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From Goal-Striving to “Right Intention”: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Interviews with Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Participants

JULIA FIELD

Anxiety, depression, and chronic pain can be crippling ailments. Many patients turn to medications and a variety of therapies to relieve their distress. However, even “effective” treatments may not completely eradicate symptoms. Research has shown that interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) can help patients learn to live with debilitating conditions when traditional medicine cannot alleviate pain altogether. Although there is a great deal of quantitative research addressing the efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), there is a lack of research detailing the psychological mechanisms through which these programs actually work. The current project explored how graduates of an MBSR program discussed changes in their intention to practice mindfulness before, during, and after the course.

To understand the foundations of mindfulness-based practices, this paper first describes the fundamental concepts of Buddhist Psychology. The intention is to review the modern-day, Western understanding of mindfulness: the primary mechanism of MBSR. After integrating the origins of mindfulness practices with current clinical applications, an overview of quantitative studies examining the efficacy of MBIs is provided, and the drawbacks of common mindfulness measures are discussed. While quantitative methods are relevant and important for outcome research, qualitative approaches expand the type of research questions that may be explored. Grounded Theory (GT), the qualitative framework for analyzing interview data used in this research project, is described. Finally, extant research pertaining to MBI participants’ expectations and goals is addressed.

Buddhist Psychology

Mindfulness is a term derived from Buddhist traditions developed over thousands of years. As Buddhist practices

were incorporated into 20th-century Western culture (e.g., Suzuki, 1970) they were seen primarily as a religion or a set of spiritual practices. More recently, scholars have come to appreciate the psychological components of these practices, and the past three decades have seen significant incorporation of those techniques in secular approaches to health (Benson, 1983; Koerner & Linehan, 2000). However, various scholars are now highlighting that key concepts, critical to understanding how mindfulness works, were lost in translation (Grossman, 2011; Olendzki, 2010; Shapiro et al., 2006). The present paper examines one aspect of mindfulness that has been overlooked in the psychological literature: practitioners’ intentions.

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path

In order to understand critical concepts often overlooked by Western psychologists, one needs to understand Buddhist psychology as it was initially taught. “The Four Noble Truths” are the Buddha’s explanation of the problem of suffering; they were outlined as universal conditions of being human, while the “Eightfold Path” proposes techniques for overcoming suffering. “The Four Noble Truths” are (1) all beings suffer due to the impermanent nature of our internal and external worlds; (2) attachment is the root of suffering because we desire permanence in a world where everything changes and are attached to our wishes for how we want the world to be; (3) anyone can alleviate their personal suffering by cultivating an acceptance of things as they are; and (4) they can do so (cultivate an acceptance of things as they are) by following the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is a set of guidelines for mental discipline, behavior, and social interaction that enable the practitioner to meet suffering in a new way. The guidelines are right view, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right thought, and right concentration (Olendzki, 2010). Of the mental disciplines outlined in the Eightfold Path, the one of interest here is right intention, or the deliberate cultivation of more developed or skillful intentions for acting or being in the world. Practitioners are taught to meditate to become more fully aware, in order to gain insight into the workings of their minds and the nature of suffering, so as to reduce or eliminate it.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBSR is an eight-week program designed to help both clinical and non-clinical populations to manage stress reactivity through contemplative practices such as meditation, gentle yoga, and mindful walking. Kabat-Zinn (1990) created the MBSR program in 1979; he defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). Although Western psychologists reference this definition in their studies of mindfulness, few fully define mindfulness. Shapiro, Carlson,

Astin, & Freedman (2006) are a rare exception: they clarified Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness by teasing apart three axioms they interpreted it to contain. By axioms, Shapiro, et al. meant specific qualities of mindfulness. In particular, their axiom "intention" captures Kabat-Zinn's phrase "on purpose." Historically, mindfulness practices were intended to cultivate compassion and enlightenment, which should be included in any model of mindfulness (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000). In other words, Western psychologists seem often to ignore the purposes for which practitioners engage in mindfulness meditations. By ignoring meditators' intentions, researchers are missing an important aspect of the process.

Quantitative Approaches to MBSR Efficacy

There is ample evidence supporting the efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Interventions in improving both the physical and psychological well-being of participants (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Carmody & Baer, 2007; Davidson & Lutz, 2010; Salmon, Santorelli, Sephton, Kabat-Zinn, 2009). In an attempt to study MBIs in more detail, several self-report questionnaires aim to examine changes in mindfulness (Cardaciotto et al., 2008; Chadwick et al., 2008; Lau et al., 2006), usually in pre- to post-intervention designs. Grossman (2008, 2011) commented on the use of such questionnaires and suggested that the measures, while reliable, may not necessarily be valid. His main criticism is that they cannot measure "mindfulness" because Western psychologists lack a clear definition or objectively observable criterion. This makes it impossible to know what exactly is being measured. For example, some researchers treat mindfulness as a trait, similar to openness or agreeableness (Latzman & Masuda, 2013), while others treat it as an ongoing psychological state, akin to attentiveness (Langer, 1990). Neither of these fully capture the concept described in Buddhist psychology. Further, several researchers have noted a lack of studies exploring how MBSR and other MBIs work (Mamberg, Bassarear & Schubert, 2013; Salmon et al., 2009; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). In order to understand the subjective experience, a clearer definition of mindfulness and the use of qualitative methods are necessary.

Qualitative Approaches to MBSR: Grounded Theory

Following Shapiro et al.'s (2006) imperative to clarify intentionality when examining MBIs, the current study explores participants' reasons to practice by analyzing in-depth interviews. Qualitative MBSR studies are becoming more common in the last ten years (Irving et al, 2012; Smith, Graham, & Senthinathan, 2007, Mackenzie et al, 2006). Grounded Theory (GT) is a systematic method of closely analyzing discourse to capture participants' meanings without imposing the researcher's agenda (Charmaz, 1995; Willig, 2008). For the purposes of this study, four discrete stages

were distilled from the GT process: (1) interviews structured to elicit participants' own narratives about their practice, (2) transcription of the digitally recorded interviews using a detailed scheme showing what participants said and how they said it, (3) Open Coding, which captures the content of what each participant said, and (4) Focused Coding, which examines the coded content in order to identify common themes within and across participant interviews. Using a process of constant comparison, codes are sub-divided, revised and integrated, creating "thematic categories." GT entails an ongoing process of revising and re-interpreting until the data yield no additional themes.

Practitioners' Expectations and Goals

People decide to practice mindfulness meditation for a variety of reasons. Doctors refer patients to MBSR programs when treatment for physical or mental ailments is not available or has been inadequate to reduce suffering. Others self-refer due to general life stress. The MBSR literature suggests that participants begin the MBSR course expecting to achieve tangible outcomes and that during the MBSR course, there is often a shift in understanding mindfulness as a way of being rather than a means to an end; their goals shift from outcome to growth and from product to lifestyle (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; 1994; Santorelli, 1999). Despite these clinical anecdotes, researchers have not deliberately explored how participants shift from goal-striving to living mindfully. However, there was a hint of this issue reported in Mackenzie et al.'s (2006) qualitative study, in which they examined nine patients in an oncology setting who had completed an MBSR program. One participant reported his motivation for taking the course: "There was no treatment left for me. I felt I'd better figure out how to cope with this disease. Meditation was what I thought I had to do." Several of the participants saw MBSR as a final chance to learn to cope; while they could not change their predicament, the program enabled them to shift their attitudes toward it. By the end of the course, participants stated that they found new ways of perceiving their present life situations; many discussed mindfulness as a lifestyle, not simply another treatment or skill. These and similar findings among health professionals (Irving, et al, 2012) served as the inspiration for a more detailed analysis of participant intentions for the present study.

The Present Study

Given the gaps in the literature outlined above, the present study examined intentionality through interviews with former MBSR participants about their subjective experience of practicing mindfulness. For the purposes of this paper, intention is defined as the practitioner's stated motivation for, or attitude toward, practicing mindfulness meditation. The goal was to explore what participants learned from taking the

course, and particularly whether their stated intentions for taking the course and for practicing mindfulness shifted once they learned MBSR. The guiding research question therefore was, “After taking the MBSR course, how do participants discuss shifts in their intention to practice mindfulness?”

Method

This study was part of a larger project in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with adult members of a small, rural, liberal-arts-college community who had taken an MBSR course with one of the principal investigators, a professor who was trained to teach the MBSR course at the Center for Mindfulness. The purpose was to learn what participants felt was most helpful during and after the course and to understand how participants incorporated MBSR into their identities. Relevant aspects of that larger study, as well as the present study’s specific portion, will be described.

Participants

Volunteers were recruited from among all who had completed an MBSR course on campus in the past four years, and who had indicated at the completion of the course that they would be interested in participating in future research studies. Participants (N = 14) consisted of college students, faculty, and staff. There were five students whose ages ranged from 21 to 26 (\bar{x} : 22.4 years). There were nine faculty and staff whose ages ranged from 47 to 61 (\bar{x} : 53.56 years). There were six males and eight females. It should be noted that no claims are made regarding these subgroups. Demographics are provided for descriptive purposes only.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in an office setting and used a semi-structured interview schedule, which contained ten questions with follow-up prompts. (See Appendix A for a sample question.) Interviews lasted an average of 47.5 minutes. All participants had a prior relationship with the interviewer, which was assumed would encourage interviewees to share their subjective experiences most fully. The goal of the qualitative interviews was not to assess outcome, but to elicit the participants’ interpretations of their own learning processes. The interviewer was familiar with terms and activities from the course, which were likely to come up in conversation. Lack of this familiarity could prevent an untrained interviewer from understanding subtle points. GT does not presume the interviewer should be neutral. The goal of this method is to elicit the richest, clearest data from the interviewees.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved procedures were followed for maintaining confidentiality. Demographic data were stored in a Microsoft Access database and kept separate from interviews and consent forms to maintain

confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for use in presentation. A digital voice recorder was used to create electronic audio files of the interviews. These files were then uploaded to iTunes where they could be listened to during transcription.

Transcription

The recorded interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word using a USB-linked, foot-pedal transcription machine, which allowed frequent pausing and rewinding of the audio files in iTunes. Qualitative analyses depend on data that carefully maintains the participants’ exact wording, in order to best capture their intended meaning. A detailed transcription scheme (see Appendix B for sample conventions) was used to transcribe verbatim for close analysis (Ochs, 1979). The goal was to capture not only participants’ statements, but also discursive aspects of the interview conversation such as overlaps, cut-offs, laughter and other meta-linguistic features, which aid analysis and interpretation. This process ensured the researcher’s pre-existing assumptions were less likely to interfere with coding participants’ statements. Once transcribed, all 14 interviews were reviewed for accuracy by a second transcriptionist. Each completed transcript was converted to an .rtf file and uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative database used for coding.

Data Reduction

GT turn-by-turn coding was used to analyze each transcript. That is, the unit of analysis was a speaker’s conversational turn, primarily those of the interviewee. Since many of the interviewer’s turns were simply statements displaying active listening (“Okay,” “Mmmhmm,” etc.), the interviewer’s turns were rarely coded. Rather, they were used to mark each formal interview question (highlighting the structure of each interview), as well as follow-up prompts and introductions of new concepts. Data analysis was broken into two processes: open coding followed by focused coding (Charmaz, 1995).

Open Coding

The initial open coding process entailed a close reading of each transcript, followed by systematic recording of the primary content of each conversational turn. The goal was to fully capture the various meanings contained in each statement. Participants’ turns contained multiple concepts, as expected, each of which was coded with a key word or phrase. The most important information was thus noted in a quick but thorough manner to facilitate theme generation within and across the interviews.

Three independent researchers conducted open coding independently on a subset of the data. Coders were kept blind

to each other's work using separate databases in Atlas. The principle investigator began coding to create a preliminary code list. Then each coder referred to this master codes list, adding to it as new concepts were encountered in the data. Upon completion, the coded interviews were then compared among the researchers. Any discrepancies were discussed and clarified until coders agreed on the most appropriate codes for a given turn. Generally, discrepancies were minor and consisted of terminology differences (e.g., "obstacles" vs. "hindrances," or "option" vs. "choice."). As coders reached consensus, Atlas enabled quick re-coding and refinement in the master database.

Focused Coding. The second process, focused coding, entailed reviewing the master codes list, identifying codes that related to the research question, and then grouping related data into coherent themes. The research question guided the selection of codes that referred to participants' intentions for taking the course. The codes "intent" and "intention" best captured statements by participants indicating their (initial or current) approaches to practice. Fifty-two conversational turns were coded with "intent" and seven turns were coded with "intention," for a total of fifty-nine relevant turns. These turns were then grouped into coherent themes, as presented below, to address the research question. While the themes generated were mutually exclusive, some turns contributed to more than one sub-theme since they conveyed multiple aspects of the theme into which they were placed.

Analyses

Three thematic categories emerged in the focused coding process, based on the 59 conversational turns that had been coded as "intent" or "intention" in the open coding process. Seventeen turns (drawn from ten participants) contained statements indicating participants had goal-oriented mindfulness practices. This first theme was labeled, "Doing: Practicing to Achieve." Fifteen turns (drawn from six participants) contained statements indicating participants were deliberately living in a more mindful way. This second theme was labeled "Being: Practicing to Become Mindful." Fourteen turns (drawn from nine participants) contained statements indicating meta-awareness of participants' own shifting intentions: from practicing in order to achieve a goal, on the one hand, to choosing to be more mindful in their life, on the other. This third theme was labeled, "Shifting Awareness: From Doing to Being." Sub-themes were then identified within each theme.

Doing: Practicing to Achieve

The first theme, "Doing: Practicing to Achieve," reflects 17 turns in which participants stated that they were meditating for specific purposes, such as attaining a particular result or benefit. In MBSR this is called goal-striving. Some stated

that they wanted to escape from stressors such as medical conditions or taxing work schedules. Four sub-themes were identified in this category: Obtain Benefits, Escape Distress, Learn the Right Way, Attain Goal(s), as detailed below.

Obtain Benefits.

The first sub-theme, Obtain Benefits, reflects 11 turns in which participants' stated that they expected to gain something from taking the MBSR course, based on pre-conceived notions about meditation and personal experiences of self-improvement. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Keith was asked about why he enrolled in MBSR. Keith said, "...there's no pressure um you know it's just completely for ME you know I can show up and um learn something that's really beneficial." This exemplar conveys the essence of most of the turns that fell into this sub-theme: a general sense that practicing mindfulness would be educational or otherwise psychologically helpful.

Escape Distress

The second sub-theme, Escape Distress, reflects six turns in which participants indicated they meditated to escape stressors such as demanding jobs or general life events. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Ann said, "I felt I had too MUCH going on at work (4) and I thought I needed to learn how to manage (.) more without having (.) stress (h, h)." This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: an intention to practice in an effort to avoid some negative aspect of reality.

Learn the Right Way

The third sub-theme, Learn the Right Way, reflects six turns in which participants conveyed that they were concerned about practicing meditation incorrectly or that there was a specific way of practicing that they struggled to attain. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Linda said, "I had bought a couple of books on meditation (.) I had bought a couple of CD's on meditation--but I didn't feel like I was probably doing IT the right way or getting out of it what I really wanted out of it." This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: participants took this course with the intention of learning to practice mindfulness "correctly," which, while understandable, indicates a type of striving.

Attain Goal(s)

The fourth sub-theme, Attain Goal(s), reflects five turns in which participants stated that they practiced mindfulness in order to attain goals such as reducing blood pressure, controlling racing thoughts, and learning to achieve a tranquil state. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Clare was talking about her high blood pressure; she said, "...and

stress makes it worse so so it's like I've got to find a way to reduce my stress ... and I said okay you know I need to find something that I can use that'll that'll help ... cause I I can feel my blood pressure when it goes up." Clare's motive to practice was symptom reduction. This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: choosing to practice in an effort to achieve a new state or accomplish some objective.

Being: Practicing to Become Mindful

The second theme, "Being: Practicing to Become Mindful," reflects 15 turns in which participants talked about being mindful in their daily lives. The data in this theme captured a different intention to practice mindfulness meditation: one that was more about a way of being than what the participants would get from practicing. Three sub-themes were identified when these data were examined: Establishing a Daily Practice, Cultivating Compassion, and Developing Curiosity. These subthemes refer to ongoing lifestyles or ways of perceiving and relating to the world.

Establishing a Daily Practice. The first sub-theme, Establishing a Daily Practice, reflects 10 turns in which participants conveyed a commitment to practice and the establishment of a daily practice. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Josslyn said,

... Uh very careful about that first message I play in the morning (.) when I wake up (.) It's not <vc> OH NO I have to get UP I have to go <vc> -- It's <vc> (.) Okay? time to get up? Gonna get to swim now. <vc> ... So it's it just completely changes everything (.) it makes- it makes [it] very easy to bound out of bed and get and get to the pool if you – if you think of it as a negative (2) Oh man! It makes it tougher?

This exemplar captures a unique daily practice that Josslyn uses to cultivate mindfulness. Additionally, Josslyn reflected on the positive impact of waking up with a mindful intention versus that of a negative, resentful awakening. This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: a conscious integration of mindfulness practice into daily life.

Cultivating Compassion. The second sub-theme, Cultivating Compassion, reflects three turns in which participants conveyed an attempt to cultivate compassion or acceptance toward oneself where they previously had been judging. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Ann described her habitual reaction to making mistakes; she said, "I needn't be so harsh on myself when it seems to be part of the human condition y'know? It's NOT an affliction so to speak but it's part of being human –h so (2) I think I think that really helped..." Ann's intention here is to generate self-compassion instead of

being self-critical. This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: choosing to be more self-compassionate.

Developing Curiosity

The third sub-theme, Developing Curiosity, reflects two turns in which participants reported having a novel sense of curiosity in everyday activities. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Bonnie said,

... even when I'm running now I'm (.) I'm curious of how like (.) like my body is moving and like how,-h, different muscles ARE (.) like affecting my running ,-h, and like I realize I like (.) curl my toes:: when I run (h) never noticed that before! (h) ...yeah! Just (.) yeah general curiosity of (h) I'm a very (.) MUCH more curious now! (h)

This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: consciously exploring and inquiring into personal experience.

Shifting Awareness: Doing to Being

The third theme, "Shifting Awareness: Doing to Being," reflects 14 turns in which participants described their meta-awareness of transitioning from initially striving toward goals to a deeper commitment to being mindful in life. While this theme relates to the first two, it takes a wider view of intentionality because participants are directly describing their own shifting intentions to practice mindfulness. Within this theme, they talked about practicing for the sake of being mindful. They also explicitly juxtaposed cultivating ongoing mindfulness with some earlier goal-striving intention. Several of these turns referred to no longer engaging in practice solely in order to achieve something. Three sub-themes emerged in this thematic category: Noticing Choices, Noticing Change, and Redefining Mindfulness.

Awareness of Choice

The first sub-theme, Awareness of Choice, reflects seven turns in which participants recognized they had a choice in how they could respond to stressors such as difficult work situations, forgetting to do something, or negative interpersonal encounters. The clearest example of this subtheme is Bella's turn, in which she discussed her inconsistent meditation practice: "...and then being mad at myself at night for not [meditating] (4) and that I could (5) that I could just go a little deeper into that and say <vc> oh what— what's stopping you? What's the BARRIER to actually doing this? <vc> (9) it sort of reminds me that I COULD be compassionate toward myself... I could aim at myself what I aim at other people." This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell

into this sub-theme: an awareness of the option to be more mindful in response to a situation they might habitually judge.

Awareness of Change

The second sub-theme, Awareness of Change, reflects four turns in which participants reported a change in perspective on a particular matter, such as changes in awareness or behaviors toward the self by being more self-compassionate as opposed to “beating myself up” or changing from being competitive with others to becoming a “better person.” The clearest example of this subtheme is when Patty said,

I think striving before was a closed kind of competitive, if you will, striving um (.) so probably against other people or against other things and now the striving is within me and it's a better ... it's an idea of BOY (.) I could really learn from pursuing meditation and um in a more intentional way so the striving is is far more personal than competitive and I don't even think -- it doesn't even feel as if I'm being compet— it's competitive part of me it's just knowing that there's more (.) knowing that I want to get there and and uh knowing that I'm open to to trying that.

This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: an awareness of a change in the speaker's own attitude or behavior, usually toward a more mindful way of being.

Redefining Mindfulness

The third sub-theme, Redefining Mindfulness, reflects three turns. In this sub-theme, participants described meta-awareness of revising their underlying definition of mindfulness (or meditation) since first enrolling in the course. The clearest example of this subtheme is when Kim said,

...I thought meditation was um (2) just about clearing your mind completely... um and that was one of the pleasant surprises about the course was that defining mindfulness and and (.) really that it's it's bringing an awareness and that's just much more practical and I don't know it it made me feel like this this— what I'm doing matters [as] opposed to trying to to to clear your mind completely and like being-- I don't know (.) being nothing y'know being-- or or as if like there are NO problems or something ...

This exemplar conveys the essence of most turns that fell into this sub-theme: participants' revision of their definition of mindfulness meditation during or after the MBSR course.

Discussion

The primary goal of this portion of the larger study was to explore participants' discussion of shifts in their intention to practice mindfulness. Shapiro et al.'s (2006) model of mindfulness included intention as one of the mechanisms, yet no research studies could be found which examined participants' reports of the intentions they bring to MBSR practices. Exploring 14 semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals who had previously completed an MBSR course, revealed 993 total conversational turns. Of those turns, 59 contained participant discourse relating to their intentions to engage in mindfulness practice. The analyses presented are a first systematic attempt to develop a theory about intentionality, rather than rely on MBSR teacher's anecdotal reports.

Participants made sense of their own intentions to practice mindfulness in three ways. Some turns revealed that participants had practiced meditation as another form of goal-striving, to achieve or gain some positive outcome (“Doing: Practicing to Achieve”), while other practitioners described mindfulness practice as a means of transforming their way of being, moment to moment (“Being: Practicing to Become Mindful”). Still other participant statements noted a shift from a Doing intention to a Being intention over time (“Shifting Awareness: From Doing to Being”). Within each of these themes, various subthemes emerged across several participants, fleshing out variation within a given theme.

Of particular interest to mindfulness researchers is the way these three themes relate to the MBSR teachings about goal-striving, reducing reactivity, and enhancing compassion toward oneself and others. While those topics are sometimes discussed directly in class, more often they are only implied in the ways mindfulness practices are taught. Yet the themes of Being and Shifting show how participants have incorporated the essence of mindfulness practice into their lives, and into the ways they speak about their experience.

As described earlier, the 14 participants in this study were selected from a pool of volunteers who had completed the MBSR course at a small, liberal-arts college. Except for one participant who identified as a Buddhist, most participants did not have previous knowledge of mindfulness or meditation practices. When asked why they initially chose to take the course, participants sometimes did not have specific reasons other than the idea that the course was supposed to somehow be helpful to them. In the theme, “Doing: Practicing to Achieve,” participants' reported practicing in an effort to achieve a goal or escape a negative aspect of reality. Derived as it is from Buddhist psychology, MBSR seeks to reduce goal-striving since it is ultimately a form of attachment.

Goal-striving simply maintains the cycle of suffering because participants aim at some outcome in the future or judge their practice negatively; such an intention is not in line with mindfulness as defined in Buddhist psychology. Clearly, participants are primed in our culture to bring a goal-striving attitude toward MBSR, and it is important to encourage shifts away from that intention. In contrast, non-striving embodies the original intent of mindfulness teachings, as Shapiro, et al. (2006) described. Future models of mindfulness should include intentionality as a concept integral to understanding mindfulness practice and its effects. Therefore, quantitative research studies should include non-striving intentions within their operational definitions.

In addition to the analyses discussed, this project also displayed the usefulness of qualitative methods in the study of mindfulness. The GT approach to participants' reports about their intentions to practice mindfulness allowed a highly detailed examination of the 14 in-depth interviews. The subjective experience of practitioners' intentionality is clearly a complex concept. Intentionality has been neglected in mindfulness research, but these analyses show it is an important mechanism in developing mindfulness practice after the course ends. The results of this study suggest the need for more qualitative research using the tools of Grounded Theory to understand the subjective processes of practicing mindfulness.

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About the Author

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