaking process. Thus, organizational members go through sensemaking to bring meaning to their cultures. For example, Dougherty and Smythe (2004) used sensemaking as the theoretical framework to examine organizational culture. Sensemaking may also be used to understand how organizational culture norms shift when changes occur, such as workplace setting changes. These changes relate to collective mindfulness because sensemaking and culture reflect or become a part of organizational culture as it manifests in groups. The sensemaking process happens naturally when people communicate in conversations, as people aim to make sense of situations (Bushe & Marshak, 2014).

The theory of sensemaking suggests that people use micro skills by asking and answering questions such as, “What’s the story?” and “Now what?” (Weick et al., 2005). After asking these questions, individuals may experience macro, meso, or micro changes in the organization. Socially constructed norms and scripts allow people to believe others’ words to be true and then people may act accordingly (Bushe & Marshak, 2014; Weick, 1988). Sensemaking helps groups of employees maintain routines, bring stabilization, move forward with actions, develop precedents, and set criteria (Weick et al., 2005). It explains how employees may achieve goals by teaching and learning rather than threatening and being threatened as well as being resilient. Resilience happens when

employees retrospectively use past experiences, usually failure or a response to an unexpected or uncertain/ambiguous event, to strengthen current understanding.

Sensemaking was originally a systems theory (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Weick (1988) first introduced sensemaking in the organizational setting to understand crisis events that threaten organizations' goals. He suggested that individuals act according to the situation and this action facilitates understanding, yet individuals understand and reflect on events after they happen, called retrospective sensemaking (Weick, 1988). Therefore, when individuals face unexpected situations, they may use retrospective sensemaking to look back and understand what happened (Weick, 1988). This retrospective sensemaking is a way to receive feedback, learn, and make sense of uncertain events. If people are reluctant to act, then there may be less understanding and increased risk of error. In later research, sensemaking started to be recognized as a narrative and interactive process (Currie & Brown, 2003). Also, scholars have suggested that sensemaking is a communicative process because it is social and usually occurs with other people (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Weick et al. (2005) expanded research on sensemaking through the discussion of action orientation, visibility, emotional, and behavioral focus of sensemaking; viewing it as a process that can occur at the macro-level and that involves identity construction. Weick and Sutcliffe (2015) further described sensemaking as a social construction process to develop certainty at work.

A concept closely related to sensemaking is sensegiving. Sensegiving is related to sensemaking, however, it was described as more specific to the role of helping other organizational members define their reality in a preferred way (Scarduzio & Tracy, 2015). Sensegiving describes the changed organizational vision of reality that

management teams communicate to members and stakeholders to create new meaning (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sensegiving occurs when organizational members strive to change their employees' sensemaking process and meaning construction to give a new perspective of organizational reality (Scarduzio, 2012). For example, managers may engage in sensegiving by reframing a recent loss in customers. Instead of saying, "We are losing our clients", managers may say, "We are shifting our target audience."

On the other hand, sensebreaking is when individuals break down meaning (Pratt, 2000) before sensegiving (Scarduzio, 2012). To add to the example above, managers would need to spend time thinking about how they could frame their loss in customers due to their major changes. To sensebreak, they may say that the employees need to maintain their relationships with their current and possibly new clients before framing the situation as shifting their target audience. Other scholars have used sensemaking to study experiences of, concerns about, and agendas based on change due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Stephens et al., 2020). These extensions to sensemaking continue to advance the theory. However, there may be new extensions of sensemaking in an organization when that organization enacts collective mindfulness.

Sensemaking and organizational mindfulness theories both indicate processes that occur as organizational members compare previous patterns of behaviors, schema, and communication regarding current situations. Organizational mindfulness is developed when organizations need to anticipate and analyze unexpected changes (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Sutcliffe et al. (2016) explained how members in organizations are mindful when they make sense of unexpected events. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested scholars examine how commitment to resilience and/or deference to expertise

may impact the speed and depth of actions taken when there are unexpected changes. In addition, research shows that employees make sense of past events in retrospect and future events by making sense of unexpected events (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004).

Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) proposed that scholars should explore individual mindfulness and mindful organizing to see if they are similar when organizations adopt routines, which are shared socially. Thus, organizational mindfulness, mindful organizing, and sensemaking may be embodied in routines. In terms of organizational mindfulness, routines form expectations about what may occur and the best scenario of what can occur. Mindful organizing may emerge in routines that spread bottom-up to influence organizational mindfulness throughout the organization. Furthermore, mindful organizing forms routines for employees, groups, and organizations to revisit in response to unexpected events. Although it is unknown if unexpected events might happen, this dissertation will explore how members make sense of the changes that may occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will reveal how a new form of sensemaking occurs.

More specifically, Dernbecher et al. (2014) found that the combination of researching organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing in online settings allowed for an understanding of all the hierarchical levels of an organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations had to switch to virtual platforms to prevent the virus from spreading (Feintzeig, 2020). Collective mindfulness specifies how all levels of organizations are present and co-construct reality in the online setting (Dernbecher et al., 2014). Qiu and Rooney (2019) described how members who adapt to their environment may develop mindful organizations, and how individuals within the organization may become more mindful through the change. Members in organizations may need to adapt

the way they communicate to create changes. Similarly, this dissertation will explore how Genuine Auto engages in organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing and makes sense of their members' communication as work settings changed during the pandemic, such as from in-person to hybrid.

In past research, Dernbecher et al. (2014) found that organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing in online settings had highly significant positive effects on job performance and innovation. Organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing helped members deal with challenges of working online. They found that it was more challenging to communicate informally in online work settings because members could not walk up to others' offices to chat. However, collective mindfulness allows organizational members to swiftly adapt to changes, such as when the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly changed in-person work environments to online settings. Collective mindfulness allows members to have situational awareness of these changes. In addition, organizational mindfulness supports dynamic online work environments using technology, such as cloud computing and cellphone usage. However, it is unknown how an organization that engages in collective mindfulness makes sense of communicative changes at work during a pandemic. This leads to the next research question:

> *Research Question 3: How do employees that engage in collective mindfulness make sense of organizational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

2.4 Chapter 2 Summary

In this chapter, literature on collective mindfulness, mindful organizing, organizational mindfulness, individual mindfulness, listening, and sensemaking was reviewed. The theoretical framework of this dissertation was introduced. From this

literature review, three research questions were presented to explore how the theories and concepts will connect and be explored at Genuine Auto. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to answer the three research questions.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

Qualitative research centers on three main concepts: self-reflexivity, context, and thick description (Tracy, 2019). Self-reflexivity is how people thoughtfully consider their backgrounds, experiences, views, and roles and how these roles shape their interactions and interpretations in the contexts they study. Qualitative researchers observe, participate, and interview to gain understanding. Context is the scene that qualitative researchers immerse themselves in to make sense of their topic. When qualitative researchers immerse themselves in a particular context, they use thick description, which is fully detailing the culture and circumstance. Interpretations are based on these details and contexts.

In this dissertation, I take an interpretive stance and use first person to report my methods and results. I employed qualitative research methods to "… establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 20) and to capture the culture and context (Tracy, 2019) of an automotive organization from the eastern U.S. through my interpretive paradigm. As an interpretive scholar, I interpret human language, culture, and intentional behavior to help develop organizations and strengthen interpersonal interactions. My goal is to understand the meaning of human behavior. As an interpretivist, I look for multiple meanings to understand people and their communities.

Sandberg (2000) explained that within the interpretive paradigm, effective development does not happen with a set of rules. Instead, effective development is interpretively explained through meaning. People in organizations make sense of their development through constructive dialog, which helps understand what works well in

specific scenarios. Due to my alignment with the interpretive paradigm, I believe the participants create and sustain multiple social realities with multiple social "truths" that can be "enabled" or "constrained" through communication. I begin the first method section by explaining my self-reflexivity.

3.1 Self-Reflexivity

Self-reflexivity is being honest about personal identities and approaches, such as explaining how the researcher may impact the research, to respect the audience, participants, and other affiliates (Tracy, 2019). This includes providing motivation to research studies and exposure to study topics. Therefore, I provided my personal self-reflexivity in this section by discussing how I became interested in mindfulness and my positionality regarding mindfulness. In addition, I practiced self-reflexivity throughout the entire process of completing this dissertation.

To begin, my grandma was a dance instructor when I was young. I took her classes and she had me take additional classes to learn from others as well. In one of my weekly classes in 2000, we practiced meditation in the beginning of each class. This is how I learned what meditation was and how to do it. The combination of dance and meditation sparked my interest in yoga, and I became a yoga instructor in college in 2013. In college before becoming an instructor, I was curious why I enjoyed certain hobbies, such as rock climbing, dancing, and yoga. There was something about them that extended beyond just a physical workout. I was normally flighty and aloof until these hobbies kept me grounded, focused, and aware of what went on around me. I realized later during my 200-hour yoga teacher training in 2016 that the unexplained characteristic

of these hobbies was mindfulness. I began studying mindfulness in my doctoral program, starting in 2018.

My mindfulness practice is positioned within the Eastern perspective. However, as an organizational communication scholar, I noticed that a lot of the studies took on a different definition of mindfulness that was new to me, rooting back to Langer's (1989) novelty seeking and distinction recognition. Also, I observed that Weick et al.'s (1999) work recognized step-by-step procedures for mindfulness, particularly collective mindfulness in organizations. Although my view of mindfulness is more interpretive in nature, I admire the collective and cultural aspects of incorporating mindfulness in organizations. I think it makes for an excellent balance of concepts, such as stress and healing, productivity at work, satisfaction, and business and health mindsets. This appreciation of balance reflects my research approach in this dissertation, where I tend to lean more toward the Eastern perspective, but I add the Western perspective for balance, openness, and complimentary aspects. Personally, I would define collective mindfulness as a social process of people being non-judgmentally aware together and relating to each other with compassion. I would argue that collective mindfulness allows people to deeply listen to one another because they are aware and care about what others have to say.

The benefit of my prior experience with mindfulness is that I understood what could be considered mindfulness and I talked to participants about mindfulness when necessary. During the interviews, I noticed how participants perceived mindfulness. Some of the participants even expressed how they practiced mindfulness. I was able to relate, especially since I have gone through and taught the mindful communication course that some of the participants learned about if they took the leadership training at Genuine

Auto. If the participants did not know what mindfulness was, I was able to explain my understanding. During the observations, I was able to capture detail of mindfulness elements because I have the experience and training.

The drawback of my experience is that I strongly believe that mindfulness and respectful communication allows for positive outcomes. I think that people who follow mindfulness practices are "happier." When individuals said they did not practice mindfulness and were happy, I was reticent to believe that they did not practice mindfulness. I perceived that it is still possible that individuals may practice mindfulness without knowing it. For the individuals that I observed who did not seem to be mindful, I perceived that they were not as satisfied at work. However, I was open to what participants had to say and I acknowledged similarities and differences in the prior research and my own experiences. Next, I discuss the background of the organization I studied in this dissertation.

3.2 Genuine Auto Background and Training

For the protection of the automotive organization's identity in this dissertation, I refer to the car dealership as Genuine Automotive Company (Genuine Auto). I selected Genuine Auto because they do an annual leadership training where they learn to communicate mindfully. Previously, I have taught a class called Communicating Mindfully at a college where I met the mindful communication trainer at Genuine Auto, whom I refer to as Dave. The Communicating Mindfully course was created by Dave, and it provides the basis for the leadership training at Genuine Auto (Dave, personal communication, March 14, 2020). Dave indicated that he does not agree with Langer's perception of mindfulness. He also teaches the Eastern perspective of mindfulness.

To take the optional leadership training, Genuine Auto employees either apply or another employee recommends them (Dave, personal communication, March 14, 2020). Usually, frontline employees take the training to move up in the company. 10 - 14 employees are selected per year. The annual training begins in August and ends in May. All the trainees meet together for two to two and a half hours per month with Dave and three to four hours per month with the other trainer, whom I refer to as Paula. The trainees also meet with both Dave and Paula separately once a month for personal coaching.

Paula teaches about personality types and how to work with others that have different and similar personality types. She also teaches the psychology behind communication. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the trainers went to Genuine Auto or different places in the state the company is located to conduct the training in person. They met outside Genuine Auto because the owner wanted to expose participants to interesting places in the state and to involve trainees with the community. For example, they went hiking together at a local park. However, because of the changes due to the pandemic, the trainers are now on Zoom and the trainees have the option of meeting at Genuine Auto together, or meeting on Zoom on their own. The trainees replace the time they would be working to do the leadership training.

Like Huston (2015), a large part of what Dave teaches in his mindful communication training is how to strengthen listening skills. One of the anticipated outcomes of the training is deeper listening. In this dissertation, I qualitatively and interpretively explored the Western and the Eastern perspectives of mindfulness in the organizational setting. I specifically interviewed and observed Genuine Auto employees

to understand how they listened and engaged in sensemaking to communicate mindfully. Next, I discuss the participants and the recruitment process in this dissertation.

3.3 Research Participants and Recruitment

All the workers at Genuine Auto (*n* = 340) were invited to participate in this study. I interviewed 23 employees that ranged in their levels of hierarchy and job positions and observed 26 meetings with a total of 46 meeting observation participants. I interviewed 13 of the meeting participants, therefore, there were 56 total participants in this study (*n* = 56), which made up 6% of Genuine Auto. Participants held a variety of positions at the company including technicians, an accountant, an inventory trainee, product specialists, a commercial salesperson, inventory specialists, a financial analyst, a consultant, managers, board of directors, and other/unknown car dealership workers.

I worked with the owner/steward and her administrative assistant of the organization to gain approval and to recruit participants for the virtual meeting observations and interviews. After institutional review board (IRB) approval, I provided the gatekeeper with a message and the observation cover letter for the administrative assistant to add and attach to the recruitment email. In the message, I invited the employees to volunteer to participate in a study about mindfulness, listening, and communication at work. I shared my email address and let employees know that they could ask me any questions. I added that the participants may gain knowledge about mindfulness, listening, and communication at work. The participants did not receive an incentive for participation.

If they were interested, they had the option to email me or fill out a Qualtrics survey to schedule an interview and/or meeting observation via Zoom. Qualtrics is a

software used to create and conduct surveys. This dissertation's Qualtrics survey began with the observation cover letter and asked participants if they consented to participate in the meeting observations. The next question asked for the participant's name, so I knew who did or did not indicate consent. Lastly, there was an optional question to indicate the participant's email if they were interested in an interview. If they provided their email, I contacted them about scheduling an interview, and sent them the informed consent.

The gatekeepers first sent the email and attachment to all the leadership trainee graduates because some of the interview questions were only for individuals that took or were taking the leadership training. Therefore, I wanted to make sure that I included leadership trainee graduates as part of my study. Many of the leadership trainees that were recipients of the original recruitment message from the gatekeeper expressed their interest in participating in an interview. Because of this, the employees and I started off with scheduling and conducting interviews. At the end of the interviews, I recruited for the meeting observations by asking about meetings they were a part of and asking if I could observe their meetings on Zoom. Four interview participants and I worked together to schedule meeting observation times at the end of or after the interviews. I sent them the observation cover letter and the Qualtrics survey to indicate their consent to send out to all the potential meeting participants.

I also recruited nine meeting participants to the interviews by verbally discussing the option to volunteer for an interview after the meetings. I provided more detail about this in the observation section below. In this case, I recruited interview participants through the meeting observations, and I recruited meeting observations through interview

participants. The rest of the participants were recruited through the original recruitment message that the gatekeepers sent. In the next section, I discuss how I collected data.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

I used a concurrent procedure to observe meetings and conduct interviews without a specific order (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) because the meeting observations helped me recruit interview participants and the interviews helped me schedule times to observe meetings. As the observations progressed, I added member reflection questions to the interview guide based on the emerging findings. Member reflections are times when interviewers describe their interpretation of the data collected at that point and ask respondents/participants to provide feedback on those interpretations (Tracy, 2019). Therefore, I first described the observation and interview findings at that point in time. Specifically, I explained how I noticed that Genuine Auto workers mentioned and seemed to care a lot about communication with employees, acknowledged employee accomplishments even if they are not in the meeting, and mentioned how they should be mindful of different things, like scheduling and timing.

I began forming themes after sixteen interviews, so I asked the last seven interview participants what they thought about my interpretations at that point. This allowed the participants to provide their input relating to the data and helped shape the emerging findings. I asked the member reflection questions toward the end of the interviews, so they did not change the nature of the potential new responses. Generally, the observations helped understand collective themes and the interviews helped understand individual perceptions. I provide more detail on these processes the next two sections.

3.4.1 Observations

Qualitative researchers' minds and bodies become the instrument during observations (Tracy, 2019). During observations for this dissertation, I shared my Zoom link with at least one individual (such as the meeting organizer or manager) from each planned Genuine Auto meeting for them to set up Zoom. Therefore, I observed Genuine Auto in-person meetings through Zoom to identify the organization's collective mindfulness (organizational mindfulness and mindful organizing) and shared patterns of behavior through ethnography (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Ethnographies are studies, usually observations, of cultural interactions of people in their natural settings over a period of time. The ethnographer takes thick description notes of the group's lived experiences and ethnographers immerse themselves in a particular context to capture meaning and understanding (Tracy, 2019).

I did not record meetings because there are strict laws about recording groups in the state that Genuine Auto is located. Instead, I observed the meetings and took detailed field notes. I observed 26 meetings for a total of 20.6 hours and 46 meeting participants (n = 46). The average meeting length was 47.5 minutes long and I observed 8 different teams. I spent about 14.5 extra hours writing the scratch meeting observation notes up into formal field notes and I wrote 176 pages of double-spaced observation notes, which was an average of about seven pages of observation notes per meeting. I also spent about 12 hours engaging in extra fieldwork, which included emailing participants and setting up observation meetings.

When I observed meetings, I gave each participant a pseudonym. During the meetings, I noted their level of hierarchy, position at work, nonverbals, and what they

said. I also paid attention to how others were listening and acknowledged mindful language. At times it was difficult to hear because I was on Zoom, and they were all in-person. I had a hard time hearing individuals that sat far away from the computer that had Zoom open. Therefore, I paraphrased quotes using brackets when I could not hear, or when the individual was talking too fast for me to catch every word. On my screen, I kept my video on and muted myself, other than the beginning, the end, if someone asked me a question, or if someone spoke to me directly. After an individual opened the meeting on Zoom, usually he/she and I would greet each other and make small talk before the meeting officially started. In the end, individuals would usually let me know the meeting concluded and we would remind each other if we had another meeting scheduled. We would say our farewells and end the Zoom meeting.

To retain as much detail as possible, I transcribed the observation notes within 36 hours after each meeting (Tracy, 2019). The "raw" observation notes consisted of shorthand writing to quickly write as much as possible about what was happening during the meetings. There were spelling and grammar errors, such as incomplete sentences to summarize my thoughts. I went back and edited the raw observation notes to create the formal typed up field notes after the meetings. This included notes and comments on my analysis of what was happening, my reflections of what was happening, and nonverbal communication, such as body language and tone of voice. Next, I describe the interview process in more depth.

3.4.2 Interviews

Participants that were interested in the interviews emailed me to schedule an interview on a day/time that was convenient for them. When the participants and I

figured out the interview days and times, I sent them a calendar invite, which included the interview cover letter and Zoom link. Interview participants included three technicians, an accountant, an inventory trainee, four product specialists, a commercial salesperson, two inventory specialists, five managers, three board of directors, and three unknown car dealership workers for a total of 23 interview participants (n = 23). The participants included eight women (n = 8) and 15 men (n = 15). There were 16 participants who said they were white (n = 16), six participants who did not indicate their race/ethnicity (n = 6), and one participant who said they were black (n = 1). Participants ranged from 26 to 67 years of age with an average of 42 years of age. Participants worked at Genuine Auto between a half of a year to 36 years with an average of 12 years.

Before each interview, I reviewed the informed consent, said that I may take notes during the interview, and let participants know that only my faculty advisor, Dr. Jennifer Scarduzio, and I had access to the interview transcripts/notes. I verbally asked participants if they have any questions, then asked if they consented to the study. If they said yes, I continued with the interviews. Every participant consented to participate. Participants had the option to have their videos on or off on Zoom, skip or refuse to answer any questions, and finish the interview early if needed.

The one-on-one interviews were semi-structured. The interview questions were based on this dissertation's research questions yet put into simple conversational language that invited participants to share their experiences (Tracy, 2019). The interview was respondent and narrative because the participants' experiences that they shared related to this dissertation's research goals. For example, instead of asking about theoretical terms, I created questions that would likely be understandable to employees.

The questions also prompted employees to provide examples, experiences, and reflections relating to communication at work, how others listen and did not listen at work, mindfulness at work, the leadership training if individuals took the training, how employees made sense of changes due to COVID-19, and advice about work.

Sample questions include, “What is your most enjoyable aspect of your job?” “How is your online work routine similar to or different from the routine in in-person work?” “Provide an example of when you felt like people were (or a person was) genuinely listening to you at work.” (See Appendix 1 for the full interview guide). I ended with asking basic demographic questions and providing space for an open chat. As the interviewer, I took a responsive stance, which involved being respectful to the interviewee and reflecting on my own biases.

The interviews lasted an average of 44.5 minutes long, ranging from 30 to 76 minutes. It took an average of 2.7 hours to transcribe one interview, which totaled about 44 hours of transcribing interview data by hand. There were 349 pages of double-spaced transcripts, or an average of about 15 pages of transcripts per interview. I gave each interview participant a pseudonym to protect their identity. I audio recorded the interviews on Zoom. The audio files were stored in a password protected storage in my Zoom account. Like the observation transcripts, I transcribed the interviews within 36 hours after each interview (Tracy, 2019). I added extra detail, such as the nonverbal communication, that I remembered. I transcribed the interviews by hand, then immediately deleted the audio recordings after the transcripts were finished. Next, I detail how I analyzed the data.

3.5 Data Analysis

The number of interviews I conducted and observations I observed were based on when I reached theoretical saturation and recruitment saturation. Theoretical saturation is when researchers know they have gathered enough data because new information does not add value (Tracy, 2019). I also reached recruitment saturation when I continued the recruitment method until I was unable to receive more interested participants. When I analyzed data, I used an iterative approach, where I moved back and forth between relevant theory and the data (Tracy, 2019). This allowed me to use the theories, collective mindfulness, listening, and sensemaking, to guide the study while allowing new data to emerge.

I used both an inductive and deductive approach to data analysis. For the first research question about collective mindfulness, I used a deductive approach and for the second and third research questions, I employed an inductive process. Deductive is a top-down approach to reasoning, in which generalizations and theories come first, then observations, and lastly, confirmation or non-confirmation of the theories (Tracy, 2019). For the first research question, I specifically observed, noted, and coded using the framework of the Western collective mindfulness components: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). I started with this framework in mind and as I coded the data, I noted if there were any new or additional aspects of Western mindfulness that were present. I ended up finding that employees were at times too preoccupied with failure, employees focused on accomplishments and successes rather than just what can go wrong, and employees tried to make operations more efficient, which were extensions to the framework.

On the other hand, inductive analysis is a bottom-up approach to reasoning, during which theory and generalizations emerge based on the observations and the data (Tracy, 2019). For the second and third research questions, I took a more open stance to allow theory and generalizations to emerge as I collected and analyzed data. I used listening and sensemaking as sensitizing concepts. Sensitizing concepts are theories or background frameworks that are used as a starting point in qualitative methods (Tracy, 2019). However, I did not apply a set framework to the results when examining the data in relation to research question two and three.

For all the data, I developed a codebook in NVivo by coding four interviews, which were Christa, Ben, Amy, and Carder's interviews, and four meeting observations using primary-cycle coding, in which I coded line-by-line and added comments, indicating the descriptive first-level codes (Tracy, 2019). NVivo is a qualitative data software program used to assist with analyzing qualitative research. I used it by adding my transcripts, then going through each transcript document by creating codes, highlighting each part of the line/section that needed to be coded, and adding the codes to the particular section. Then I went back to see all the data within each code. NVivo provided information in each code, such as which document related to each line or section, and how many codes and references I had for each transcript document. In NVivo, references means anytime I referred to a code, or a section was coded, including repeated codes.

For the primary-cycle coded interviews, I had 85 codes and 130 references for Ben's interview, 48 codes and 102 references for Amy's interview, 57 codes and 98 references for Christa's interview, and 28 codes and 40 references for Carder's interview.

For the primary-cycle coded meeting observations, I had 33 codes and 70 references for the first team meeting, 20 codes and 34 references for the second team meeting, 31 codes and 58 references for the third team meeting, and 20 codes and 49 references for the fourth team meeting. As I collected data, I added and adjusted codes as needed. I used secondary-cycle coding to compare and contrast the data with theory (e.g., collective mindfulness, listening, and sensemaking) and with previous literature (Tracy, 2019) for the rest of my data. I added these second-level analytic codes to NVivo and used axial coding, where I reassembled the first open coding process. Then I created hierarchical codes by combining various codes under the same larger category code.

In NVivo, I ended up having 34 codes, and 22 of those larger codes had additional subcodes underneath them. I also began developing a more condensed codebook in Excel with the descriptive codes and definitions. The axial coding with hierarchical codes allowed me to adjust the extensive coding in NVivo to a more condensed codebook in Excel. The condensed codebook had 11 codes and 3 subcodes that were first-level codes, 5 codes and 5 subcodes that were second-level codes, and definitions of each code and/or subcode. (See Appendix 2 for the condensed codebook). I conclude this method chapter with a summary.

3.6 Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter presented detail regarding my self-reflexivity, the participants, the recruitment procedures, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis for this dissertation. I interviewed employees and observed meetings using Zoom to understand Genuine Auto's work-related collective mindfulness, listening, and sensemaking processes during the COVID-19 pandemic; and Genuine Auto employee's individual

mindfulness and listening. I created transcripts of the interviews and observation notes, then analyzed them using NVivo. The qualitative methods in this section informs the results presented in chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS 1

This chapter is an introduction to how people in Genuine Auto communicate with one another about collective mindfulness. Collective mindfulness includes: (a) mindful organizing which describes how coworkers communicate Western mindfulness to each other and to their managers and (b) organizational mindfulness which illustrates how managers communicate Western mindfulness to employees. I observed and interviewed employees to understand how coworkers at Genuine Auto communicate each of the components of collective mindfulness: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). These components explain how the Western perspective of mindfulness includes anticipating, detecting, and responding to situations that may be unexpected (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).

I detail each of the five components with examples from the observations and interviews. Mindful organizing describes how coworkers enact the five components of collective mindfulness, which encourages a bottom-up approach to mindfulness in organizations. Organizational mindfulness is how managers and supervisors enacted the five components of collective mindfulness, which encourages mindfulness in a top-down approach in organizations. I studied mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness together to capture how employees across all levels of Genuine Auto communicate collective mindfulness.

Genuine Auto is split up into five stores and they are currently creating a sixth store. Frontline employees usually work for a specific store and managers generally oversee teams of about 5-10 individuals. In many auto companies, there are employees

with titles called car dealers or salespeople. At Genuine Auto, they told me that they call employees in the same position product specialists because they believe it is a less intimidating and more inviting position title. Similarly, they call customers “guests” to welcome the community into their stores.

Each product specialist works for a specific store or dealership. One of their managers is a general sales manager, who oversees all the product specialists in each store. However, there are also four managers that are specific to their stores and there are frontline workers that are not assigned to solely one store, such as the technicians. Although there are separate stores, employees have expressed that they feel like “One Genuine Auto,” so employees at different stores work together rather than work as separate entities. Genuine Auto’s mission statement is “to serve the teammates, guests, and community with integrity, kindness, and respect to build lifelong relationships.” Therefore, they say their teams come first so working well with their fellow employees is their number one priority.

The results in this chapter reveals the Western mindfulness culture of Genuine Auto’s employees, which includes new extensions to collective mindfulness literature. For example, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) explain the collective mindfulness component, preoccupation with failure, as the focus on emerging issues. However, in my observations and interviews, I noticed that workers communicated collective mindfulness by talking about the bright side of events as well. To further show how this manifested in the data, I begin by discussing how Genuine Auto employees communicated that they were preoccupied with failure.

Although I mainly combined mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness, I did notice some differences in how frontline employees communicated compared to their managers and board of directors. For example, in terms of preoccupation with failure, I noticed that managers think their teams can be too preoccupied with failure, whereas the frontline workers and coworkers did not express this finding. Through my observations and interviews, I recognized that Genuine Auto employees communicated collective mindfulness by working through conflict and problem solving; having open discussions; and hiring experts when needed. I begin with describing how Genuine Auto employees communicated collective mindfulness in terms of preoccupation with failure.

4.1 Preoccupation with Failure

Noticing what can go wrong is one of the five components of collective mindfulness. Genuine Auto coworkers and employees communicated how they are preoccupied with failure by expressing the aspects of the organization that needed work and by trying to prevent what can go wrong. However, I also noticed how coworkers and employees expressed fearlessness and attempted to look at the bright side of situations. I did not observe managers being fearless like some coworkers. Instead, managers stated that their teams can become too preoccupied with failure, or issues at hand. I begin by detailing how employees focused on failure.

4.1.1 Things That Are Failing and Need Work

Within the interviews and meeting observations, employees expressed how they noticed parts of the organization that needed to be worked on to fix certain issues. Teams brought up issues that were failing or needed adjustment in their own area of the business

or areas outside their realm of business. For example, the inventory team found issues in their own department and issues in the service department. In general, teams brought up these issues to make processes smoother. For example, Aaron, a manager, described how during meetings, his team brought up a lot of feedback about what is going wrong. He stated,

> Everyone comes in here and I don't want to say everyone, that's such a generalized statement. But . . . many team members come in here with the understanding of they're going to be looking for problems all day long and they're going to point it out when it happens and . . . bring it to somebody's attention that . . . needs to be addressed. So, each morning when I come in here, it's 'Hey let's have the report.' 'Well, we're down two technicians, the parts didn't arrive for Mrs. Jones' car. There's an irritated guest outside with a flat tire on the car. They just bought [a car] and sales brought [them] over without an appointment'. So, they point out all the stuff that's . . . wrong that we need to get fixed, and so I guess, in that sense we already do that intrinsically.

Later in the interview, Aaron continued to explain, "We need to fix issues as they pop up, not just ignore them and we need to watch for them . . . and catch them in advance." In these two examples, we see how Aaron observed how his team was preoccupied with failure and agreed that his team needs to come to the meetings ready to communicate the issues they notice. This comment suggests how his team engaged in collective mindfulness by detailing issues that happened, and it reveals the teams' efforts to solve problems together.

I also observed this happening in meetings. In some of the meetings, employees expressed concerns outside their own business area that were affecting their specific areas. For example, in an inventory meeting, Mac, a frontline worker, explained how he wanted to bring up an issue that has been on the team's mind. He elaborated, "There are cars that are making it on the website that are sold. There are some things that need to be cleaned up . . . That is something that needs to be taken care of." Furthermore, Mac even offered that him and another guy, Jay, could work on deleting out the cars that are sold. It was not discussed why and how this issue originated, however, the coworkers volunteered to fix these mistakes as they noticed them. In this case, Mac was preoccupied with the concern that the cars that were sold needed to be deleted from the website and offered to help with the issue. Therefore, he communicated collective mindfulness by expressing his concerns about what is currently failing on their website and proposed a temporary solution. Although this example is individual, it represents how employees can communicate mindful organizing and collective mindfulness by bringing up their concerns in another department and assisting with the issue even though the root cause is in another realm of business.

The managers at Genuine Auto expressed their preoccupation with failure when things went wrong by clearly indicating that things are not going well. For example, Ben, a manager, brought up multiple issues with titles during a leadership meeting. He said, "We have all kinds of issues: No titles; no one knows where the title is . . . Make sure the names match, that sort of stuff. Mistakes on those really matter." Ben emphasized certain words, such as "all kinds" in the sentence, "We have all kinds of issues" and "Make sure" in the sentence, "Make sure the names match." The emphasized words indicated that he

wanted the team to know the importance of not making mistakes on titles because there were a lot of mistakes at that time. In another meeting, he even added, “How can we help the team see the importance of that? How can we solve this because that’s big? It’s from the marketplace, that car doesn’t exist. Boy, is that a [problem].” Similarly, he emphasized “Boy” and “that” when he said, “Boy is that a [problem]” and widened his eyes, which I took as his expression of concern. He knew there were issues and wanted the team and Genuine Auto to fix those issues. These comments and other nonverbal communication I observed at meetings suggest that employees communicate collective mindfulness by being honest and making it known when there are issues that need to be fixed at the company.

Lastly, in an interview with another board of director, Amy, clearly communicated how her personality and behavior relate to why she is preoccupied with failure. She said,

> I have a perfectionist streak and I always point out what’s not going right because . . . we’re so good, and I want us to be that much better. I have a very critical eye for things that if somebody’s waiting for too long, or a phone’s ringing and no one’s answering . . . it makes me bananas. We exist to serve people. If we’re not serving them, I always point things out.

In addition to her personality and approach, she reflects on the importance of serving others. This is part of the company’s mission, which is provided in the introduction to this chapter. Therefore, Amy was connecting her day-to-day work behavior to the company’s mission statement, as she expressed how the company exists to serve people. She explained how being preoccupied with failure helps her point out

when things are failing to improve in those areas, particularly to serve others. In this example, Amy communicated collective mindfulness by being critical and providing continuous growth opportunities for Genuine Auto workers about how to improve the way employees treat customers as guests.

4.1.2 Trying to Prevent What Can Go Wrong

Genuine Auto coworkers both described how the employees prevent what can go wrong, and they demonstrated how they prevented what can go wrong through their actions. For example, in an interview response about Western mindfulness, Ren said, “In regard to what can go wrong, we know what we want to avoid, we know that we want to take care of our guests, first and foremost.” Ren displayed this type of mindfulness when I observed him in meetings as well. Normally, a manager opened Zoom for the team meetings I observed, but in two observations, the manager was on vacation, so Ren opened Zoom for those meetings I observed. During the first meeting he opened on Zoom, Ren was having issues with the audio. I could see him on the video yet could not hear him. He would talk and I would attempt to lip read. He ended up fixing the issue by calling in on his phone separately for audio and had his video still on in the original Zoom on a laptop. The next meeting, he emailed me ahead of time, asking for the phone number so he could do the same thing as last meeting. In terms of collective mindfulness, he was prepared for what happened in the last meeting and prevented the audio issue from happening again. Not only did he anticipate what can go wrong, he detected and responded to it, which are all aspects of the Western perspective of collective mindfulness (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).

When communicating about preventing things from failing, during meetings, managers said phrases like, “It takes more planning, more awareness” and “It would be [unfortunate] if we had to . . .” Managers also described the importance of preventing what can go wrong. For example, Kyle responded to a question relating to Western mindfulness by saying:

> That’s kind of how . . . we start our days . . . paying attention to what we have on the agenda and knowing the consequences of what can go wrong. That’s a big part of our training in terms of . . . how we handle our credit [and] doing a proper budget analysis. What can go wrong in that is showing someone a car [and] mistakenly telling them that a car will be within their budget that is not. What can go wrong is they would be very upset and disappointed and not want to work with us at that point . . . I think it’s important to know the consequences and . . . be aware of what we have to do . . . [to complete] the task at hand and know the consequences of if we don’t do it right.

Since collective mindfulness involves being aware together as a team, Kyle communicated why it’s important for his team to engage collective mindfulness by paying attention and knowing consequences of what can go wrong to prevent mistakes. Kyle and other managers encourage their teams to engage in collective mindfulness by preventing things from being an issue and educating them about what can happen if preventative measures are not taken. These examples of things that are failing and need work communicate the Western perspective of avoiding mindlessness, which means the teams avoided “auto pilot” by recognizing consequences of what can go wrong if they are not mindful (Renecle et al., 2020). These examples of how Genuine Auto employees

prepared for failure also connect to the Western perspective of anticipating unexpected events, which happens before detecting and responding to the events (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). In contrast to preparing for failure, in the next section, I discuss how Genuine Auto employees talk about the bright side of situations as well.

4.1.3 Brightside

Although Genuine Auto coworkers are preoccupied with failure, they also focused on the positive aspects of what was going well within the organization. For example, employees recognized others' accomplishments during the meetings. During a morning meeting, Mike, a frontline worker, opened Zoom and began leading the meeting. He started off getting data up on the shared screen and mentioned what the team and Genuine Auto employees were doing well, such as how many units they sold. His voice sounded confident as he spoke clearly, like he took pride in sharing what was going well. Therefore, Mike and the team were willing to recognize accomplishments rather than only focusing on failure. Embracing appreciation and gratitude is a part of Eastern mindfulness, however, it is not a component of Western mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Genuine Auto coworkers demonstrated how they engaged in both collective mindfulness and how they added Eastern mindfulness into their culture through recognizing and appreciating accomplishments.

In addition, coworkers expressed how they were surprised that their managers noticed their accomplishments and extra efforts. For example, in an interview with Fred, a frontline worker, he detailed a story of how he unexpectedly won an award during one of his meetings:

> I was caught by surprise . . . There was a car broken down, an old gentleman blocking the off ramp. (I felt) kind of bad . . . I got out, offered to push the car. I pushed a car off the road in my shirt and tie and my dress shoes. And I got it off and I got back in, and I paid no attention to it . . . It was because I know I do that anyway. And like a month and a half later, they presented me with an award saying that you really represent the Genuine Auto way of thinking, by doing selfless acts.

In this case, Fred's trainer wanted to acknowledge how assisting others in the community without any expectations in return was a representation of how people should act in the company. Fred did not expect to be acknowledged or to receive an award for helping someone—he just wanted to assist someone in need. In terms of collective mindfulness, instead of only being preoccupied with someone that is having car issues, Fred engaged in a "selfless act" and unexpectedly received an award. Therefore, the focus was on his accomplishments rather than the issue of someone's car breaking down. In other words, the focus was not on what was failing and how to fix that—instead the focus was on something positive that had occurred and rewarding that positive behavior.

Although managers were clear about indicating when things were failing or encouraging mistake prevention, they also communicated when things were going well. For example, in meetings, managers said phrases such as, "We dominate that, and we need to keep that going" and "We should see [it going up]." The managers also praised their team members and Genuine Auto workers that were doing well by recognizing their accomplishments. For example, in a leadership team meeting, Carla, a manager, said, "We were busy over the weekend and [Tyler was off] but [Jill] stepped up and did a great

job. That made a difference." Instead of focusing on the challenges of the busy weekend, she pinpointed a specific individual that worked hard during that time.

This reveals that managers recognized the positive aspects of situations rather than just what is failing, which is important because it creates a balance between optimism and pessimism and allows employees to feel positive emotions together as well. I also noticed this happening frequently in meetings, where managers would point out specific individuals who are doing well in their job, whether that individual they recognized was present in the meeting or not. Therefore, managers did not only focus on failure, but they focused on coworkers' successes as well. Preoccupation with failure is part of collective mindfulness, however, acknowledging and rewarding employees for their accomplishments adds an additional Eastern mindfulness layer. Next, I discuss how managers expressed that their teams could be too preoccupied with failure.

4.1.4 Too Preoccupied

An additional element that only the management team expressed were how teammates could be too preoccupied with things that can go wrong or are going wrong. For example, when responding about Western mindfulness during his interview, Aaron mentioned how he thought coworkers can sometimes be too preoccupied with issues. He stated:

> It . . . sometimes . . . creates too much negativity . . . [There are] certain situations . . . that you do not have control over and then there's certain scenarios where you really should pick and choose your battles . . . If someone has a safety concern going on versus . . . somebody forgot to sign off on a repair order once . . . Let's concentrate on the big safety concern, alright? Some of these little things . . .

> overwhelmingly creep up in abundance . . . We do want to be a problem-solving community of workers here but man . . . sometimes we concentrate too much on the little stuff that doesn't matter, and it takes us away from the big picture, so we're less effective.

In this example, Aaron revealed that there should be a balance in how much employees should be preoccupied with failure. He describes how it can be beneficial if employees weighed their options for where to focus their energy. There are some instances that should take priority, rather than trying to fix every issue that emerges. Although being preoccupied with failure is a part of collective mindfulness, this example indicates that there may be situations that have too much of a good thing. The team is highly engaged with collective mindfulness; however, some managers indicated that they are so preoccupied on every situation that can go wrong, that it becomes too much. Aaron suggests that teams may be more effective if the team prioritizes their concerns.

On the other hand, Don mentioned how he has been too preoccupied with failure when he was managing his team. He said, "My job . . . at home was to be a micromanager . . . That's not my nature, that's not who I am . . . I had to come up with creative things to be doing from home for work that I typically wouldn't do." Don noticed how he was paying attention to little detail about his team and began to micromanage his team when he was working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "I [had] time to realize . . . what I was doing . . . looking over their shoulder all the time and trying to catch them doing something wrong or not working."

Don was able to realize that he was being too preoccupied with failure. He began focusing his attention elsewhere to avoid micromanaging his team. In this and in Aaron's

example, managers expressed how employees can focus too much on what can go wrong or what is going wrong. Adding Eastern mindfulness, such as gratitude and compassion, may create balance for teams and employees who are experiencing too much Western mindfulness, or are too preoccupied with failure. Additionally, in the next section, I describe how at times, employees at Genuine Auto were not preoccupied with failure.

4.1.5 Fearlessness

At times, Genuine Auto members expressed how they were not worried about certain issues. For example, in an individual store meeting, Paul, a frontline worker, communicated a potential issue. “If it’s a time sensitive thing, if the keys aren’t accessible, it’s still not ideal. What about when it’s 20-degree weather? Do we just park everything on the hill again? Haha.” Ren responded, “We’ll figure it out.” Mar, another manager, replied, “Everything will be fine. Ha.” and Ben added, “Don’t try to solve [that problem].” This example reveals how teams at Genuine Auto were not always preoccupied with failure. In this case, when one coworker brought up a potential issue, the rest of the members were not concerned and instead comforted the employee by saying they do not have to worry about it and that it will get resolved.

In addition, Sean, a frontline worker, expressed a possible issue yet simultaneously said he does not think it will be a problem during a meeting. He stated, “Most techs don’t want to work on used vehicles. They like what they are used to . . . I’m not afraid of anything about it. . . As long as we explain the whole picture, I don’t think we’ll have much pushback.” Sean’s voice sounded calm, and his rate of speech was slower when he said this quote. In this example, it appeared as if he was not worried and was more relaxed, despite his recognition that the technicians prefer not to work on used

cars. He acknowledged a potential issue and he communicated that he is optimistic and is not experiencing fear around this issue. This example and the previous scenario seemed to differ from the Western perspective of mindfulness, or collective mindfulness, as they were not preoccupied with failure and instead, they were centered on being fearless. Building on the previous two sections of how Genuine Auto employees were focused on the bright side and were too preoccupied with failure, when organizations take part in Western and Eastern mindfulness, teams may express confidence and optimism. This is complimentary to being preoccupied with failure. Next, I discuss how coworkers communicated that they were reluctant to simplify interpretations.

4.2 Reluctance to Simplify Interpretations

Many of the employees stressed how it is important to ask questions because there could be more information to learn rather than making assumptions. Josh, a frontline worker, responded about advice he would give someone about his position by saying, "Keep up with your product knowledge . . . If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Reach out to another product specialist to answer something . . . Always ask for help. We're all here to help each other." Josh learned that it is OK to be reluctant about the job and asking questions to seek information from others is useful. This quote is significant because it reveals that Josh encourages collective mindfulness by advising others to be reluctant to simplify interpretations through asking questions. He also indicates that the employees will assist in answering questions, which signifies how he perceives Genuine Auto members, particularly managers, to be helpful. Josh expressed how his team is collectively mindful in terms of being reluctant to simplify interpretations.

Kyle, a manager, provided similar advice about asking questions, so interpretations are not simplified and assumed. He said, “Having all the information definitely contributes to the work environment.” Kyle spoke about the importance of asking questions as a collective contribution at work. He continued, “I’ve been in situations where my managers don’t have all the information and it’s making like a quick off the fly decision or has some type of not complete understanding and it’s making a judgement on that.” In other words, managers may make more informed decisions if they are reluctant to simplify interpretations by collecting all the information in advance.

He also mentioned how meetings on virtual platforms, such as Zoom, allowed more time to answer questions, rather than making quick and simple decisions. He said, “If you’re in a room . . . I think people are eager to find a solution right then and there. Where if it’s over Zoom . . . we . . . discuss it and we come back at a later time to review our findings.” Kyle observed how meetings on Zoom gave more opportunities to be reluctant to simplify interpretations. This is important because in the Western perspective of collective mindfulness, reluctancy to simplify interpretations allows teams to detect unexpected events (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). He added, “I think it gives a little more breathing room for projects.” This also demonstrates the importance of not simplifying interpretations, as Kyle noticed situations that worked better when his team took time to think about solutions rather than cutting corners to make quick decisions. In this case, Zoom allowed his team to have “breathing room” so they could be reluctant to simplify interpretations, which means they used their time to enact collective mindfulness.

Managers also asked others for feedback frequently and confirmed that they are open to hearing feedback from others. I noticed that the managers communicated that

they are reluctant to simplify interpretations by asking others for their input. For example, in an interview with Aaron, he said, "[Amy] is getting ready to open up a new monster facility so she holds like monthly meetings to get our feedback on what we think should go into this new monster facility." He emphasized how one of the board of directors, Amy, seeks feedback from Genuine Auto workers beyond just other fellow board of directors. By hosting monthly meetings, employees could collectively contribute their input. In this case, Amy encouraged collective mindfulness by seeking other employees' interpretations and feedback. Aaron recognized her efforts, which communicated that collective mindfulness spread as she led by example, promoting the organization's employees to seek input collectively. Next, I discuss how employees communicate collective mindfulness by being sensitive to operations.

4.3 Sensitivity to Operations

The coworkers experienced sensitivity to operations in terms of what they have accomplished in the past, what they currently do, and what can be changed for the future. Christa, a frontline worker, provided a story of how coworkers came together and formed a process of operation naturally in a time of need. She said,

> I don't know . . . where you live, if it's ever even entered your mind the idea [of what we do] when we get three feet of snow and there's 200 cars in the lot . . . So, I'll tell you. Everybody at [Genuine Auto] cleans them, from our accounting office to our president . . . Normally you go out with a push brush and brush off the cars and then one at a time you move a whole line of cars [and drive each] back one at a time . . . Then the plows go and . . . you move another line. [During] this storm, we moved those cars [and] we cleaned them for two and a half days.

> All of us worked together on one car at a time. So, there was four people brushing the snow off [and] one person shoveling [around] the door to get into the car. When you moved the car, there was an imprint left and backside mold on the side of the car. It was unbelievable and it was fine . . . We didn't have a process on how you're going to tackle three feet of snow . . . One person took the job of shoveling [around] the door . . . three people brushed off the car, someone got in position to push the car, and . . . there was . . . a post brushing team afterwards.

Christa hoped they would not get that much snow again, but she also felt like they figured out a system, so they are prepared if it did happen. In this example, the team enacted collective mindfulness by creating ways of operating in a time of need, as the team needed to get the snow off the cars to show customers the cars. The team was not only sensitive to the operation, but they formed the operation on the spot by collectively organizing to efficiently solve the problem.

Moreover, employees expressed daily processes their teams have and how they work well. When asked about a time his team worked well together, Fred described how it is a part of Genuine Auto's process. He said, "Well, it happens every day. Our process is, we interact with our guests, we file all that information, and put it into the appropriate form. [Then, we] bring it up to our team leader who reviews it." He continued to describe the procedure. "[We] fix it then we meet with the finance people. When the information is then passed from the team leader to the finance people, they run the credit. [Everybody works] well within the . . . company." Fred explained how following these operations helps the team work well together. By being sensitive to the operations, Fred acknowledged how the team collectively accomplishes tasks together. His team enacts

collective mindfulness by going through specific workplace operations and being aware of the operations. Being aware of operations contributes to collective mindfulness because it allows teams to have the opportunity to know how to respond to unexpected events when specific operations are in place or need to be in place (Sutcliffe et al., 2016).

There are other instances where employees communicated issues in the current operation and discussed potential changes to that operation. For example, in a meeting observation, a team explained how a group in another department was not adding all the necessary information that was affecting their team's work. They discussed whether it would be best to encourage the managers or the coworkers to add this information to the company's shared files. Paul said, "Sometimes the team leaders will put the status in . . . then [delete it back out later]. I manually added it back in." When discussing if the product specialists should put the information in, Mac said, "[If we asked product specialists to put the information in, we would be] asking for mess ups." Thus, Mac believed the product specialists would not accurately add information into the shared files. This seemed to have communicated that Paul and Mac did not fully trust the product specialists as much as they trusted the team at the meeting.

Shelly, a frontline worker, said, "I think product specialists have too much [on their plate]. I've checked it once a month but obviously that's not enough." Shelly thought that when she checks it once a month, she finds enough incidences where there is missing information that it is becoming a larger issue. By checking for mistakes, she is putting a "Band-Aid" on the issue. However, she expressed that there could be someone fixing the root cause. She expressed that she did not think the product specialists have

time to add the missing information, and this prompted a further discussion about how to solve the issue.

The conversation continued as Paul responded, “What if we get access on the report that [Sarah] creates? [That would] give us the power to [run those numbers]?” This report that a coworker, Sarah, in another department puts together had information that could be useful in fixing the issue of inaccurate status updates in the shared drive. The team came up with different ideas on how to adjust the current operation, so all the necessary information could be provided and updated. Therefore, they cared about the current operations enough to provide ways to improve them and organize mindfully. In the following example, the team was collectively mindful in terms of being sensitive to the operation by brainstorming ways of strengthening the operation for more accuracy.

Managers at Genuine Auto enacted being sensitive to operations by training and teaching coworkers, discussing operations, and setting procedures. In a team meeting, Paul, a frontline worker, was complaining about an issue he had been facing. He said, “It sounds bad or critical, but I go in and ask, ‘Is this vehicle still going on?’ [They didn’t know what happened the previous day. There] seems to be no communication on what’s going on.” In my field notes about this comment and what was happening in this situation, I wrote, “*Ben’s worried eyes with his eyebrows up, his mouth slightly opened, and his consistent attempts to interrupt Paul made it seem like he was concerned that Paul was going to sound bossy or demanding if he brings this issue up to others*.” Paul then added, “It’s kind of a [downer that] I’m busting my ass to get these [cars in.]” Ben then acted and verbally expressed what I was observing. He said:

> Just be mindful [with how you go about the issue.] To try to help someone do this on their own, there's three things that need to be present**.** Skill set: they know how to do this, how to dig in if it's a real deal or not. Autonomy would be another thing. They might not know that they [can do it on their own]. And the last ingredient is purpose. Why is this important? Why one vehicle matters? Invite them to these meetings. [They can learn how focused we are on each vehicle] . . . All those ingredients have to be [present. Does] that make sense? Thank you for surfacing that.

In this example, Ben took the opportunity to train Paul on how he can communicate the issue in a more effective manner. He specifically encouraged Paul to be mindful in his approach by providing three specific "ingredients". Ben indicated that they could help resolve the issue by following the suggested approach when they communicate with the appropriate employees. Ben was encouraging collective mindfulness by teaching Paul to be sensitive to how he proceeds or communicates regarding a specific issue. By describing specific ways to be mindful, he transferred his understanding of collective mindfulness to Paul.

What Ben attempted to teach Paul is what Ben also mentioned in his interview. He explained how his philosophy is to give others (a) skills to do their job, (b) autonomy, and (c) purpose, or explain "why this matters." These are the components that Ben strived for in operations within work at Genuine Auto. He also described how he asks questions about Genuine Auto operations to help others think critically about the operations. He provided some questions he asks his team: "How are we going to get [Genuine Auto] at the top of consumer's minds? When they live in this area, how do we get to sell their

used cars?" In the observations, I also noticed he asks operation related questions to his team frequently. For example, in a meeting, Ben asked his team, "Prior to wholesales, what were we doing? What happens when a [Genuine Auto car] goes to another shop? . . . How can we use this process to make us better evaluators?" The questions Ben asks and talked about in his interview show that mindfulness is present because they encourage teams to be aware of their operations and critique how they can be improved.

Managers in other meetings frequently discussed operations and how they can be improved. For example, in a team meeting, Mar, a manager, advised others to, "Follow up. Get with team leaders." Additional examples of how other managers phrased their inquiry about improving processes included, "How do we keep our gains from this year [and improve]?" and "What's one thing we can do [to be right there?]" Others have mentioned the importance of following operation procedures. For example, when asked about challenges at work, Aiden, a manager, responded, "*I hate* it when we shoot ourselves in the foot . . . when we have a process in place and we don't follow it, and it causes a greater rift between us and the customer." This emphasized how Aiden got frustrated when others did not follow procedures. In this example, he expressed that when he noticed his team not engaging in collective mindfulness because they were not being sensitive to operations, there were negative outcomes. Although he did not particularly say that he encouraged his team to be sensitive to the operations, it appeared as if he is sensitive to the organizing processes that are in place at Genuine Auto.

In addition, there are processes set when employees move up in the company. For example, in Fred's interview, he explained the process on how to become a team leader. He said, "I know that . . . you're pulled out of your dealership and your learning other

positions . . . [The team leaders in training] start . . . learning the process, how long it takes, and what kind of communication . . . is lost." Therefore, there were specific processes that managers want others to follow, there were operations that new hires learned, and there were operations that took place when employees become managers. Each of these signified that managers at Genuine Auto are sensitive to operations and that relates to collective mindfulness because the procedures purposefully assist with teams collectively working well together. Next, I explain how Genuine Auto coworkers were sensitive to operations by trying to make operations efficient.

4.3.1 Efficiency

Genuine Auto coworkers enacted mindful organizing by being sensitive to operations and making suggestions on how the current process could be more efficient. Many of the coworkers that suggested changes to current operations tended to offer adjustments to make processes more efficient by providing ideas of how to make the process easier/simpler, and/or to save time. For example, Carder, a frontline worker, was quick to respond to most of the questions during a meeting. In one of his answers, he explained why a spread sheet would be better than a binder that they currently used to collect information. He elaborated, "My idea would be just the ones we sold. It's not like we would have 30 units at a time. It's like Desklog without access to [our manager]." Desklog is a software system that allows teams to add updates on projects and it automatically keeps track of the timing for the project (Desklog, n.d.). However, at Genuine Auto, only the managers can add updates in Desklog. Therefore, Carder indicated that his idea would simplify the process because they would not need to seek a manager to add shared information. This example relates to collective mindfulness

because it shows how Carter was sensitive to operations and tried to make a process simpler through the suggestion of using a spread sheet.

Similarly, in another meeting, Sean also suggested going paperless for more efficiency. He stated, “This can be done without generating a copy. We can see where it’s at . . . in this process. We created a Google sheet, and we’ll share it . . . It works from a distance. I’d like to do a paperless route.” In this example, Sean emphasized the benefits of working in a Google sheet to be more efficient. In the same meeting, Sean specified how he encourages efficient operations. He said, “We would have one lead and 1-2 additional techs . . . We can have some consistency . . . That’s how I would design it. I’m a simple process guy. I like efficiency and harmony.” In these examples, we see that the frontline workers strived for efficiency in terms of saving paper and simplifying current and new processes. Efficiency is connected to collective mindfulness in these examples because Carder and Sean are sensitive to how processes are operated and recommend the operations to be more efficient. It is important to see the connection between efficiency and collective mindfulness because when teams and employees are more efficient, they avoid wasting time and energy and avoid burnout.

Additionally, managers have communicated ways for their teams to be efficient by saving time and simplifying what needs to be accomplished. For example, in a leadership meeting, Aiden said, “If you have product specialists that aren’t good at that, [we can talk to them about it. It’s a simple part of the job that makes a difference]. It saves your team time too.” Aiden said this quote calmly yet sounded like he was motivating the team by mentioning how teaching product specialists is efficient. During my observation, this communicated to me that he cared about other employees’ work and

was sincere when he encouraged other board of directors to teach employees for more efficiency in return. He was using efficiency in terms of saving time as a collective benefit that would not just benefit him but would benefit the entire company.

Similarly, in an interview with Don, he said, “Ever since then . . . we don’t have to have meetings for . . . an hour . . . We have 10-minute conversations, and we get a point across now, which helps out both of us because we both don’t like being in meetings.” Saving time in conversations was a benefit to Don and his coworkers. In this example, Don and his coworkers figured out how to adjust communication processes to avoid long meetings and instead, they condensed their updates to save time.

Similarly, in a morning team huddle, Aaron even advised to not do something to save time. Aaron’s eyes squinted slightly, and his eyebrows raised as he said, “I wouldn’t advertise it. It’s time consuming, it’s a pain in the butt so I don’t even mention it.” Aaron critiqued the operation and decided it is not worth it to pursue. To me, his nonverbals communicated that Aaron was judging the situation and did not agree that it was worth pursuing. The way he spoke made it seem like he has had negative experience that caused him to waste time, so he encouraged his team to not waste their time on it either. This relates to collective mindfulness because coworkers may help each other out by eliminating time consuming processes that do not seem like they are worth it to pursue just as Aaron did in this example.

In addition, managers have aimed to create simple operations. In meetings I observed, employees discussed how to simplify multi-step processes into one step. For example, in a team meeting, Carole, a manager, said, “I get that they’re afraid their cars are going to get sold. We can have big orange tags saying sold [instead of having all this

writing].” She sounded empathetic when she said, “I get that” as she emphasized “get” and her eyebrows were up. To me, this communicated that she cared about the guests as she expressed how she understood their fear that their car is at risk of getting sold. Carole provided her idea of how to assist her concern for guests in a simple way. This suggests that employees and managers may enact collective mindfulness with their motivation to change operations, even if they are simple adjustments, out of empathy and concern for their guests. Next, I cover how I noticed coworkers being committed to resilience.

4.4 Commitment to Resilience

Coworkers at Genuine Auto demonstrated their commitment to resilience by working through conflict and problem solving. In my field notes, I reflected on three meetings that all demonstrated a particular team’s commitment to resilience. “*I noticed the team tries to resolve issues. The first discussion about the conflict is longer and more drawn out than when they follow up with coworkers about it.*” In other words, the team took time to discuss the issue, then simplified the problem when they followed up with others, which is how they went about resolving conflict. “*In the past three meetings, they said they need to show others how big of an issue they are having*.” The team demonstrated how they were committed to resilience for the whole organization because they wanted to prevent conflict and solve issues across the company, rather than just within their team. They were committed to resolving conflict to continuously be resilient as an organization by learning from the past to strengthen their future.

Carder also confirmed my reflection within his interview. He said, “Occasionally . . . we’ll miss something and you . . . have to figure out how to do it better the next time.” Carder acknowledged how his team learned from their mistakes. By learning from

mistakes and resolving conflict, the team is being committed to resilience and that is critical to collective mindfulness not only because it is one aspect that makes up collective mindfulness, but because it also demonstrates collective growth and development.

In a meeting, a manager said that Genuine Auto had never been able to solve the issue that Sean was planning to solve and came up with a solution. Sean said, “That’s what I enjoy the most—problem solving.” When the team solves problems or strives to solve problems, they are committed to “bouncing back,” or being resilient. Sean expressed his enjoyment in that process. Western mindfulness suggests employees need to be committed to resilience, which this example shows through the awareness of growth opportunities. When Sean and his team focus on “problem solving” they are opening themselves to growth, which then contributes to resilience. To achieve collective mindfulness, employees need to be aware of growth opportunities and Genuine Auto employees demonstrate resilience through their awareness and responses to adversity.

Lastly, managers have communicated resilience by saying quotes, such as: “I enjoy when there is an obstacle to overcome” and “If we fix this thing, then we’ll do well.” In a team meeting, Ben said, “I don’t want us to get ahead of ourselves . . . My goal is to get through all of that, then here’s the final project plan and we pull the trigger.” He mentioned how it is OK to be in the process of creating the “rough draft” to get through what they are going through before the final project. He continued, “This is where your feedback is critical . . . and we’ll make mistakes. We’ll still have to be nimble.” He encouraged employees to provide their input at this time in hopes that when

the time comes to it, the team will be resilient by learning from the mistakes in the "draft" and will be ready for action.

In this example, Ben and his team enacted collective mindfulness by preparing to be resilient and knowing that they will learn throughout the process. They do not need to focus only on the outcome, but they can be aware of the whole process, which includes making mistakes along the way and fixing the mistakes in preparation. These examples of how Genuine Auto employees were committed to resilience demonstrated the Western perspective of responding to unexpected events, which come after anticipating and detecting the events (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Next, I detail how coworkers enacted in Western mindfulness by differing to experts, which is another response to unexpected events.

4.5 Deference to Expertise

Genuine Auto workers demonstrated how they are comfortable leaning on others for assistance when needed, whether they went to their own teammates, reached out to people in other departments, or searched for assistance outside of Genuine Auto. Managers both encouraged employees to defer to experts and they deferred to experts when they needed to as well. Some of the language managers used to communicate deference to expertise included, "Go to specific people for assistance" and "I'm going to ask you to take the lead on this." In a meeting observation, I noted that, "*The manager was asking about how to do some things on Excel and the group was assisting him. The manager assists people, and coworkers assist him when he's presenting.*" They are open to deferring to an expert, or someone who can teach them accordingly. These examples show that Genuine Auto employees, whether they are managers or frontline workers,

collectively encourage deference to expertise, and by doing so, they enact collective mindfulness.

Many employees expressed how they will go to the specific person who is an expert in the area they are seeking assistance. For example, when Carder and I were discussing possible observations with his team, he said, “I don’t see why not. I would want to refer you to a team leader . . . I don’t know how to use the Owl . . . I think [Don] does so I’ll have him send you an email.” Carder openly communicated that he was not an expert with the technology tool, Owl, so he deferred me to his manager that knows how to use it. Fred also pointed out a particular leader that he trusts and defers to. He said, “Identify who is strong in the way that [Genuine Auto] does work, like the guy who is going through the team leader process. I would lean on him quite a bit. . . he just seems . . . energetic and willing to help.” Because coworkers felt open going to others when needed, it allowed individuals to feel more confident to do their work on their own temporarily. These examples are significant because they reveal that teams engaged in collective mindfulness through trusting each other, as employees went to an expert or supervisor when needed.

Genuine Auto managers and leaders also empowered other employees by giving employees autonomy. For example, Don said, “I tried to make sure their autonomous . . . We’re not the typical dealership where . . . a manager . . . [makes] some kind of . . . concession . . . I tell them they have all the answers unless something stops them from moving forward.” Don expressed how the people he manages can make their own decisions, but he is there as an expert if needed. Similarly, Lynne, a manager, said, “Just because I’m the director doesn’t mean anything . . . They know what they’re doing.” Like

Don, Lynne trusted her team. She added, “I always tell them, ‘You’re the boss today . . . Teach me what you do’ Then . . . get them thinking about, ‘Ok, well there is a better way.’” Lynne detailed how she is there for her team, but she wanted to learn how the team operates on their own. She is there to make recommendations on how to make the process smoother when necessary. Don and Lynne both encouraged collective mindfulness by providing their teams with freedom because they trust their teams, and by providing their expertise as needed to strengthen the organizing process.

In the employee’s viewpoint, Shelly confirmed that the frontline workers are trusted to do their work, but they have their managers when issues arise. She explained:

> Even though Mac’s my manager . . . generally, all of us in this position . . . have to work on our own . . . We know what needs to be done. So, you have to . . . be a self-starter. That helps. And definitely don’t get . . . too stressed out when those challenges arise because . . . there’s always an answer to everything. And certainly, if you do have an issue, there’s always somebody to talk to. So don’t be afraid to go to that manager and say, “Hey I can’t figure this out. Can you help me?”

Therefore, Shelly and other frontline workers were given autonomy as they were trusted to seek assistance when they needed it. Although autonomy is more independent by definition, when Shelly was given autonomy, she said coworkers still can ask for help, or defer to an expert. In other words, her team enacted collective mindfulness even when employees are given autonomy because they can still go to an expert or experts when necessary.

In addition, Genuine Auto employees have suggested hiring outside members to assist in areas that need more attention and have previously hired outside consultants and trainers. They hired a consultant, Ray, for auto marketing. He was in two of the meetings I observed. They also hired outside leadership trainers and one of them does individual communication consulting and coaching for Genuine Auto employees. In a meeting observation, a team discussed how they wanted to hire an additional expert to grow their organization at a new store. Sean proposed this suggestion to a manager. He said, "They would be responsible to take off brand vehicles to other stores." The manager responded, "I love your approach [and] what you said . . . [about hiring] a new person." The manager agreed that hiring an expert in the area is a good idea. Therefore, coworkers have enacted collective mindfulness by suggesting deference to an expert through hiring someone new and hiring outside experts. This shows that employees at Genuine Auto not only defer to coworkers but go beyond the organization for expertise.

4.6 Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter, I detailed how Genuine Auto teams, employees, and managers communicated collective mindfulness based on the theoretical components. The results indicate that Genuine Auto employees added elements to collective mindfulness, such as looking at the bright side of situations rather than just failure, being fearless around certain issues, being too preoccupied with failure at times, creating efficient operations, and adding Eastern mindfulness as complimentary aspects to Western collective mindfulness. In the next chapter, I detail how employees communicated individual mindfulness through listening and making sense together at work.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS 2

Employees integrated individual mindfulness practices of listening to develop collective mindfulness by (a) developing teaching and learning environments, (b) recognizing and appreciating that coworkers were listening, and (c) checking in with coworkers. The board of directors introduced mindfulness to Genuine Auto, which developed collective mindfulness because mindfulness was encouraged from the leaders to the whole organization. One of the outcomes of this culture of collective mindfulness was an annual leadership training, where employees could sign up to learn how to communicate mindfully and mindfully listen to others. This leadership training also developed collective mindfulness because mindfulness was encouraged from the frontline workers to the leadership teams, and throughout the entire organization.

I also observed how employees who did and did not take the training listened, and I noticed how listening and learning were embedded into the organizational culture. I noticed how Genuine Auto employees functioned as a learning organization and made sense of changes due to COVID-19 by being appreciative of support from their coworkers and being resilient. The combination of the leaders' communication and the leadership trainee graduates practicing mindfulness and mindful listening to motivate employees allowed Genuine Auto to enact collective mindfulness to engage in what I have named as *sensechecking.* In this results chapter, first, I explain how employees communicated that the board of directors introduced mindfulness into the culture, which encouraged deeper and more mindful listening.

5.1 Collective Mindfulness, Leadership, and Leadership Training

Genuine Auto employees expressed how the mindful culture in the organization began with the board of directors and spread down the hierarchy of the company. When asked about Eastern mindfulness in Genuine Auto, Lynne said, “I think that that’s something . . . [the board of directors] . . . brought to the company . . . 2013 is when . . . they started introducing that into the culture of Genuine Auto.” The board of directors introduced mindfulness to the culture by developing the optional leadership training program, where employees can learn about and practice mindfulness to strengthen their leadership skills.

Shelly gave a similar answer when asked the same question about Eastern mindfulness. She said, “[At least one of the board of directors are] into all mindfulness . . . They have a program that you can sign up and learn about mindfulness . . . Having the culture where [the board of directors are] pushing for that . . . really does help.” Although Shelly has not taken the leadership training program, she is aware that employees learn about mindfulness in it, and she knows that the board of directors introduced mindfulness to the culture and to the leadership training program. This example shows that the board of directors encouraged Eastern mindfulness, which over time supported a culture of mindfulness throughout the organization.

One of the board of directors, Amy, confirmed that her care for people is also part of Genuine Auto’s culture. In an interview, she said, “I like people. That’s my thing . . . Especially when it comes to the team . . . being able to . . . uncover what’s getting in the way of them . . . reaching their potential . . . The culture that we have is very explicitly people first.” In this example, Amy reveals that her deep care for people has been engraved into the culture and helped other employees to put people first. When

employees put people first, they are likely motivated to listen to others fully and mindfully.

These examples demonstrate how leadership teams can make positive changes to the organizational culture. Specifically, teams have opportunities to create mindful cultures where people listen to each other with care. Genuine Auto's mindful culture began with the board of directors, for example, Amy, because she practiced mindfulness and put people first. Amy's mentality was then communicated throughout the organization and created a more mindful culture, where people tended to listen to others. As mentioned in this section, the board of directors introduced mindfulness to Genuine Auto through an optional annual leadership training program. The next section covers how the training develops individuals' listening skills, which also contributes to Genuine Auto's collective mindfulness.

5.1.1 Leadership Training Listening Skills and Collective Mindfulness

Some of the employees I interviewed said they participated in or were currently participating in the annual leadership training, where they learned to communicate mindfully. They expressed how they were (a) working on their listening skills, (b) observing how their listening skills have improved, and (c) noticing how coworkers listen in conversations since they took the leadership training. The data showed that the inspiration to be more mindful when listening spread mindfulness from the coworkers or frontline employees to managers and board of directors, which helped to encourage a culture of mindful organizing at Genuine Auto. First, I discuss how employees expressed how they wanted to strengthen their own listening skills.

Many of the employees detailed how the leadership training helped them become aware of how they listen to others. In an interview with Anna, an accountant, she mentioned how her goal was to strengthen her listening skills. When asked what skills she incorporated from the leadership training, she said, “We had to identify something about ourselves that we would like to improve and that was my listening and I’m still not perfect.” Anna shared that in the beginning of the leadership training, she chose to work on her listening skills and that she is aware of her past and current listening skills. She continued, “I . . . like to talk and . . . I have a bad habit of cutting people off . . . I have worked on that . . . here at work . . . I try to just be gentle with myself that I’m working on it.” This example illustrates that Anna acknowledges her listening habits and that she consciously puts effort into strengthening her ability to listen to others. Knowing that it is challenging, she is gentle with herself as she is developing her skills. This is significant because it shows she is using self-compassion as she works on her listening skills. Self-compassion is a form of mindfulness practice that allows individuals to treat themselves like they would treat a loved one (Neff & Dahm, 2015). The fact that Anna is using self-compassion as she strengthens her listening skills demonstrates that she has perhaps internalized some of the skills she learned within the mindfulness teachings in the leadership training.

Don also talked about how he was working on strengthening his listening skills because of the leadership training. He said, “That’s the biggest thing I learned over [the leadership training] is that my active listening skills were subpar . . . I can take away a lot by listening to others’ thoughts before acting on my own.” Because Don participated in the training, he noticed how he listened to others. Besides noticing his listening skills, he

also chose to strengthen them, and how others recognized changes in him. He continued, "I was in a meeting and [Amy] . . . [asked] 'What's wrong because you're not talking?'. . . I . . . said, 'I'm listening' . . . It's not something I do very often . . . so it was . . . big to be able to listen to people." In that meeting, Don was consciously making efforts to listen to others, and his manager noticed because of the difference from his normal behavior. This suggests that practicing mindfulness to strengthen listening not only allows employees to recognize changes in themselves, but it also helps others to notice changes in behavior related to mindfulness.

Additionally, employees described how they observed other leadership training graduates becoming more effective listeners. In an interview, Christa said she took the leadership training with her manager. When they were taking the training, she recognized how her manager was listening to her at work. She said:

> I pulled him aside and I'm like, "Hey, I just want you to know that . . . I really appreciate you listening to me . . . I can see you're working really hard on the content, because I feel . . . heard for the first time in a very long time, and I appreciate you giving me that time.

In this example, Christa explained that she felt heard after her manager started working on his listening skills. Thus, she expressed appreciation and gratitude toward him. Being appreciative and expressing gratitude is also a form of Eastern mindfulness (Voci et al., 2019). Not only was Christa noticing her boss becoming more mindful, but she was also being mindful of his new listening abilities herself. Bringing up her appreciation of him listening also may have motivated him to keep working on his listening skills. The support from fellow leadership training graduates in these examples seems to represent

collective mindfulness because graduates may be aware of mindfulness and listening in themselves and each other, which motivates them to keep working on their skills. As employees work on their skills and become more mindful together through communication, the entire organization begins to foster a culture of mindfulness.

Lastly, employees that have taken the leadership training described listening as more than just listening to someone talk. Samuel, a technician, said, "I observe people in people's interactions now. [I] see how quick people can get upset and [I'm] just trying to read that, watch it, and learn from it." Samuel explained how he goes beyond listening in conversation and listened to other's interactions and feelings. This type of mindful listening adds emotional intelligence, which is the ability to understand, access, and perceive emotions and understand the reasoning for emotions to promote intellectual growth (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Samuel is aware of how others work together and aware of coworkers' emotions. Having emotional intelligence at work can allow individuals to connect with other employees and develop a deeper understanding of their feelings (Wall, 2008). Emotional intelligence also contributes to collective mindfulness because it allows employees to collectively support coworkers on an emotional level. Next, I discuss how employees that took the training and did not take the training listened to each other interpersonally.

5.1.2 Listening With and Without Leadership Training

In meetings and interviews, I noticed how past leadership trainees listened to each other and I observed the whole culture of listening at Genuine Auto. Although I did not do individual comparisons before and after the leadership training, I observed that the leadership team encouraged mindful listening and specific employees take the annual

leadership training to strengthen their mindful listening. This became the start of how I observed the collective culture of listening. Within the culture of mindful listening at Genuine Auto, workers that did not take the leadership training acknowledged how their coworkers who did take the training were good at listening and vice-versa. I begin by detailing my observations of coworkers who recognized "good listeners."

In a team meeting, Ben, who did not take the leadership training, said, "I had a really good meeting with Aaron today and he's really good at listening." In this example, Ben acknowledged that Aaron, who did take the leadership training, was a good listener. Ben described that Aaron's listening skills allowed the meeting to be effective. In addition, individuals that took the leadership training recognized that those who did not take the training were also good listeners.

In an interview, James, a middle level employee who took the leadership training, said, "He's a good worker . . . When we're talking, he's listening . . . I could tell he was tuned into me. When I was talking, everything I was saying he was paying attention to me." James described how he believed his coworker was an effective listener and due to his listening skills, he believed his coworker was a "good worker".

Both examples communicated that being mindful of others in meetings and being a strong listener, may allow employees to be more effective. When individuals are mindful and bring their awareness to what others are saying, without judgement and with an open mind (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012), coworkers may recognize that they are being heard, which develops trust among the employees (Mustafa, 2021). Trust is important for mindfulness because it allows nonjudgmental openness and communication with one another.

Also, Aiden took the leadership training and mentioned how individuals at work "build trust with the team by listening." This quote demonstrates how Aiden described listening as an asset when it comes to teamwork. When coworkers interpersonally listen to each other, they develop trust within their relationships, which contributes to stronger collective team bonds. Interpersonal communication involves creating meaning together, which is a skill that can be developed at work (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2018). Listening is the concentration of verbal and nonverbal messages to help understand meaning (Wolvin, 2010). Therefore, interpersonal listening is how individuals create meaning together by concentrating on others' messages to understand meaning. Taking the leadership training that focused on listening allowed Aiden to realize the impact that listening has at Genuine Auto and to enact interpersonal listening at work.

In the data, there were other examples of how employees communicated effective listening skills even though they did not take the leadership training. In an interview, Josh, who did not take the leadership training, said, "If [they're] already involved with a conversation with something else, and [I thought my topic was] urgent, [I used to] try to inject [myself] situationally. I know better now . . . [Instead], I wait patiently." Josh explained how he used to interrupt others. In the past, his behaviors may have communicated that he cared more about what he had to say than what his coworkers had to say. Now, he tries to take time to wait for others to finish before speaking. This skill helps make individuals stronger listeners because they can teach themselves to be patient with others and not only focus on talking. Listening is about acknowledging that what other people say is important (Wolvin, 2010). In this example, Josh reveals how Genuine Auto coworkers recognize the importance of listening whether they take the leadership

training or not. Listening is embedded into the culture. While the leadership training is important, it is also just an additional element of the culture at Genuine Auto that can strengthen an employee's listening skills—it is not required to be mindful.

However, I observed challenging parts of listening during meetings for those who have not taken the training. In a couple inventory meetings, one employee was designated to go on the laptop that is hooked up to the large screen to share and review comments about used cars on a website that is for Genuine Auto employees. The team reviews the comments then assesses if Genuine Auto should purchase the used vehicle or not. Paul told me during an interview that the leadership training was offered to him, but he denied taking it because he was focusing his time on learning his new role. When he was on the laptop scrolling through the comments, I noticed how he had a hard time completing his task while trying to listen and respond to others at the same time. This was evident because his responses to others seemed to be unfinished. His sentences would end as he was attempting to work at the same time. There were other times that he missed what coworkers were saying because he was reading the comments. Although there is no way to know for sure if his listening skills would have strengthened if he took the training, Paul seemed as if he was putting his tasks before listening, which made his communication come off as incomplete and ineffective.

Although the culture at Genuine Auto is one that encourages individuals to listen to each other and the leadership training emphasizes the importance of listening, there is still room for improvement. The leadership training only takes about 10 employees per year, and some employees did not want to participate in the training. In the example above, Paul, who denied the training because of time constraints, still may take the

training in the future. Although some individuals have taken the leadership training where they learn to listen and some have not, collectively, Genuine Auto has a culture that puts a high importance on listening, which is a part of the organizational culture. In the next section, I further explore Genuine Auto's culture.

5.2 Listening in the Organizational Culture

The culture at Genuine Auto appeared to be a people culture, where employees developed an environment of encouraging listening and allowing people to be heard. For example, Christa said in her interview, "I feel a sense of more security at the company, because . . . I feel like I'm being heard and valued." Similarly, Shelly said, "It's nice to . . . work for a company where if I have a problem or I want to talk about something . . . everybody's always willing to help out and talk to you." Shelly described the people at Genuine Auto as helpful when she wanted to talk to someone, and Christa felt secure because people at Genuine Auto listened and respected her. These examples reveal that the employees wanted to be listened to by their coworkers. The environment they described is one that has components of psychological safety, in which individuals feel "safe" to talk to their managers about what is on their minds without feeling insecure, judged, or disrespected.

In addition, Genuine Auto employees illustrated how the leadership team hires people that fit with their culture. For example, Kyle said, "We hire people that are not necessarily salespeople, they're kind of people people." Kyle referred to the cultural fit as "people people," which means they were individuals that cared about others. He continued, "We in fact try to hire people that don't have sales backgrounds, especially automotive sales backgrounds, because they can bring in a lot of bad habits from what

we're trying to do." Kyle realized that in the past, other individuals in automotive sales had a different culture and mission than the "people culture" at Genuine Auto. Therefore, he expressed that they hire new employees based on their soft skills, such as their care for people and their listening skills, rather than their hard skills, such as previous sales experience. In this example, Kyle articulates the importance of the people culture. According to mindfulness, individuals that care about other people are strong listeners because they are motivated to bring their awareness through communication during conversations (Huston, 2015). At Genuine Auto, through these examples, we see that employees may add mindfulness in their conversations by realizing that anything can happen in the moment and the importance of listening with care and openness to what others communicate, both verbally and nonverbally.

Furthermore, employees connected listening to other soft skills. For example, when asked to give advice about working in her position, Lynne said, "Learn about people. Learn how to care about people, how to listen to people. A lot of the times, people just want to be listened to." After working at Genuine Auto for so many years, Lynne learned the importance of listening to coworkers with care because it communicated to them that she wanted to understand and hear them. This showed mindfulness by opening the opportunity to learn about what someone else was saying in the moment. This example shows that listening and caring about coworkers is a skill that employees at Genuine Auto can learn through the culture. When employees practice mindfulness and co-create a culture of care, they can strengthen their listening skills to fully be aware of what coworkers are saying.

Employees also expressed how this culture that the Genuine Auto employees created made them feel “good” and “empowered.” Anna, a middle level employee, said, “When you are surrounded by good people, it just feels good.” Anna expressed her admiration for the people in her workplace and communicated the positive impact it had on her. Braden, a frontline worker, also described his positive perception about Genuine Auto. He said, “I would say it’s less of a report to your boss . . . You ask them for guidance and reassurance that you’re making the right decisions. All the positions here are really empowered.” Braden described how the culture at Genuine Auto creates empowerment for the workers. Empowerment happens when employees feel heard and respected (Mustafa, 2021). Because listening and caring are a part of the culture at Genuine Auto, employees described that they felt empowered, and ultimately, that may make them feel good about their coworkers, the company, and the culture. These examples demonstrate how listening and caring in the workplace can make individuals feel good and create empowerment, which has been shown to be related to job satisfaction in past research (Mustafa, 2021).

Despite all the positive descriptions of Genuine Auto, there was an employee who did not embrace the culture like the other Genuine Auto employees. In an interview, Paul said, “I think one of the challenges . . . with a company that has multiple departments and multiple jobs and stores . . . is not knowing what everyone is responsible for.” Paul expressed that because Genuine Auto is so large and has many different departments, some employees are unaware of who should perform each duty. He continued, “If someone . . . doesn’t tell me . . . that a vehicle . . . didn’t sell . . . not following through . .

. can affect . . . the car's ability to sell. People don't understand how it affects them if they're not the ones that are affected."

In this example, Paul discussed how a lack of communication and awareness with his coworkers has created challenges. His experiences and perceptions communicated that he does not see the culture the same way as other individuals that described Genuine Auto as a caring people culture. This example shows how the culture at Genuine Auto has multiple dimensions, and it is not a "one size fits all" type of community. However, another part of the culture is the teaching and learning environment that I detail in the next section.

5.2.1 Learning Organization

Genuine Auto's people culture, where coworkers are motivated to listen to each other, also contributes to their motivation to learn and develop skills together. For example, in a team meeting, Ben asked Mason, a frontline employee, why he joined the meeting when it was not required for him to be there. Mason said, "[I] just join to learn more and have the inside scoop." This quote illustrates that Mason was motivated to learn on his own and take initiative. Ben responded, "When someone takes their discretionary time, you're investing in your skillset. I appreciate you coming. [With this team], it helps them [see that you are volunteering to join to strengthen your skills and knowledge.]" Ben applauded Mason for joining meetings voluntarily to develop himself. He expressed that Mason was leading by example, which perhaps may motivate other members of the team to do the same. Ben's behavior communicated that he was mindful that meetings were an opportunity to gain knowledge and updates, so he chose to join the meetings.

Similarly, in a response about advice Kyle would give someone in his position, he said, “Be a student of the business. Continue to learn and develop yourself. You can’t continue to develop others if you don’t continue to work on your own skills daily.” Kyle reflected on why Genuine Auto workers encouraged employees to develop skills. Collective organizational development starts with the drive to develop oneself and listening allows individuals to develop as they are open to learn from coworkers (Kluger & Itzchakov, 2022). Kyle continued by adding advice relating to the culture of Genuine Auto. He said, “You have to care about the people you work with to really impact change and influence them.” In his advice, Kyle suggested employees should continue to learn and grow while caring for their coworkers. As the examples above explain, it is important to listen to coworkers to grow individually, which allows the opportunity to assist them in their development.

Other employees expressed how mindfulness is embedded in Genuine Auto’s culture to help each other. Ren responded to a question about Eastern mindfulness by saying, “We’re developing people for the future . . . Everybody wants to make everybody better and nobody wants anybody to feel bad. We want to . . . build people up. We want to explain to them how they could do it differently next time.” In this example, Ren explained how coworkers are caring and want to develop their coworkers and this was significant because it revealed how Genuine Auto has a culture of teaching and learning. The teaching and learning process requires listening *and* understanding others.

Braden also communicated that the organization was committed to teaching and learning. He said, “It’s . . . learning together, exploring together, what can we improve upon as a department [and] as a whole.” When employees are open to listening to each

other, they become open to learning and exploring together. This way of thinking requires open-mindedness and being mindful assists employees with being open-minded. When individuals are open to what coworkers say, they can understand where someone else is coming from, which can facilitate exploration and growth opportunities.

Lastly, Josh described the open learning culture and how it is different from other organizations. He said, “People that have been here a year or two are willing to go out of their way to help brand new people, make them feel comfortable, [and help] them understand how each dealership works.” He described how Genuine Auto is committed to teaching others to assist in coworker development. Josh then described his previous sales environment. He said, “It’s funny because in a previous sales environment, especially salespeople don’t usually work together very well.” From his experience, the culture in sales at other companies is very different than it is at Genuine Auto. The culture of sales can be individually competitive, and coworkers may not work well together. However, Josh expressed how coworkers want others to “feel comfortable” and learn about the organization at Genuine Auto. Josh expressed that instead of a toxic culture the culture at Genuine Auto encouraged listening and growth. Furthermore, this listening process allowed new employees to learn from more seasoned employees. In the next section, I expand how the learning organization specifically made sense of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.2 Making Sense of COVID-19

This dissertation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore I noticed how employees made sense of changes due to the pandemic. Sensemaking was previously defined in the literature review as collective shared experiences that form and

sustain cultures (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). Sensemaking is a communicative and retrospective process of making meaning and then acting according to that meaning (Weick et al., 2005). As a learning organization that enacted collective mindfulness, Genuine Auto employees made sense of changes due to COVID-19 by appreciating the organization's support and by being resilient.

Employees expressed their gratitude that they worked at Genuine Auto during the pandemic. Christa said, "Car dealerships are notorious for their employees being a number . . . so [Genuine Auto's] response . . . the communication was on point." Genuine Auto employees made sense of the pandemic by comparing their experiences to what they perceived was going on in other car dealerships or "typical" car dealerships. The comparison during the sensemaking process allowed employees to be grateful for how their leadership team communicated to them and how they provided support to each other throughout the organization during an uncertain time.

Making sense through appreciation added an Eastern mindfulness element to the employees' sensemaking processes. In an interview with Lynne, she said, "Their response was, we will do whatever it takes . . . to keep . . . your team members here . . . We're unique. A lot of places . . . people got laid off . . . I am truly internally grateful working at [Genuine Auto] . . . They supported every team member." Lynne and the other coworkers' examples above made sense of what was happening during the pandemic by expressing their gratitude that they were even able to keep their jobs. Gratitude is an Eastern mindfulness practice of being thankful for what an individual or group has at that time (Sawyer et al., 2022). The employees were mindful that Genuine Auto's leadership team was working hard to support them, and the leadership team was

being mindful of what was happening and how others were feeling. In other words, in a culture that embraces listening, learning, and care for team members, Genuine Auto coworkers made sense of the support they were receiving and expressed gratitude during COVID-19.

Other employees expressed the positive aspects of working virtually. In an interview, Aiden said, “My skills have gotten better . . . since COVID [because] I was forced into using tools . . . Now I’m . . . more comfortable with communicating by different means.” Aiden made sense of the changes from working online due to the pandemic by recognizing the positive aspects of being able to learn about new forms of communication. He made sense through a positive, growth mindset by being mindful of his new skills. This is significant because it demonstrates that employees in collectively mindful learning organizations may find some ease in stressful events by realizing what skills have developed because of the situation. In the sensemaking process, employees who are mindful in their organization promote listening, learning, and care, and search for the growth outcomes of challenging events, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, as an extension to sensemaking, I discuss how Genuine Auto employees enacted a process that I call *sensechecking*.

5.2.3 Sensechecking

When observing and interviewing how employees at Genuine Auto embrace teaching and learning, I observed that many of the employees would check in with other coworkers to make sure they understood what was being said. Because the culture at Genuine Auto espouses to be caring about others and puts a high importance on listening and learning, employees checked to see if the listeners were fully understanding their

message. I named this process *sensechecking*, as an extension of sensemaking, which was defined in the section above. In the literature review, I also discussed how there are seven characteristics of sensemaking, which are identity construction, retrospection, sensible environment enaction, socialization, ongoing process, focus on/by particular cues, and subjective nature, and not concrete accuracy (Weick, 1995).

I also described sensegiving, which is an extension of sensemaking, however, it is significantly different from sensechecking. Sensegiving happens when organizational members try to shape coworkers' meaning toward a predetermined definition of reality (Scarduzio & Tracy, 2015). The managers' purposes of sensegiving are to create meaning of organizational reality from their perspectives or ways of communicating about situations or events—whereas sensechecking involves the co-construction of reality between two or more employees. In this section, I describe sensechecking, explain how it differs from sensemaking and sensegiving, provide examples, and explain the characteristics.

5.2.3.1 Definition and Differentiation

I define sensechecking as a process that occurs during the social aspect of sensemaking when employees at all hierarchical levels (a) check with other members to ensure their message is clear and understood, and (b) invite the group to co-construct meaning together. Importantly, sensechecking is facilitated through the process of being mindful and listening to each other. Sensechecking is different than sensemaking because it demonstrates collective mindfulness through reluctancy to simplify interpretations as it gives others an opportunity to contribute their insights on what has been communicated and it does not necessarily attempt to reduce uncertainty or ambiguity. Instead,

sensechecking centers on appreciation because it shows that the person talking in the moment cares about and appreciates their coworker enough to check in and give space for their interpretations. It is different than sensegiving because the purpose is not to force meaning and perceptions for others to adopt. The purpose is to open the conversation to allow groups to make meaning together when the sensechecker invites the listeners to provide feedback to continue the discussion. I detail the characteristics of sensechecking next.

5.2.3.3 Characteristics

Like sensemaking, sensechecking also includes retrospection and socialization as an ongoing process, which is subjective by nature. However, it extends sensemaking by adding that sensechecking is an open communicative process, where the sensecheckers are focused on the listeners. Based on the examples in this section below, sensechecking has six characteristics. The characteristics of sensechecking are that it is: retrospective; a social process; an ongoing process; subjective by nature; focused on the listeners; and an open communicative process. I provide examples of the characteristics next, then define the characteristics based on the examples.

5.2.3.1 Examples

During meetings, Genuine Auto employees initiated sensechecking through asking, “How I would read that is,” “How I would interpret it,” “What I’m hearing is that,” and “Does that makes sense?” Then, groups would collectively discuss their answers to these questions. For example, after an initial sensechecking question, Sean talked about a challenge he thought of with displaying off brand cars with their current brand-named cars. He said, “The only challenges I see with that is you’re not going to

want to intermix the two . . . I'm not saying it's all or nothing—That's great if we serve off brands, but it's an extra layer." Sean seemed to find uncertainty with part of the previous explanation and proposed to make meaning with the group collectively.

He continued, "It's not just a value [focus so] that doesn't make sense." A lot of car sales focus either on value or quality. Scott seemed to have a disagreement and said that value vehicles and quality vehicles should not be displayed near each other. In this example, Scott continued the collective discussion by not confirming and instead, saying that something does not "make sense," which invited the group to further analyze the issue.

Rob, an inventory team member, said, "I have a question." Next, Rob explained what he heard Sean say. He continued, "That would be our value program?" Rob proposed how they could possibly focus in on the off-brand cars with a "value program" and continued the sensechecking process. Sean replied, "That would be up for discussion . . . It's not a one size fits all. I think we could be successful." To me, this communicated that Rob and Sean proposed to sensecheck their perceptions with more people or keep the conversation going about the situation—rather than one of them forcing their meaning on the situation onto the other person.

This sensechecking example demonstrates the ongoing process of sensemaking. When one employee brought up a question or discussion topic, the group collectively listened to each other, mindfully thought about the situation, and proposed new discussion topics or questions until the group confirmed or planned to further communicate about the situation. In this example, we also see how employees may combine Western collective mindfulness components during the sensechecking process.

Sean and Rob were reluctant to simplify interpretations because they kept the conversation going about each other's interpretations, and Sean brought his awareness to what could possibly go wrong, which demonstrates the preoccupation with failure component. When Sean and Rob went through sensechecking process together, they used collective mindfulness aspects to deepen their understanding of each other and to continue co-constructing reality.

During interviews, employees also explained processes they go through that communicated sensechecking. In Ben's interview, he explained how he checks in with the team to make sure they understand. He said, "Does that make sense? Was that helpful? That's how I try to approach everything we do." This quote shows the social, retrospective, and ongoing aspects of sensemaking. Specifically, Ben used the term "we," which communicated that his sensechecking was a social process. His question, "Was that helpful" seemed to communicate that he wanted to know if the past situation contributed to the team's development in retrospect. When he said, "That's how I try to approach everything we do," I perceived this as an ongoing process that happens at work. By asking these questions, I also perceived that Ben wanted to hear from individuals that were listening to him and invite the listeners to provide their feedback as well—to collectively make sense of the situation.

I observed that Ben did ask these questions, and similar sensechecking questions during meetings as well. In a team meeting, Ben said, "I'm hearing that a lot." In response, Mar said, "We are really focused on that." Ben mentioned how he noticed a lot of coworkers talking about what they were discussing, and Mar confirmed that the team was putting their attention to that topic. In this example, we see that an employee on the

team listened to what others were saying to the point that he acknowledged what they had communicated frequently. The responder, Mar, confirmed that Ben was listening and "hearing" correctly. In other words, coworkers may enact sensechecking by gathering information that they listened to others say to create a common understanding, meaning, and/or reality of what they all heard. An individual employee or a group of employees can bring up the initial idea of the meaning to the team and then check to ensure the meaning is appropriate and acceptable to other coworkers.

In many meetings I observed, leaders checked to see if what they communicated made sense. For example, in a leadership team meeting, Johnathan said, "If they are in the body shop, they might be out for 2-3 months. So that's kind of it. Does that make sense?" Johnathan asked to make sure that the group "got the gist" of what he said. In the same meeting, Johnathan asked, "Did I explain that well?" Then, Lew also checked in with the group to make sure it made sense to the other board of directors. He said, "That's the guidance. Johnathan is here [to talk about the system. Does] that make sense? Johnathan?" Lew wanted to confirm with the team and with Johnathan. This shows that the speaker cared about the listener and wanted the listener to understand the speaker's message. Not only are Genuine Auto members mindful of others when they are talking (e.g., the listening culture), but the speaker is mindful of the listener (e.g., Johnathan and Lew's communication above). These examples demonstrate the retrospective nature of sensemaking because they illustrate how the employees who spoke asked the listening employees to reflect on what was communicated during the sensechecking process. The sensechecking component comes in through the social process of co-constructing what

was communicated together in that moment through mindful listening, understanding, appreciation, and respect.

This social, ongoing process of sensechecking was embedded in the culture of Genuine Auto when coworkers communicated too. In another team meeting, Kyle asked the team, “Well, let me ask you what your response was?” The team looked up with wide eyes and looked around the room for someone to respond. When Kyle checked in with the team, the team became more attentive. Therefore, when coworkers engaged in sensechecking, it appeared that the attention to the listener turned inward. During the sensechecking process, the individuals seemed to have thought about what others said as the speaker acknowledged that it could be interpreted differently. Simultaneously, as individuals were thinking about their own perception or answers to Kyle’s question, individuals looked around the room, or collectively looked at each other to see if others wanted to communicate their thoughts. This example demonstrates how sensechecking involves an awareness component where employees try to recognize what they heard and base their responses on what they heard, but also simultaneously consider the responses of their coworkers before constructing reality.

These examples show that listeners and speakers were reluctant to simplify interpretations—a common goal of sensegiving—or more specifically they were reluctant to assume others interpreted their message the way they do, and therefore they used sensechecking instead. This emphasizes the interpretive and subjective nature of sensechecking. When organizations enact collective mindfulness, sensechecking may occur when teams are continuously concerned about others and want to listen to what others perceive about past messages, conversations, and communication. This turns the

focus from one employee and their contribution to the collective contribution and interpretations for groups or within entire organizational cultures.

Lastly, I noticed these examples happened frequently at Genuine Auto, which shows that sensechecking is an ongoing social process like sensemaking, yet it adds additional focus on listening to invite an open communicative discussion. This characteristic of sensechecking also includes caring and mindfulness. Sensechecking centers on listening because the sensechecker's goal is to invite feedback from the listeners. It demonstrates care for employees because the sensecheckers care about the listeners' perspectives and the listeners care about what the sensecheckers have communicated, which allows the conversation and meaning to be co-constructed rather than predetermined. It is related to Eastern mindfulness because it is a nonjudgmental awareness in the moment, like Vogus and Sutcliffe's (2012) definition of mindfulness. However, it is a collective awareness rather than individual awareness. To conclude, I summarize this chapter.

5.3 Chapter 5 Summary

In this chapter, I discuss how the individual mindful practice of listening developed collective mindfulness throughout Genuine Auto. The board of directors promoted mindfulness and listening at work and developed an annual leadership training. The leadership training taught many employees how to communicate mindfully and deepen their listening skills. Then, when employees listened to each other, it may have motivated other coworkers to strengthen their listening skills. The listening and mindfulness training contributed to the organizational culture, where employees embraced teaching and

learning. As a learning organization, employees made sense of changes due to COVID-19 by being appreciative of support they received and being resilient.

I also observed how employees enacted sensechecking, a new term I created. Sensechecking happened when employees checked in with others by asking listeners to provide their feedback and continue discussions as a social and ongoing process, which extends sensemaking by connecting to listening, care, and mindfulness. In addition to how sensechecking is a social, ongoing process that focuses on listeners in an open communicative way, it is also retrospective and subjective by nature. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I provide the discussion, which includes theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 6. IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored organizational collective mindfulness and offered a unique perspective on Eastern and Western mindfulness, listening, and sensemaking at work. In this chapter, I discuss (a) the theoretical implications of this dissertation for collective mindfulness, listening, organizational culture, sensemaking, and sensechecking; (b) practical implications; and (c) limitations, directions for future research, and reflections. During my time observing meetings and through interviews, I noticed how Genuine Auto employees communicated Western collective mindfulness based on the five theoretical components. Additionally, I illustrated how employees worked with their teams to manage conflict, solved work-related issues together, communicated openly and frequently, and were willing to seek outside experts as necessary.

Employees at Genuine Auto used Eastern individual mindfulness practices of listening to develop collective mindfulness. The board of directors introduced the individual practices of mindfulness and mindful listening to Genuine Auto by developing an annual training where employees learned and practiced these skills. Due to the training and the top-down support of mindfulness, the culture seemed to be one that not only embraced collective mindfulness, but teaching and learning as well, like what has been discussed in research on learning organizations (Jensen, 2005). Furthermore, individuals and teams within this learning organization made sense of the changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic through appreciation and resilience. Lastly, employees enacted a new term I named as sensechecking, which is an extension of sensemaking and sensegiving. Employees enacted sensechecking as they went through a process of

providing their perspectives about work-related topics, asked coworkers if they understood and agreed with their perspectives, then prompted an open, collective discussion to co-construct reality and meaning. I begin by discussing the theoretical implications of this dissertation.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This dissertation adds to the literature on organizational communication about mindfulness at work, and the theories of mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness. The investigation of the connections between Western mindfulness in the organizational communication literature with Eastern individual mindfulness highlights the importance of listening, learning, and caring about others at work. Furthermore, this dissertation highlights how sensemaking can be employed in learning organizations during stressful events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to develop appreciation and resilience. As an extension of sensemaking, I found that employees enact sensechecking at Genuine Auto, or within this learning organization that is collectively mindful. Theoretically, this study adds to previous organizational communication research by focusing on individual and collective mindfulness at work through observations and interviews, and by extending sensemaking to add sensechecking, which includes listening, mindfulness, caring, and learning elements. In this section, I discuss two main theoretical implications: (a) collective mindfulness and (b) listening, mindfulness, and sensechecking. I begin by discussing the theoretical implications of collective mindfulness.

6.1.1 Collective Mindfulness

Scholars have been studying Western collective mindfulness for over two decades (Weick et al., 1999). Past research has explored mindful organizing as a bottom-up approach and organizational mindfulness as a top-down approach to explore Western mindfulness in organizations (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). This research has typically explored these two constructs as separate entities (Nwankpa & Roumani, 2014; Schulman, 1993). However, this dissertation integrated mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness together as collective mindfulness to focus more on how the culture was mindful rather than assessing the power comparisons of mindfulness at different hierarchical levels. Like Cantu et al. (2020), the results found that Genuine Auto's culture demonstrates the five components of collective mindfulness—preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). However, the results did illustrate some differences from past research, such as the employees communicating the bright side of situations and being fearless rather than just focusing on failure. In addition, managers expressed that teams were at times too preoccupied with failure, and employees were sensitive to operations and tried to make operations more efficient.

First, noticing what can go wrong is one of the five components of collective mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Genuine Auto coworkers and employees communicated how they were preoccupied with failure by expressing the aspects of the organization that needed work and by trying to prevent what can go wrong. However, the data also showed how coworkers and employees expressed fearlessness and attempted to

look at the bright side of situations. Furthermore, at times, Genuine Auto employees expressed how they were not worried about certain issues because they perceived that the issue would be resolved in the future.

Both findings show how teams in Genuine Auto were not always preoccupied with failure, which is an extension of past research. For example, at times, coworkers brought up potential issues and the rest of the members were not concerned and wanted to disregard or minimize the fear surrounding the issue, rather than focusing on it. This expands the understanding of Western collective mindfulness as the first component, preoccupation of failure, was not the way employees at Genuine Auto always organized. Instead, employees in this dissertation were aware of organizing in ways that acknowledged failure but also what was going well in the organization.

Being preoccupied with positive behavior is significant as it expands the five components of collective mindfulness. Instead of only focusing on failure, employees were preoccupied with failure *and* success. This finding relates to appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry explains that individuals and groups can learn from setbacks and failure yet can also learn from doing more of what is going well (Havens et. al., 2006).

Extant research has also examined appreciative inquiry and collective mindfulness together (Elbanna & Murray, 2009). Particularly, appreciative inquiry has been employed to understand the innovation within a successful information systems project, in which the team created collective mindfulness. However, past research has not explored how appreciative inquiry may be used in combination with the mindfulness component *preoccupation with failure* to strengthen collective mindfulness. Thus, one of this dissertation's extensions to theory is that when individual and collective mindfulness

at work occur, employees may communicate about what may fail *and* what is going well to remain mindful.

Additionally, at Genuine Auto, employees focused more on learning than failure. If anything, they focused on both success and failure to prepare for the future. Many of the HRO studies (Gärtner, 2013; Ray et al., 2011; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) shy away from the trial-and-error type of learning and emphasize error-free work through preoccupation with failure. However, resilience is also a component of collective mindfulness. The combination of the two components may create a culture that fosters more collective mindfulness. When exploring how organizations may be committed to resilience, it is important to note that by doing so, members may discuss accomplishments and reflect on what the organization did well and recognize the successes of teams and individuals.

Second, organizational trust relates to organizational mindfulness (Nwankpa & Roumani, 2014), and the results demonstrated that employees trusted their coworkers. Therefore, trust relates to collective mindfulness rather than just organizational mindfulness. Organizational trust includes five dimensions: (a) competence, (b) honesty and openness, (c) concern for other employees, (d) reliability, and (e) identification (Nwankpa & Roumani, 2014). These dimensions are evident in the results of this dissertation because employees in teams and groups tended to trust each other and enacted organizational mindfulness by illustrating the dimensions in their communication at the meetings I observed and during their interviews. However, I found that organizational trust may be enhanced through individual mindfulness practices. For

example, employees who practice expressing gratitude may develop a deeper connection to their coworkers, which develops more trust between coworkers.

In this dissertation, employees did not communicate mindful organizing by identifying role expectations or directing instructions like the results that Vendelø and Rerup (2020) found. I also did not observe employee to customer relationships, which was one limitation of this study that I discuss later. Instead, employees attempted to make processes more efficient, which was interpreted as a new, and more particular way of being sensitive to operations. These behaviors that were observed and communicated expand on the theoretical components of collective mindfulness because they explain how employees were sensitive to operations at work. Future research should consider these additional elements of collective mindfulness into the whole theoretical framework: to focus on (a) the bright side of situations, (b) building trust among employees, and (c) efficiency. In the next section, I indicate the theoretical implications of individual mindfulness, learning organizations, and sensechecking.

6.1.2 Listening, Mindfulness, Organizational Culture, and Sensechecking

This qualitative exploration of individual and collective mindfulness has implications for understanding how organizations that enact collective mindfulness communicate and how trainings may make a difference to organizational culture. At Genuine Auto, employees enacted sensechecking, which I further discuss in this section. To start, the theory of learning and the learning organization explains that organizational members work closely together by transferring data to information and then to knowledge (Jensen, 2005). Next, employees transfer that knowledge into action and then finally learning to create new knowledge.

The five principles of the learning organization are (a) mission and vision, (b) leadership, (c) experimenting culture, (d) transfer of knowledge, and (e) teamwork and cooperation (Vassalou, 2001). Moreover, the learning organization explains how an organization's environment promotes each type of learning. This dissertation found that Genuine Auto was a learning organization and demonstrated these characteristics because they followed their vision and mission to care about people in their workplace first, then their customers, then their community. In meetings, I observed how their teams worked well together through cooperation and leadership skills. Additionally, I noticed how employees transferred knowledge, and they developed an open teaching and learning culture.

Because caring for others is in Genuine Auto's mission, the employees' awareness of coworkers allowed them to focus on listening, which incorporates the Eastern perspectives of collective mindfulness. Past research has found that individual mindfulness involves being calm, focused, aware, and present during uncertain and chaotic situations (Fraher et al., 2017). At Genuine Auto, employees communicated an additional aspect of listening during the uncertain times of COVID-19. Listening then contributed to the theoretical extension of sensemaking that I discuss in the next section, called sensechecking.

6.1.2.1 Sensechecking

Sensemaking was used as a theoretical framework in this dissertation to explore how Genuine Auto members made sense of the changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As data collection and analysis proceeded, I used an inductive process to examine the data. During that process, I noticed a new process called sensechecking that occurred

during sensemaking. Sensechecking can manifest when a coworker explains to her team an idea on how to engage with clients on a new social media platform. She may check in and ask if it makes sense and listen for a confirmation before moving forward. If the teammates have feedback or additional questions, they may ask and further discuss. The teammates may continue sensechecking until the team concludes with confirmation or plans for further discussion.

One of the characteristics of sensemaking is that it is a social process. Sensechecking happens during this social process of sensemaking because it invites teams to co-construct meaning together and provide collective feedback for deeper discussion. Additionally, sensechecking can happen between two employees or a group of employees. It allows the employees to co-construct the reality of what has been communicated. The next section details similarities and differences among related concepts.

6.1.2.1.1 Sensechecking and Related Concepts

Sensechecking relates to the concept of sensegiving and floating. First, sensegiving is defined as management teams' attempts to redefine the reality of employees and stakeholders to communicate new forms of understanding (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sensechecking is almost the opposite of sensegiving because sensegiving involves efforts to change a coworkers' meaning to a preferred definition of reality (Scarduzio & Tracy, 2015) while sensechecking is the co-construction of meaning between two or more coworkers. Sensechecking involves listening and the mindfulness characteristics of care and appreciation. Sensegiving is typically the framing of a reality

by one person, or a group of employees and it is not shaped through listening or mindfulness.

Sensechecking also relates to floating, which is an informal norm in communication among HRO teams to receive feedback or confirm or deny an idea (Roeder et al., 2021). Similar to sensechecking, this allows teams to make decisions and check for accuracy. Floating provides an opportunity for the sender to ask for or receive confirmation or feedback from teams, and to engage with others. Floating and sensechecking are cognitive prosses which seek reliability. They were both discovered by observing the same five organizational communication theoretical components within teams. Therefore, they both relate to deference to expertise, reluctancy to simplify interpretations, and sensitivity to operations. Lastly, they both encourage open communication and decision making.

However, there are differences between floating and sensechecking. Floating was found in an HRO and the purpose of employing floating was to make a quick decision (Roeder et al., 2021). However, sensechecking does not have to happen during a quick decision and can occur during scheduled meetings in a non-HRO. The sensechecking process is ongoing within meetings and there are not necessarily any time constraints. During interviews, it was observed that employees strived for longer and/or deeper sensechecking moments because they demonstrated that more time and effort communicating about an issue could ensure that they co-constructed a meaning for the situation together.

Sensechecking is also focused on the audience or listeners rather than only focused on experts or senders. Whoever is in the room is invited into the sensechecking

process, whether they are an expert or not. The purpose of sensechecking is also to understand if the listener is receiving their message the way they meant it to be received. Therefore, unlike floating where the topic of communication is frequently about complex issues (Roeder et al., 2021), sensechecking can include discussions of simple statements, issues, and ideas. For example, someone can say, “I am hearing that a lot” to sensecheck and confirm or ask, “Does that make sense?” to seek understanding of the group and invite discussion with their teams.

Another difference is sensechecking is an extension of sensemaking. In one study, floating was described as the following from one of the participants, Henry: “two heads are better than one. Why not just see what [others are] thinking and see if what I’m saying makes sense to them?” (Roeder et al., 2021, p. 453). This sounds like sensechecking, except the term was not an extension of sensemaking and the characteristics were not based on sensemaking. Sensemaking and sensechecking both include the following characteristics: retrospective, social, an ongoing process, and fluid nature instead of concrete (Weick, 1995). However, sensechecking is focused on the listeners and is an open communicative process.

The last difference between floating and sensechecking is the use of silence. After floating and idea, silence can be used as nonverbal confirmation (Roeder et al., 2021). However, with sensechecking, to understand and engage the listeners, silence was not demonstrated in the data collected as a nonverbal confirmation. Instead, during sensechecking, the speaker invites the listeners to provide feedback verbally or nonverbally with body language. If the listeners do not respond verbally or with body language, then confirmation has not occurred because during sensechecking, the listeners

are actively engaged in the process to co-construct reality together. Next, I detail the characteristics of sensechecking.

6.1.2.1.2 Description of Characteristics

Based on the results of this dissertation, the six characteristics of sensechecking are described as the following: The retrospective characteristic explains that groups think back about the past to make sense of the current situation. The social characteristic of sensechecking describes how sensechecking must occur among two or more employees, and it is a collective process. The ongoing characteristic illustrates that it is a continual process that repeats as meaning is constructed and re-constructed among coworkers. The characteristic of subjective by nature reveals that groups are reluctant to simplify interpretations or reduce ambiguity/uncertainty and therefore are open to other's interpretations rather than only focusing on their own.

Focusing on listeners details that when a speaker is sensechecking, they want to hear from the listeners and gain the listeners' perceptions to help co-construct meaning rather than use a predetermined meaning for an event or situation. Lastly, the open communicative characteristic involves communication with a group and the sensecheckers care about the listeners and invite the listeners to become a part of the sensechecking process by seeking feedback. Future research could build upon this by exploring sensechecking in other organizations, ones that may or may not enact in collective mindfulness. Next, I explain the practical implications of this dissertation.

6.2 Practical Implications

This dissertation revealed that employees, teams, and organizations can adopt listening and mindfulness practices to foster a more mindful culture. If organizations want to be more mindful, they may create trainings that include mindfulness and mindfulness practices. Employees may take the training if they want to but there should not be pressure or a requirement to take the training. Organizations my use this dissertation's findings to encourage mindfulness and listening amongst employees through mindfulness practices and training. Employees may learn to bring their attention to the present moment and bring their full awareness to coworkers when listening to them without judgement and with open minds.

Other car dealerships may implement similar leadership trainings in their own organizations, and other companies in general may adopt similar trainings as well. Based on the results in this dissertation, companies may train employees to practice mindfulness to develop their mindful listening, mindful communication, self-compassion, and emotional intelligence skills. Similarly, organizations may benefit from providing yoga and meditation classes for employees to promote health, wellness, and a more mindful culture. Companies may use appreciative inquiry to explore what is going well and use the assets to develop teams and/or the organization.

As I witnessed and heard Genuine Auto workers communicate collective mindfulness, there are a few suggestions that may transfer to other employees at automotive organizations and/or HROs when developing Western and Eastern mindfulness strategies. First, employees may communicate with coworkers about both accomplishments and about what can go wrong. This is important because it allows employees to balance their optimistic and pessimistic views to foster a well-rounded

awareness and recognition. Second, employees may promote open teaching and learning environments. Employees need to be taught to do this because it may allow coworkers and teams to effectively manage conflict and solve problems together.

Third, employees should feel comfortable asking questions and know they can go to their coworkers for help when they need them. It is beneficial for employees to teach their employees mindfulness skills because issues and challenges are inevitable but knowing it is acceptable to ask for help may prevent stress and ultimately assist in resolving issues collectively and effectively. Lastly, employers may hire outside consultants and trainers for specialization needs. Hiring outside consultants would be useful because it opens the opportunity to learn from specialists that may offer unique perspectives and resources that employees and employers may not know about. These strategies suggest employees may show appreciation and gratitude toward coworkers, celebrate accomplishments together, and be committed to resilience through open learning environments and communication that promote collective mindfulness.

Another practical implication of this dissertation that can transfer to other employees in automotive organizations and/or HROs is sensechecking. Some potential behavior that could be taught are described below. First, when ideas emerge, a team member could explain the idea and then check in with the group to gather other perspectives. Next, employees may check to make sure other coworkers understand the idea and interpretation of the idea. Then, employees can seek feedback and develop a conversation around the idea in an open, nonjudgmental way, where learning and development is encouraged. As employees go through this sensechecking process, they can simultaneously practice strengthening their mindful listening skills with their teams.

Teaching organizations about sensechecking could be beneficial because it may inspire effective and productive team communication. Lastly, I discuss this dissertation's limitations, recommendations for future research, and my own reflections.

6.3 Future Research, Limitations, and Reflections

This dissertation is not without limitations. It was an in-depth qualitative examination of Western collective mindfulness and Eastern individual mindfulness at work. This dissertation explained how employees at an automotive company, Genuine Auto, communicated mindfulness personally and as a collective culture. Additionally, it detailed how listening and sensemaking/sensechecking played into Genuine Auto employees' communication at work—adding to the organizational communication literature. Moreover, the dissertation used participant observation and interviews to witness and learn about coworkers' experiences and perceptions relating to these and other phenomena that occurred.

The reliance on qualitative data made this dissertation longer and denser than other studies on collective mindfulness at work; however, it provided employees' experiences with rich detail. I was able to provide validity with employees' perspectives of my findings through member reflections and crystallization (Tracy, 2019). My own reflexivity also helped me to connect with employees and understand their experiences with the leadership training because I have also taken and taught the communicating mindfully portion of the training. I was also able to understand and recognize their mindfulness practices and culture because I am a mindfulness practitioner and teacher as well. Future researchers may use their own personal background to observe an organizational culture of familiarity to reflect on what is happening and on past

experiences. Additionally, the combination of observations and interviews across the organization allowed different views and perspectives. The multiple types of data allowed for a complex picture of how and why employees think and reason the way they do.

The main limitation to my study was how I conducted meeting observations rather than in-person observations. I employed Zoom to observe Genuine Auto's in-person meetings. It was challenging for me to be able to see and hear everybody in the meetings. There were few individuals that the Zoom video would face, and I could mainly hear and see them. For example, in a lot of my meetings, Ben would open Zoom so I was able to write down clear observation quotes from him because I could hear and see him well. But other meeting participants, such as Lew and Shelly, sat far away so I could not catch exactly what they said. This limited my ability to have a full understanding and awareness of what was going on during meetings. If I was in person or if every individual was on Zoom, it would have been easier to hear all the participants.

I also could not always see who was speaking and I did not know an individual's voice. There were some instances where I took notes about how the person that said a quote could be two different people. I would make descriptions of how the individual sounded, then at times, I was able to realize who said past quotes by hearing them and seeing them speak in another meeting. I would then have to go back to my past observation notes and update who said certain quotes.

I originally thought that all the meeting participants would be on Zoom because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a lot of organizations to switch to a virtual format. However, Genuine Auto was only particularly virtual for the first month that the COVID-19 virus began spreading rapidly in the U.S. around March 2020. I started collecting data

in August 2021. Genuine Auto was deemed essential by the government, and therefore, the employees were able to work in-person by law. Future researchers may consider observing meetings in-person or meetings through a virtual platform, in which every participant is working from home and joins the virtual platform individually.

In addition, I did not observe employees at work except during meetings and I did not observe communication between employees and customers. Future researchers may consider observing communication in the workplace beyond just planned meetings. It is possible that new forms of communication may emerge as employees work together outside of meetings. Future researchers may also consider observing how employees communicate with customers to understand the role of mindfulness with customer service and satisfaction.

Other limitations to this study were that I had more men than women and most of the participants were Caucasian. This was due to the overall lack of demographic diversity in the company. However, future research may select organizations that have more demographic diversity to see how mindfulness, listening, and sensechecking emerge in organizations with more diverse voices. In addition, it was challenging to recruit in the beginning. After the gatekeepers sent my message to the leadership trainee graduates, I only received interest from a couple employees. Not many employees wanted to schedule meeting observations because they had to ask their teams, schedule, gain approval from each meeting participant, and set up Zoom before the meeting. These challenges would have been prevented, or at least a lot smoother, if I were in person during the meetings. This way, one individual would not have to be responsible for gaining approval from each meeting participant, as I could have individuals explain and

sign forms; and one individual would not have to be responsible for setting up Zoom before the meeting/s.

Lastly, I did not explore differences related to race, sex, sexuality, or other demographic differences, in this dissertation. A few questions that future research may consider include: How does race, sex, and/or sexuality impact individual and collective mindfulness at work? How does race, sex, and/or sexuality influence sensemaking and sensechecking at work?

Other topics for future research include studying Western and Eastern mindfulness training and their impact on the organizational culture and differences between their outcomes. Future research may consider exploring cultural competency training and the impact on organizational culture. Researchers may interview and observe trainees before, during, and after trainings to understand the pre and post differences. Lastly, researchers may explore retention, job satisfaction, and productivity in learning organizations and organizations that enact collective mindfulness.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation provided a complex understanding of individual and collective mindfulness at an organization called Genuine Auto that conducted annual leadership training where employees learned about mindfulness. Studying Eastern individual mindfulness and Western collective mindfulness (i.e., mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness) together through meeting observations and interviews allowed a comprehensive understanding of multiple views at Genuine Auto. The first results chapter indicated that employees communicated collective mindfulness through open discussions, managing conflicts, solving problems, and asking for help when

needed. The second results chapter indicated that employees used individual mindfulness to create their collective mindfulness culture through teaching and learning and promotion of stronger listening skills. Lastly, employees made sense together by sensechecking and made sense of changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic by appreciating the support they received during the process and viewing their past experiences as learning opportunities. Future research should continue to expand on the relationship between mindfulness, listening, culture, and sensemaking in other types of organizations and with more diverse samples to understand the complexities of organizing in mindful ways.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

[Welcome]. In this interview, I will ask work background and demographic questions, as well as questions relating to communication at work. Have you read the informed consent? [Review as needed]. Do you have any questions? Do you consent to participate in this interview? [If so], Great, we will get started then!

Work Background

1. What is your job title? [May ask additional questions to indicate the level of hierarchy.]
2. How long have you been working here?
3. How long have you been working in this type of profession?
4. Can you tell me what a typical day at work is like for you?
    1. What does a typical day during the COVID-19 pandemic look like for you?
    2. What does a typical day before the COVID-19 pandemic look like for you?
5. What is your most enjoyable aspect of your job?
6. What is something about your job that can be challenging?
7. Have you taken [the leadership training]? [If so, ask the following questions below.]
    1. Which year were you and how was it conducted (face-to-face, hybrid, or fully online)?

2. Can you give me an example of a time that you used your training content at work? What happened?
3. Can you compare what work was like before and after you took the training?
4. What was the most important thing/s you learned from [the leadership training]?

Workplace Communication

8. [This question will vary based on the interviewee's' level of hierarchy.] Describe a time that your coworkers worked well together. AND/OR Describe a time that you and your manager/s worked well together. AND/OR Describe a time that you and people you manage worked well together.
9. Do you believe that there is a difference in the way you communicate with [your managers vs coworker] or [other managers vs people you manage]? If so, what are the differences? If not, why do you think they are similar?

Making Sense of Change

10. How is your online work routine similar to or different from the routine in in-person work?
11. What are some things you enjoy about your online work routine that are similar to or different from your face-to-face work routine?
12. How do you feel about the transition from working online to going back to the office? Why do you think you feel this way?
13. What is your organization's response to the transition?
14. How do you feel about how your organization is responding to the transition?

Listening

15. Provide an example of when you felt like people were (or a person was) genuinely listening to you at work. Can you share an example of a time when you felt listened to?
16. Provide an example of when you did not feel like people were (or a person was) genuinely listening to you at work. What happened? How did it make you feel? Why did it make you feel that way?

Mindfulness

17. Mindfulness in organizations have been defined in multiple ways. One definition is about people being aware together without judgement and with deep care. Do you think this is a part of your organization? Do you think this should be a part of your organization? [If yes] How so? [If no] Why not?
18. Another definition is the daily coordination of people paying attention together on what is going on and understanding what can go wrong (Sutcliffe et al., 2016). Do you think this is a part of your organization? Do you think this should be a part of your organization? [If yes] How so? [If no] Why not?

Advice and Additional Questions

19. What advice would you give to someone who worked in your position?
20. What else would you like to share or add?
21. [Explain observation and interview findings at this point if applicable. If so, ask, "What do you think about my interpretation here?"]

[Open chat.]

Demographic Questions

22. What is your age?

23. What is your gender/sex?

24. What is your ethnicity/race?

APPENDIX 2. CODEBOOK

1st Level Descriptive Codes	**Subcode**	**Definition/Explanation**
Applying leadership training		The leadership trainee graduates using the skills they learned from the training to continuously develop.
Care		Taking extra time to be thoughtful to others.
Challenges		Difficulties that people face at work.
Communication		
	Effective	The perception of successful conversations.
	Ineffective	The perception of unsuccessful conversations.
	Joking	Laughing together with others when they think something is funny.
COVID-19 precautions		Taking the appropriate measures to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Eastern mindfulness		The ability to focus attention and be aware of what is going on.
Happiness		Feeling satisfied at work.
Listening		The ability to focus attention on another person while they are speaking and understand what they are saying.
Mission statement		The common understanding of the organization's shared encouragement to serve fellow employees, guests, and the community with integrity, kindness, and respect.
People culture		Acknowledging that members in the workplace tend to focus their attention on people and their communication with people, which allows the organization to differ from competitors.
Plan ahead		The ability to decide on what to do for future occasions.

2nd Level Analytic Codes	**Subcode**	**Definition/Explanation**
Company support		Employees perceiving their organization to provide necessary financial, social, and wellness resources.
Learning organization		The continuous focus on gaining knowledge, skills, and development through training and mentoring of the employees throughout the organization.

Western collective mindfulness		
	Preoccupation with failure and success	The ability to bring awareness and recognition to both what can go wrong and what is going well.
	Reluctancy to simplify interpretations	The ability to understand that what someone says or does could have different meaning than how it may be initially perceived.
	Sensitivity to operations and efficiency	The ability to be aware of procedures and make efforts to change processes to save time, money, and/or energy.
	Commitment to resiliency	The ability to learn by working through conflict and solving problems collectively.
	Deference to expertise	The ability to turn to individuals who are knowledgeable or specialists for assistance.
Sensechecking		Employees at all hierarchical levels checking with other members to ensure their message is clear and makes sense, then inviting further conversation as necessary.
Sensemaking		Shared experiences and understanding to form and sustain culture of meaning making.

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VITA

Leanna Hartsough, PhD

Education Degrees Awarded

Youngstown State University- Youngstown, OH
Master of Arts in professional communication (December 2017)
Advisor: *Dr. Rebecca Curnalia*
Specialization: Marketing; Completed 5 MBA courses
Thesis: Hartsough, L. (2017). Male and female athletes' perceptions of their coaches' communication (Master's Thesis, Youngstown State University). https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ysu1516795664040302&disposition=inline

Youngstown State University- Youngstown, OH
Bachelor of Science in individualized curriculum program, *AACSB Accredited* (May 2016)
Major: International business
Minor: Nonprofit leadership
Bachelor of Arts in exercise science (May 2016)
Major: Physical education

Professional Positions

College of Engineering and KY Water Resources Research Institute - University of Kentucky
Grant Funded Research Assistant (February 2021 - Present)

Department of Communication - University of Kentucky
Teaching Assistant **(**August 2018 - Present)

Festival Fitness - Virtual and at various locations
Business Owner, Trainer, and Instructor (online, synchronous and in-person) (August 2016 - Present)

FYH Practitioner - Virtual
Communication Consultant (online, synchronous) *(*August 2020 – March 2021)

Department of Communication - University of Kentucky
Grant Funded Research Assistant for Dr. Kevin Real (January 2020 - August 2020)

Turning Technologies - Youngstown, OH
Higher Education Sales Intern and Inside Account Manager (April 2017 - June 2018)

Department of Communication Studies - Youngstown State University
Graduate/Teaching Assistant and Adjunct Instructor (August 2016 - May 2018)

Additional Teaching Experience

Co-lecturer for Understanding Workplace Communication in a Diverse U.S. Society at the University of Kentucky (online, asynchronous) (December 2021 - January 2021)

Instructor of record for Persuasive Speaking at the University of Kentucky (online, asynchronous) (May 2021 - June 2021)

Communicating Mindfully adjunct instructor at NHTI Concord's Community College (online, synchronous) (August 2020 - May 2021)

Grader for Introduction to Communication at the University of Kentucky (online, asynchronous) (June 2020 - August 2020)

Mindful Communication and Stress Reduction curriculum designer for Nursing CE Central (online, asynchronous) (June 2020)

Yoga instructor at Youngstown State University and The Jewish Community Center (June 2013 - June 2020)

Co-facilitator for a Mindfulness for Professionals workshop at the Cognitive Therapy Mindfulness Center (June 2019)

Junior Achievement volunteer Business and Economics instructor (May 2017)

Zumba instructor at Youngstown State University and The Jewish Community Center (May 2012 - May 2017)

Kayak, rock wall, and team building instructor at Youngstown State University (February 2012 - May 2013)

Book Chapter Publication

Real, K., **Hartsough, L.**, & Huddleston, L. (2021). Communicating in medical teams and groups: Examining psychological safety and simulation training. In S. J. Beck, J. Keyton, & M. S. Poole (Eds), *The Emerald Handbook of Group and Team Communication Research.* United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing. https://books.emeraldinsight.com/page/detail/The-Emerald-Handbook-of-Group-and-Team-Communication-Research/?k=9781800435018

Peer Reviewed Publications

Hartsough, L. (2022). Leadership training program assessment: Using appreciative inquiry for assessment and development. *AI Practitioner.* https://aipractitioner.com/product/leadership-training-program-assessment/

Wilkinson, E., & **Hartsough, L.** (2021). Adherence to the academy: Power relations with the colonized student. *Ohio Communication Journal*, *59*(1), 90-96. https://www.ohiocomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/OCA-Wilkinson-FINAL-6.pdf

Publication Proceedings

Hartsough, L. (2022). "It really was a good thing we were virtual." Poetic inquiry about teaching during the pandemic. *International Association of Autoethnography and Narrative Inquiry.*

Hartsough, L. (2020). The Uncertainty poem written while Leanna Hartsough (a UK student) self-quarantined with COVID-19 symptoms but was unable to get tested due to test scarcity, 2020 May 1. In *In This Together: Documenting COVID-19 in*

the Commonwealth Collection, 2020, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

Scholastic and Professional Honors

Recipient, Research Grant Award **($500)** through the University of Kentucky Graduate Student Congress to perform online consulting and leadership program assessment for a car dealership (January 2020)

National Communication Association Training and Development Graduate Student Representative (November 2018 - Present)

Three Minute Thesis finalist at Youngstown State University (November 2017)

Youngstown State University Campus Recreation Recognition for "Best Class Format" (May 2016 - 2017)

Youngstown State University Communication Department recognition for "Excellent Teaching Assistant" (April 2016 - 2017)

Youngstown State University Nonprofit Leadership Certification (May 2016)

Youngstown State University Campus Recreation recognition for "Most Likely to Cover a Class" (May 2015 - 2016)

Youngstown State University recognition for "Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges" (April 2014 - 2016)

Youngstown State University Emerging Leadership Program Leadership Certification (May 2014)

Youngstown State University Division 1 Full Tuition Scholar Track and Field Student-Athlete (August 2011- May 2016)

Top Paper and Top Panel Presentations

Hartsough, L. (March 2021). *Inspiring stronger relationships between coaches and athletes through lived experiences.* **Top paper** presented at the Central States Communication Association Conference, virtual.

Hartsough, L., Wagner, W. J., Kavya, P., Clemens, C., Burk, J., & Slone, A. R. (November 2021). *Transforming "soft skills" into marketable skills: Navigating the realms of academia and industry through training and development.* **Top panel** presented at the National Communication Association Conference, Seattle, WA.

Howe, W., & **Hartsough, L.** (November 2021). Military servicemembers and romantic relationships: Identity gaps, mindfulness, and relational quality. **Top paper** presented at the National Communication Association Conference, Seattle, WA.

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[1] The organization in this dissertation was called Genuine Auto as a pseudonym to protect the identities of the employees.

[2] The figure was granted usage permission from the authors.