



The Power of Awareness

Unlocking the Potential of Mindfulness in Organizations

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Unlocking the Potential of Mindfulness in Organizations

The Power of Awareness: Unlocking the Potential of Mindfulness in Organizations

Key words: mindfulness, institutional awareness, agency, change-oriented behavior, personal resource, institutional theory, self-determination theory, job-resources demand theory

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1 INTRODUCTION

“They are mindful, taming the needs and impulses of their ego. They are suspicious of their own desires - to control their environment, to be successful, to look good, or even to accomplish good works. Rejecting fear, they listen to the wisdom of other, deeper parts of themselves. They develop an ethic of mutual trust and assumed abundance. They ground their decision making in an inner measure of integrity. They are ready for the next organizational paradigm.”

– Frederic Laloux, 2015

A new approach to being in organizations is emerging (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). Characteristic of this approach is its shift in focus from the outside in and its holistic approach to organizational life. Research within the field of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Dutton, Glynn & Spreitzer, 2008) is specifically dedicated to studying this emerging phenomenon. A distinguishing feature of this line of research is the focus on what are referred to as “life-giving” phenomena in organizations and includes topics such as meaning (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010), flourishing (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005), compassion (Dutton, Worline, Frost & Lilius, 2006; Rynes, Bartunek, Dutton, Margolis 2012), and mindfulness (Good et al., 2016).

The need for a shift in focus was identified back in 1959 by Peter Drucker, who could be considered the founding father of what we today recognize as the field of management. He recognized the limits of organizations where the number one priority was efficiency and the focus was on beating the competition. This approach to organizing work has its roots in scientific management, which is today more commonly referred to as industrial engineering (Drucker, 1999). To support the shift in focus, Drucker (1959) introduced the term “knowledge worker”, and later in 1969 popularized the term “knowledge economy”. He pinpointed a key distinguishing attribute of a knowledge worker, compared to a manual or factory worker, as a creator of value through using their mind (Drucker, 1999). As research has advanced, we can today expand on this, as cultivating the whole plethora of human qualities that create value (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Dutton, Glynn & Spreitzer, 2008; Worline & Dutton, 2017).

In searching for the generative, the life-giving, many organizations have turned to the practice of mindfulness, often defined as “receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience” (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Today we see companies such as Accenture, Google, Ford, Intel, and General Mills offering mindfulness training to their employees (Hougaard & Carter, 2018; Tan, 2012). Journals such as Harvard Business Review, Time, and Forbes continuously publish new practitioner-oriented articles on mindfulness, and books on the topic are numerous. The scholarly community has also seen an exponential increase in research on the topic (Good et al., 2016; Kudesia, 2019; Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016).

Today, the word mindfulness is so widely used that the profundity of this practice, whose effects scientists are only starting to uncover, is sometimes overlooked. The years of clinical research that have gone particularly into studying the effects of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, and the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program developed by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale, show that the practice of mindfulness reduces stress, depression and anxiety while increasing a sense of well-being (Eisendrath et al., 2016; Good et al., 2016; Kuyken, et al., 2010; Teasdale et al., 2000, 2002). Researchers agree that two of the key ingredients are awareness and attention (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Good et al., 2006). In addition to contributing to an overall sense of well-being, an increase in awareness and attention reduces the time spent in so-called “automatic pilot” mode (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Automatic processing of sensory information is identified by cognitive psychologists as one of two main processing modes (Stanovich, 2011; Kahneman, 2003). The other is often referred to as reflective processing, and requires more effort and controlled attention (Stanovich, 2011; Evans & Frankish, 2009; Kahneman, 2003). Automatic processing requires limited active conscious engagement and covers information, rules and conditioning learned to automation (Stanovich, 2011). Kahneman (2003) further explains that automatic processing is characterized by a choice being made without a person being conscious of a choice ever being made or of potential alternatives. Stanovich (2011) reminds us that humans have an inherent tendency towards automatic processing, the simplest cognitive mechanism, and he even goes as far as to say that when we are over-reliant on this form of processing we lose our personal autonomy. The role attention plays for volition was highlighted by psychologist William James in 1890 when he wrote “...the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and *will*” (James, 1890: 463, italics added).

This opens up a new avenue for mindfulness research in the organizational context. Namely, what is the relationship between mindfulness and agency in organizations? Agency here refers to purposeful engagement with the social context, aiming to alter or maintain that context (Cardinale, 2018). Interestingly, some articles in practitioner-oriented journals have raised the concern of mindfulness practice having the opposite effect, namely pacifying (Doran, 2017; Purser & Loy, 2013). This concern often stems from the notion of mindfulness having a non-judgmental component and the fear that this component may create complacency in the workplace (e.g., Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015). This is, however, a misunderstanding of the practice, as non-judgement in this context refers to how a person may skillfully relate to their own experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). A non-judgmental attitude or attitudes such as self-

compassion are qualities that can facilitate contact with uncomfortable experiences. Ryan (2005) explains that meeting your own experiences with such qualities may diminish impulsive or defensive reactions, thus promoting insight into the self, others and the human condition (Brown et al., 2007). Thus, a non-judgmental attitude does not refer to complying with potentially disharmonious external conditions; rather, it enables turning towards and experiencing the present circumstances exactly as they are. In the first and second articles of this thesis, I tackle this question in detail both theoretically and empirically, and show that mindfulness is indeed a powerful trigger for agency.

In turning the focus from the outside in, mindfulness as a skill becomes a personal resource (Grover, Teo, Pick & Roche, 2017). Many organizations are now introducing mindfulness interventions to help people develop this skill. The majority of the research conducted on mindfulness interventions has taken place in clinical settings. Thus, it is also important to examine whether the salutary effects of mindfulness interventions occur in the workplace context, too. One key issue then becomes understanding how mindfulness as a personal resource, developed through mindfulness practice, affects workplace well-being. To examine this, I draw on one of the most well-known stress theories, developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), the Job Resource Demand theory. In this model, high work demands combined with low job resources contribute to an experience of strain, whereas the same level of work demands combined with a high level of work resources contributes to a feeling of engagement. In examining the effect mindfulness has on workplace well-being, I will view mindfulness as a personal resource that independently can influence the perception of both work strain and engagement.

1.1 Research questions

The overall purpose of this thesis is to shed further light on the potential that mindfulness holds for organizations. Specifically, I will focus on how mindfulness is related to agency and how it can function as a personal resource in the workplace.

Thus, this thesis elucidates two research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between mindfulness and agency in organizations?
- 2) What is the effect of mindfulness as a personal resource on workplace well-being?

In the first article, I approach agency from the perspective of institutional theory and examine the potential that mindfulness offers to create what I refer to as institutional awareness. I explore how mindfulness is related to breaking habitual cognitive and emotional patterns and

perceptions of the reality within which an individual is embedded. This endogenously triggered process of becoming aware of one's habitat functions as a precursor to intentional societal change, also referred to as institutional entrepreneurship. In the second article, I empirically investigate how mindfulness is related to agency in the form of opportunity recognition and proactive behavior in established organizations. I examine how mindfulness supports autonomous rather than controlled choice, which then functions as a trigger for agency. In the third article, I examine the effects of a mindfulness intervention on workplace well-being, looking at the potential offered by the well-known 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program to develop mindfulness as a personal resource.

1.2 Core concepts

1.2.1 Mindfulness

A detailed review and an explanation of the definition of mindfulness I use in this thesis is provided in the second chapter "What is mindfulness?". I define mindfulness as "a *state of consciousness* in which *receptive* attention is focused on *moment-to-moment* phenomena occurring both *internally and externally*".

1.2.2 Awareness, attention and consciousness

According to Brown and Ryan (2003), consciousness includes both awareness and attention. Awareness continuously monitors both the inner individual experience and the outer environmental field, and can thus be seen as a background radar. Attention is then automatically directed towards a stimulus in the field of awareness, when it is strong enough. According to Brown and Ryan (2003), attention and awareness are interwoven, and attention continuously picks out experiences from the field of awareness, fixing them at the center of attention with varying degrees of intensity for varying lengths of time.

1.2.3 Actor, action and agency

In this thesis, I view an actor as the subject that performs an action; these can be individuals or organizations. In defining action, I follow Emirbayer and Mische (1998) in stating that action is *what actors concretely do*. I refer to agency as an actor's purposeful engagement with their social context (Cardinale, 2018), aiming to alter or maintain that social context. This definition of agency departs slightly from the traditional definition, often "an actor's ability to have some effect on the social world" (Scott, 2013:94). The difference in this thesis is that agency as defined does not necessitate success in altering the social context, as success or

failure may be seen as an outcome rather than the act of agency (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2011).

1.2.4 Institutional awareness

Debate on the “paradox of embedded agency” (Holm, 1995; Jepperson, 1991) emerged in institutional theory, as empirical reports surfaced on institutional change seemingly triggered by purposeful individual or organizational action. Thus, researchers questioned how individuals can be aware of the very institution within which they are embedded (Seo & Creed, 2002). Seo and Creed (2002) saw the enabling factors of this shift as a *reflexive shift in the consciousness* of the actor. To capture actors’ ability to be aware of the embedding institution, this thesis introduces the concept *institutional awareness*, and defines it as the ability to be aware of the conditioning and enabling qualities of the institution within which a person is embedded.

1.2.5 Self

In this thesis, I recognize two principal ways of viewing self, namely self-as-object and self-as-process (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). Wayment and Bauer (2008) refer to self-as-object as the constructed identity that is based on learned behavior that may stem from roles, status, or standing in society. Self-as-process is the function that integrates all experience to create coherency, while still allowing and recognizing the ever-changing nature of the self (Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Rigby, 2015). With mindfulness practice, the view of self is likely to shift towards self-as-process (Brown, Berry & Quaglia, 2016).

1.3 Underlying assumptions

This thesis rests on a scientific realist assumption of the world, which states that there exists an empirical reality independent of the researcher, and this reality can, albeit sometimes imperfectly, be captured and examined empirically (Westwood & Clegg, 2003). The scientific realist perspective recognizes that part of the reality is intangible, such as mindfulness and awareness (ibid.).

The epistemological foundation of this thesis is relativist, stating that although we can capture the empirical reality, what that reality is and how it is perceived will depend on an array of different factors (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2008). Thus, we are likely to find variance in answers both between organizations and between individuals within those

organizations. In order to reflect the empirical reality, it is important to examine a sample that is as representative of the population in question as possible.

It is also important to note that in studying a topic such as mindfulness, I draw on insights from two distinctively different epistemological traditions, that is, Eastern and Western (Varela & Shear, 1999). In the Western scientific perspective, knowledge is seen to be created through “third person” observation, whereas the Eastern (here Buddhist) perspective sees knowledge created through “first person experience” (Varela & Shear, 1999). The Eastern approach to knowledge creation surfaces especially in examining the definition of mindfulness, a particular state of consciousness that can only be grasped fully through a first person experience of that state.

1.4 Topics not covered in this thesis

There are several topics important to the study of mindfulness in organizations that will fall outside of the framing of this PhD thesis. These will be further elaborated in section 5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research. This thesis will not cover the relational aspect of mindfulness, that is to say how mindfulness may influence the quality of relationships. This is a timely question, since concepts such as mindful leadership are increasingly surfacing in practitioner oriented mindfulness literature (Hougaard & Carter, 2018; Marturano, 2015), and a few scholarly articles have also been published on the effect of leader mindfulness on subordinate-level outcomes (Reb, Narayanan, Chaturvedi, 2014; Reb, Chaturvedi, Narayanan & Kudesia, 2018; Reina, 2015). There are also two closely related and important mindfulness concepts that will not be covered in this PhD, namely compassion and secular ethics. Compassion is sometimes referred to as the other “wing of the bird”, illustrating that the cultivation of both mindfulness and compassion are needed for balance (Siegel & Germer, 2012). Compassion, although it is naturally included in most Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs), will not be examined theoretically in this thesis. The importance of secular ethics in the practice of mindfulness was highlighted by Purser and Milillio (2015), and they encouraged organizational scholars to examine this topic (see also Bodhi, 2011; Greenberg & Mitra, 2015; Monteiro, Musten & Compson, 2015). Although I will touch upon the question of ethics, in chapter 2.1.6 Critique of contemporary organizational mindfulness, a detailed investigation falls outside the scope of this thesis.

1.5 Structure of thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. The introductory chapter provides a background to the topic, discusses the core concepts on which this thesis rests, and introduces the research questions it seeks to answer. The second chapter presents relevant past research on the subject of mindfulness and the key theories I draw on. In the third chapter, I describe the methodology and data collection process. The fourth chapter summarizes the three individual articles underpinning the thesis, and the concluding chapter discusses findings and offers suggestions for future research.

In the first article, I address the first research question and examine the relationship between mindfulness and agency on a theoretical level. I draw on institutional theory, and theorize the role mindfulness may play in awakening agency and thus enabling larger societal changes. In the second article, I continue addressing the first research question, this time on an empirical level. I draw on self-determination theory, and approach agency in the form of opportunity recognition and proactive behavior. The third article addresses the second research question and examines what the effect of mindfulness as a personal resource is on workplace well-being. In this article, I draw on the job demands-resources theory and study the effect of a mindfulness intervention.

2 PAST RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMING OF THE THESIS

This chapter presents the theoretical framing of this thesis and discusses relevant past research. I shed light on the many aspects of mindfulness, and describe the organizational theories this thesis rests on.

2.1 What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a particular state of consciousness (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Weick & Putnam, 2006), and as such can only fully be understood experientially (Varela & Shear, 1999). Explanations of this state of consciousness can, however, both point towards and help others arrive at it. According to Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007), consciousness encompasses both awareness and attention. Awareness is our direct contact with this existence, and encompasses all internal and external stimuli, such as thoughts, feelings, emotions, input from our five senses, and the kinetic sense (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). When a stimulus is strong enough, our attention is turned towards it. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007) explain that normally a stimulus holds our attention only briefly, if at all, before habitual emotional and cognitive responses are triggered, based on past experiences and conditioning, which may result in a superficial, incomplete or distorted picture of reality. Mindfulness enables us to see things as they truly are in the present moment (Gunaratana, 2002), without the overlay of past conditionings. Good et al. (2016) further explain that mindfulness entails experiential processing (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Teasdale, 1999), compared to the more dominant conceptual processing of reality. In conceptual processing mode, thoughts are at the forefront and used to evaluate and interpret stimuli, whereas in experiential processing, a stimulus is allowed to enter the field of attention without the need to derive meaning from it. Furthermore, thoughts and interpretations are not accorded more importance than the initial stimulus; rather, they too are seen as part of the ongoing stream of consciousness (Good et al., 2016).

The question of how we can arrive at this state of consciousness has intrigued scholars and practitioners across the ages. Mindfulness as it is currently approached in organizational research has its roots in early Buddhist teachings, mostly Theravada (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In what follows, I draw on some of the contemporary commentaries on the early texts on mindfulness. This examination of its historical roots also sheds light on why mindfulness has been defined the way it has, and lays the foundation for the definition of mindfulness I propose in this PhD thesis.

2.1.1 Historical roots of mindfulness

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist psychology, and the purpose of the practice is to *gain insight into the human condition, to understand and enable the cessation of suffering and ultimately reach liberation* (Anālayo, 2014). Carmody (2015) explains that the common intention of Buddhism, medicine and psychology to reduce suffering has helped pave the way for mindfulness in these fields. Also, the lack of a clear intentional alignment of reducing suffering and enabling emancipation has given rise to much debate in the field of mindfulness research in the organizational context (Monteiro, Musten & Compson, 2015; Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017). To better understand the implications of bringing this practice to the organizational context, many organizational scholars are engaging with and examining the Buddhist texts (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017; Weick & Putnam, 2006). Some researchers even argue that this re-engagement with the original teachings is a necessity for moving forward in this field (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017). In what follows, I thus take a closer look at the historical roots of mindfulness.

The word mindfulness is a translation from the Pali language “sati”, which means to remember or call to mind (Anālayo, 2014; Gethin, 1998; Thera, 2014). As mindfulness describes a particular state of consciousness, a literal translation does not do justice to the concept, which is why scholars have elaborated to help us understand the state of consciousness the word points towards. Gethin (2011) explains that in the meditative context, “sati” does not refer to memory, but to a form of recollection. Bodhi (2011) further clarifies that sati or lucid awareness makes the “apprehended object stand forth vividly and distinctly before the mind” (Bodhi, 2011:25), and that this form of lucid awareness can be directed towards objects in the present moment or from the past. Bodhi (2011) points out that, contrary to most lay understandings of mindfulness, the object of observation does not have to be in the present moment; rather, it is the experience the observation of that object (past, present or future) evokes that is centered in the present-moment. Dreyfus (2011) thus states that mindfulness is the ability to be present to whatever is, a “turning towards” your own present experience rather than just giving that reality a “sideward glance” (Dreyfus, 2011). This willingness to be present to whatever is, has prompted some scholars to refer to mindfulness as *open* or *receptive* awareness (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997).

One of the most influential texts on mindfulness is the “Discourse on the establishment of Mindfulness” (pali: Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) (Bodhi, 2011). Although a detailed review of this text is beyond the scope of this thesis, there are a few aspects that are important to a comprehensive understanding of mindfulness. The text sheds light on the word mindfulness by describing the practice itself and illuminating both how and where to place attention. The text is divided into

four parts, each of which describes a different object to which mindful awareness should be applied: i) mindfulness of the body, ii) mindfulness of feelings, iii) mindfulness of the mind, and iv) mindfulness of mind-objects (Thera, 2014). The first three of these are also central to the well-known Western secular mindfulness training developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). The fourth object, mindfulness of mind-objects, also known as Dhammas, refers to the entirety of the Buddhist teachings. Although an examination of the mind-objects falls outside the scope of this thesis, some organizational scholars specifically encourage an examination of this aspect of the text, to help develop a secular ethic as a foundation for the practice (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017).

Between each of the four parts, describing where to place your attention, comes a refrain pointing towards how attention should be placed on the objects. This refrain is central to understanding why mindfulness is defined the way it is, and will lay the foundation for the definition of mindfulness I propose in this thesis. Here is a translation by Anālayo, (2014:92) of the first refrain where the object of attention is the body:

“In this way, in regards to the body he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both externally and internally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that “there is a body” is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. He abides independent not clinging to anything in the world.”

From this refrain, it becomes apparent there are four different qualities of mindfulness: i) internal and external, ii) arising and passing away, iii) bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness, and iv) independent, not clinging. While there are many interpretations of these four qualities, I shall point out a few of the central interpretations from Anālayo’s (2014) commentaries.

The first quality, internal/external, is most commonly referred to as the awareness of self vs. others. That is to say, being aware of and sensitive towards your own and others’ subjective experiences (Anālayo, 2014). Further, these two dimensions ultimately merge and the boundary between I and others melts away (Anālayo, 2014). At this stage, all phenomena are observed “independent of any sense of ownership” (Anālayo, 2014:102). This quality is the most familiar to organizational scholars, as both Dane (2011), Brown and Ryan (2003) and Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007), use it in their definition of mindfulness.

The second quality refers to awareness of the impermanent nature of experiences and to the temporal quality of all phenomena. Anālayo (2014) explains that the comprehension of this quality marks the distinction between the mere establishment of mindfulness and the full development thereof. Observing the arising and passing away of all phenomena uncovers their impermanent nature and leads to a growing degree of disenchantment, which in turn reduces

identification with your own experiences of reality. Anālayo (2014) explains that if something is impermanent, it cannot produce lasting satisfaction, and thus does not qualify to be seen as “I”, “mine” or “my self”. From an institutional theory perspective, this dimension is specifically interesting as Anālayo (2014) further explains that “sustained contemplation of impermanence leads to a shift in one’s normal way of experiencing reality, which hitherto tacitly assumed the temporal stability of the perceiver and the perceived objects. Once both are experienced as changing processes, all notions of stable existence and substantiality vanish, thereby radically reshaping one’s paradigm of experience” (Anālayo, 2014:105). I will further elaborate on this quality in the first article of this thesis. This quality also helps us understand why some scholars are exploring identity (Atkins & Styles, 2015), and different aspects of self (Brown, Berry & Quaglia, 2016), as mechanisms of mindfulness.

The third quality, bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness, further underlines the importance of just noting that there is a body, feelings, mind or mind-objects present without getting caught up in thoughts or associations (Anālayo, 2014). This calls for a non-reactive and objective approach to all phenomena, and the recommendation is to simply note or label experiences and so facilitate disidentification (Anālayo, 2014). This third quality is also commonly displayed in current definitions of mindfulness with words such as receptive (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007), open (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997), or non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

According to Anālayo (2014), the fourth quality, independence and “not clinging to anything in the world”, arises naturally from the third. Thus, these four qualities of mindfulness can be seen as a sequential progression of a deepening practice. Qiu and Rooney (2017) also highlight the importance of noting that there is a sequential process to the deepening of the practice of mindfulness, which is further one of the key arguments as to why longer mindfulness interventions are better than short experimental mindfulness inductions. Anālayo (2014) concludes his commentaries on this refrain by saying that it is the quality of “abiding independently”, the fourth quality, that is present just before realization occurs.

In what follows, I present an overview of mindfulness in the organizational context, and draw on the abovementioned qualities to both examine some of the current definitions of mindfulness and offer an alternative definition.

2.1.2 The concept of mindfulness in organizational research

Mindfulness was introduced into the field of organizational research by Weick and Roberts in 1993. In this early work, Weick and Roberts (1993) drew their definition of mindfulness from

Langer (e.g., 1989), and conceptualized mindfulness as cognitive flexibility and attention to novelty. This conceptualization, today referred to as a Western approach to mindfulness, has since been replaced by what we today refer to as an Eastern interpretation. In organizational research, mindfulness has thus been approached from two slightly different perspectives, Western and Eastern. In the Western perspective headed by Langer (1989; 2000), mindfulness is seen as a cognitive capability and has its roots in cognitive and clinical psychology. The Eastern perspective views mindfulness as a quality of consciousness (Brown et al., 2007), and is based on classical Buddhist texts. During the past decade, the Eastern approach has gained ground among organizational scholars, and many have gone back to the Buddhist scriptures to enrich our understanding of what mindfulness is and how it can be applied to an organizational setting (Dane, 2011; Dane & Brummel, 2014; Purser & Milillo, 2015; Weick & Putnam, 2006). Weick and Putnam's 2006 article entitled "Organizing for mindfulness: Eastern wisdom and Western knowledge" can be seen as a trigger for this shift in focus. The exploration of the Eastern scriptures to deepen our understanding of mindfulness, and how the scriptures themselves can be applied and translated to the organizational setting, is an ongoing and ever-deepening process (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017).

Dane (2011) reviewed the definitions of mindfulness most commonly used and came to the conclusion that most contained three different elements: i) attention has to be focused on present-moment phenomena, ii) and this attention should be directed both outwards, and iii) inwards. He thus defined mindfulness as "a state of consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally" (Dane, 2011:1000). On examining this definition, we see that it is rooted in the Eastern tradition, as mindfulness is referred to as a state of consciousness rather than a cognitive capability. Furthermore, on comparing this definition to that in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we see it includes the first of the four qualities, namely that of the internal and the external. This omits the three consecutive qualities ii) arising and passing away, iii) bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness, and iv) independent, not clinging, which according to Anālayo (2014) are not only four interchangeable qualities, but also capture stages of the progression and deepening of the state of mindfulness.

To better align the definition we use in organizational mindfulness research with the Eastern scriptures, I propose a few adjustments to Dane's definition (2011). I thus define mindfulness as "a *state of consciousness* in which *receptive* attention is focused on *moment-to-moment* phenomena occurring both *internally and externally*." This clearly has its roots in the Eastern approach, viewing mindfulness as a state of consciousness. Second, it captures the first quality described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, by focusing on phenomena occurring both internally and

externally. Here, I reverse Dane’s order of the words externally and internally, as according to the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta text, the internal is established before the external, after which the focus is expanded to include both dimensions (Anālayo, 2014). Third, to further capture the transient and impermanent view of reality, I use “moment-to-moment phenomenon” rather than “present-moment phenomenon”. This is in line with previous attempts to capture the transient nature of reality when defining mindfulness, e.g. “moment-to-moment” experience (Epstein, 1995:96), or “at the *successive moments* of perception” (Thera, 1972:5, italics added), rather than “present-moment” experience. The wording “present-moment” is also frequently misinterpreted to exclude past and future phenomena. Bodhi (2011) explains that the focus is to be placed on the available experience, regardless of whether it is triggered by a past, present or future event. Fourth, the word receptive captures an additional aspect of the third quality, namely that of having a non-reactive and objective approach to all phenomena. According to Anālayo (2014), when these three qualities are in place, the fourth quality of “*abiding independently not clinging to anything in this world*” can emerge.

2.1.3 Mindfulness a trait and a state

In studying mindfulness, researchers have noted that it has both trait- and state-like qualities (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown et al., 2007). State mindfulness refers to within-person moment-to-moment fluctuations in levels of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and trait mindfulness captures the duration, intensity, and frequency at which an individual tends to be mindful (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt & Lang, 2013). Trait mindfulness thus captures the tendency towards mindfulness, while state captures mindfulness at any given moment. In experimental research, state mindfulness is induced through short, 10-15 minute mindfulness exercises, after which the participants are exposed to the experimental condition (Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Hafenbrack, 2017; Long & Christian, 2015; Ostafin & Kassman, 2012; Papies et al., 2012; Reb & Narayanan, 2014). Given the subtlety and micro-placements of the mind that mindfulness requires, and the progressive and ever deepening nature of the state (Anālayo, 2014), it is advisable to interpret results from state mindfulness induction research with a little caution.

Trait mindfulness, as it captures a person’s natural tendency towards mindfulness, can be developed and enhanced with mindfulness practices over time (Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017). In addition to developing trait mindfulness through the practice of mindfulness meditation, research shows that some individuals naturally embody higher trait mindfulness than others (Baer & Lykins, 2011; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Measures such as the Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS) and Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) have been

developed to capture such variance (for a recent comprehensive review of the different mindfulness scales available, see Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016). It is advisable to adopt the same degree of caution when interpreting results from trait mindfulness scale data as in interpreting results from short, induced state mindfulness research. To highlight the importance of exercising caution in interpreting results from these kinds of studies, Christopher, Christopher & Charoensuk (2009) compared mindfulness ratings on two different scales from a sample of Thai Theravāda Buddhist monks and American college students. The monks, as expected, rated higher on the Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS), but they rated higher on only one facet of the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) developed by Baer et al. (2004). The Christopher et al. (2009) study thus functions as a reminder that there are differences between the different mindfulness scales available, and that some scales may require further development and validation.

Research on mindfulness in the organizational context has thus been conducted in three main forms: i) cross-sectional studies using the different scales, ii) short mindfulness inductions for experimental research, and iii) longer mindfulness trainings, also referred to as mindfulness intervention research. Although the results from cross-sectional studies using mindfulness scales, and from short mindfulness induction research, need to be interpreted with a little caution, mindfulness research in the organizational setting is still in its infancy and all these forms are needed to advance our understanding of the phenomenon. The following presents the current state of research findings within the organizational context.

2.1.4 Past research on mindfulness in the organizational context

Mindfulness was introduced into the field of clinical research in the 1970s when Jon Kabat-Zinn launched a mindfulness training program, known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, to help patients at the University of Massachusetts Medical School manage chronic illnesses and pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1985). Early research has thus focused predominantly on the salutary effects of mindfulness training in clinical populations, showing that it decreases self-reported distress, stress symptoms, depression relapse rates, anxiety, and chronic pain (for reviews see Baer, 2003; Brown et al., 2007).

Research on mindfulness in the workplace has followed the same trend, with the predominant focus on different aspects of well-being. In a recent review of mindfulness interventions in the workplace, Jamieson and Tuckey (2017) identified 40 articles published between 2005 and 2015, and remarked that with the exception of one, all included at least one aspect of employee health or well-being. Research on mindfulness in the workplace thus echoes previous results,

showing strong support for a positive relationship between mindfulness interventions and employee well-being (Allen et al., 2015; Eby et al., 2017; Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017).

Some of the articles included in the review by Jamieson and Tuckey (2017) examined variables such as empathy (Krasner et al., 2009; Galantino et al., 2005; West et al., 2014), compassion (Brooker et al., 2013; Fortney et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2016), safety (Brady, O'Connor, Burgermeister & Hanson, 2012; Hallman et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Brooker et al., 2013; Hülshager et al., 2013; Mackenzie, Poulin & Seidman-Carlson, 2006; Shonin et al., 2014; West et al., 2014), absenteeism (Hallman et al., 2014; Roeser et al., 2013), and productivity (Wolever et al., 2012). The findings were inconclusive on the relationship between empathy, compassion and mindfulness training. One out of three studies found a positive relationship between mindfulness training and empathy, while none of the three studies on compassion found any relationship between the mindfulness intervention and compassion in the workplace. This suggests mindfulness interventions, as such, if they do not explicitly include a focus on empathy and compassion, may not support the cultivation of those qualities. Both of the studies on safety showed a positive and significant relation between mindfulness and increased workplace safety. These findings are echoed by Weick and colleagues' work on high reliability organizations (Vogus & Sutcliffe 2007a, b). Two of the five studies on job satisfaction found a positive relationship to mindfulness and one of the two studied on absenteeism found mindfulness to decrease absenteeism. In addition to these findings highlighted by Jamieson and Tuckey (2017), Aikens et al. (2014) and Leroy et al. (2013) found a positive relationship between mindfulness training and engagement. Aikens et al. (2014) also found a positive relationship between mindfulness training and resilience. Furthermore, Hülshager et al. (2013) found mindfulness training reduced emotional labor.

In addition to the intervention results, trait mindfulness research shows a positive relationship between mindfulness and leadership (Boyatzis, 2015; Eisenbeiss & Knippenberg, 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Dane & Brummel, 2014), decision-making (Karelaia & Reb, 2015; Kudesia, 2019), turnover intention (Dane & Brummel, 2014), work engagement (Leroy et al., 2013), resiliency (Glomb et al., 2012), task performance (Glomb et al., 2012), and ethical decision-making (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010). Furthermore, research on state mindfulness shows that listening to a 10-minute mindfulness audio significantly improves insight problem-solving (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012). In addition, Hafenbrack et al. (2014), and Long & Christian (2015), found that listening to a 15-minute breath awareness meditation reduced negative affect and outward-focused negative emotions.

Although still in its infancy, organizational research on the relationship between mindfulness and organizational outcomes is growing. This overview of the outcomes to date shows that the

findings are quite diverse, which underlines the need to build theory around mindfulness, and understand the mechanisms that contribute to the findings (Good et al., 2016). Now researchers are calling for studies to build theory around the link between mindfulness and well-being in the organizational context, and to move beyond well-being and examine other organizational outcomes, too (Jamieson & Tuckey, 2017; Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016).

2.1.5 Mechanism of mindfulness in the organizational context

Researchers have already begun to map out some of the mechanisms underlying the outcomes of mindfulness (Brown & Cordon, 2007; Good et al., 2016; Shapiro et al., 2006). Some of the key mechanisms identified to date are attention (Good et al., 2016), authentic functioning (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova & Sels, 2013), self-regulation (Glomb et al., 2012), identity (Atkins & Styles, 2015; Wayment & Bauer, 2008), and surface acting (Hülshager et al., 2013). Mindfulness practice is also theorized to fundamentally shift the view of the self, which may express itself as alterations in some of the other mechanisms such as identity, authenticity, and self-regulation (Ryan & Rigby, 2015).

Starting off with attention, which can be seen as a quite straightforward mechanism, as mindfulness training specifically addresses attention and the ability to stay with and allow whatever arises during the practice (Brown et al., 2007). Here it is also important to keep in mind that the kind of attention cultivated through mindfulness practice is distinct from concentration, as it is coupled with meta-awareness (Brown & Cordon, 2007). This meta-awareness enables the practitioner to i) at all times, know what is going on in the body, mind and emotions and ii) when necessary make micro adjustments and notice stimuli influencing the attention without becoming lost in them. Good et al. (2016) specify that mindfulness enhances attentional stability, control and efficiency (Good et al., 2016). The authors further explain that this alteration of attention then shapes our cognition, emotion, behavior, and physiology, which in turn results in the outcomes we seeing in workplaces.

In examining the produced underlying change in the view of the self, Ryan and Rigby (2015) explain that in Western psychology there are two main ways of viewing the self, as an object and as a process. The authors further relate this to the relative and absolute view of the self in Buddhism. Self-as-object, or the relative self, consists of what is sometimes referred to as the narrative or constructed self, and lays the foundation of our identity (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). Drawing on the work of previous theorists (Leary, 2004; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991), Brown, Berry and Quaglia (2016) explain that identification with this self is amplified due to a lack of awareness. This is because the self-as-object mainly comprises habitual mental,

emotional and behavioral action. From a Buddhist perspective, this self is then seen to be relative, as it appears to be true in a given transitory moment, but when viewed over a longer timespan its changing nature is revealed (Sogyal, 2002). Self-as-process, on the other hand, is the function that integrates all experience to create coherency, while still allowing and recognizing the ever-changing nature of the self (Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Rigby, 2015). As the rising and falling away of emotions, thoughts and behaviors becomes visible in mindfulness practice, a person's view of the self shifts towards self-as-process (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). The constructed identity, that is to say, the learned behavior that may stem from roles, status or one's standing in society, then becomes illusory and thus imposes less control (Brown, Berry & Quaglia, 2016).

The change towards a self-as-process view is also likely to influence the alterations we see in self-regulation. In a self-as-object view, a self-image is internalized and one's own ability to live up to this self-image is constantly evaluated and judged. The ability to conform to this self-image creates feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, whereas failure to do so creates the opposite feeling. This inflicts extremal control on actions, as well as suppression and rejection of feelings and emotions that may function as threats to this self-image (Brown, Berry & Quaglia, 2016). As the constructed nature of this self-image becomes illusory with mindfulness practices all experience is allowed, which then enables more informed behavior that is better in line with personal values and needs (Bond, Hayes & Barnes-Holmes, 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Hodgins & Knee, 2002). This allows for actions to be self-regulated rather than externally controlled (Hodgins & Knee, 2002).

In line with this, Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova and Sels (2013) examined authentic functioning as a mechanism. An action is seen to be authentic when it is in line with one's own subjective experiences, wishes and beliefs (Wood et al., 2008). They found authentic functioning to mediate the effect between mindfulness intervention and work engagement. Hülshager et al. (2013) focused on surface acting, which is the *acting* of an emotion, i.e. suppressing negative and faking positive emotions without changing the actual feeling (Grandey, 2000). The authors detected surface acting to mediate the negative relationship between mindfulness intervention and emotional exhaustion. That is to say, a decrease in surface acting explained the negative relationship between mindfulness training and emotional exhaustion.

2.1.6 Critique of contemporary organizational mindfulness

To conclude this review of mindfulness, it is important to highlight some of the critique that has been directed at mindfulness in the workplace. Here I would like to touch upon three main

streams of critique and concern regarding the practice: the first concerns its purpose, the second its ethical foundation, and the third its predominant focus on positive outcomes.

The first concern is about the purpose of the practice of mindfulness in the workplace. As mentioned earlier, the transition of mindfulness into the medical field was congruent with the original purpose of the practice, which is to create the conditions for the cessation of suffering (Carmody, 2015). Although mindfulness practice is shown to increase well-being and reduce stress in the workplace (e.g. Good et al., 2016), some researchers are concerned that mindfulness might be used as a “quick fix” if it is the workplace itself and how work is organized there that is the main contributor to stress (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017). At the organizational level, researchers thus encourage actors to oversee the organizational practices, processes and operations to build healthy and life-giving organizations (Purser & Milillio, 2015). This also encourages tackling more fundamental questions, such as “What is the *raison d'être* for organizations?”. Some researchers thus advocate for organizations to be fundamentally purpose-driven, where the purpose is to contribute to the greater good (Qiu & Rooney, 2017). Qiu and Rooney (2017) further argue that purpose-driven organizations are more in line with the original teachings, and may also be more appealing workplaces for people who practice mindfulness. Seeking further inspiration on how to accomplish this in practice, research within the field of positive organizational scholarship has specifically focused on studying practices and processes that create life-giving organizations, and enable high-quality relationships, compassion and human flourishing (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003).

The second concern is related to the ethical foundation of mindfulness practice in the workplace. Here it is important to note that there are many voices in the field. Some researchers have shown that mindfulness, as it is practiced today, supports ethical decision-making (Lampe & Engleman-Lampe 2012; Ruedy & Schweitzer 2010; Moberg & Seabright 2000), ethical organizational culture (Kasser & Sheldon 2009; Valentine et al. 2010), and moral imagination (La Forge 2000; Waddock 2010). Other researchers are concerned about the lack of underlying alignment of purpose as discussed, and the outcomes this shortfall can give rise to (Monteiro, Musten & Compson, 2015; Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017). The researchers who voice their concerns raise questions such as: Is it right to train mindfulness in a corporation that is exploiting the planet and/or its own employees? If organizations are just concerned with stress reduction and well-being, are we robbing the practice of its emancipatory potential? This has led some scholars to advocate for incorporating elements from Buddhist ethics into the training (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Qiu & Rooney, 2017), or at the very least to ensure that mindfulness teachers are knowledgeable about the ethical foundation of the practice. As a counterpoint to this argument, the

importance of keeping Mindfulness-Based Interventions value neutral is highlighted, and that incorporating elements of Buddhist ethics would be in conflict with the secular and scientific nature of these courses (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). Grossman (2015) points out that when we speak about ethics in this context, it is important to remember we are “not talking about a set of rules based upon theistic obligations or duties” (Grossman, 2015:18), rather the discussion is about a set of embodied attitudes and values, and that these are developed in the practice itself. From the current discussion in the field, it is thus unclear whether or not an explicit ethical element is needed and, if so, where it should be derived from.

The third concern is the predominant focus of mindfulness practices on positive outcomes. In mindfulness training programs, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), it is clear that the training is a process, and the practitioner can pass through many different phases during the course of the program (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). The practice will enable the practitioner to feel and face both physical and emotional pain that may previously have been numbed or neglected (*ibid.*). In line with this, Qiu and Rooney (2017) call for researchers to examine mindfulness as a process, acknowledging all the different phases of the practice and adopting a more longitudinal research approach. Furthermore, as mindfulness practice supports awareness of your own subjective experiences, wishes, beliefs, and action in line with those (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova & Sels, 2013), the practice may also function as a trigger for smaller or larger life changes (Qiu & Rooney, 2017). Qualitative longitudinal data would enable researchers to capture the unfolding of the process of practicing mindfulness, which would shed light on the nuances of the practice.

2.2 Theoretical foundation of this thesis

In what follows, I present the three theories this thesis rests upon. Namely, institution theory, self-determination theory, and job demand-resources theory. In institutional theory, my focus is on how mindfulness is related to agency, and awareness of the institution within which the actor is embedded. In self-determination theory, I follow the work of Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007), and Ryan and Deci (2017), in continuing the investigation of the relationship between mindfulness and self-determination or autonomous functioning. The focus in job demand-resources theory is on mindfulness as a personal resource.

2.2.1 *Institutional theory*

The foundational thesis of institutional theory is that actors, individual and organizational, are not free rational agents but deeply influenced by the social and symbolic pressures from the institutional setting within which they operate (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Selznick, 1949). Dimaggio and Powell (1983) explain this is one of the main reasons why organizations within the same field are so similar. Thus, institutional theory has traditionally focused on the stabilizing nature of institutions (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Oliver, 1991), and examined how they guide behavior (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

More recent research has, however, drawn our attention to institutional changes seemingly triggered by intentional individual and organizational action (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009; Garud, Jain & Kumaraswamy, 2002; Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009; Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) refer to this as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:215). As action has traditionally been seen as guided and governed by the institutions within which the actor is embedded, a debate on the paradox of embedded agency emerged, raising the question of how the individual can influence the institution within which they are embedded (Holm, 1995; Jepperson, 1991; Seo & Creed, 2002).

Institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009; Dimaggio, 1988; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Hardy & Maguire, 2008), and institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009), are two streams of research within institutional theory that have been dedicated to examining agency in relation to institutional change. In institutional entrepreneurship, a key characteristic is that the agent has been involved in both initiating and implementing the observed institutional change; however, this participation may be either intentional or unintentional (Battilana et al., 2009). Institutional work, on the other hand, is defined as “the *purposive* action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” [emphasis added] (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006:215). Intentionality is a key characteristic in institutional work. The ability to become aware of the institution within which you are embedded is thus central to the rise of agency, while the resulting institutional change or failure to achieve it is of secondary importance.

In trying to understand the rise of intentionality and awareness of the institution within which the individual is embedded, Seo and Creed (2002) argued for the importance of a reflexive shift in consciousness, a shift from passive actor to active agent. Seo and Creed (2002), however, did not go into further detail in explaining what this reflexive shift in consciousness

is and how it can be achieved. In the first article in this thesis, I examine this dynamic and specifically focus on the role mindfulness may play in enabling what I refer to as institutional awareness.

2.2.2 Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory is instrumental in helping us understand how mindfulness is related to autonomous choice, as the theory is dedicated to understanding where action stem from. According to self-determination theory, individual expression of the self will range from a core, integrated self to a highly fragmented, passive, reactive, and alienated self (Ryan & Deci, 2002). When, what the authors refer to as, the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are fulfilled, actions are more likely to stem from the core, integrated self rather than from the fragmented self. Action that stem from the core self, is authentic and in line with the individual's own being (Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2017). However, if the self is fragmented and the basic psychological needs are not fulfilled, action will be directed towards filling the core needs with "needs substitutes" that can provide a sense of self-worth. Action will then arise from desires and strivings (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser & Deci, 1996). Actions that arise from the fragmented self will thus alter the reason for which the person initiates the action, and increase the likelihood that it stems from ego-involvement rather than task-involvement (Ryan, 1982). When a person becomes ego-involved, they will feel the need to behave in a certain way and their sense of self-worth becomes dependent on the performance of the initiative. Whereas, in task-involvement, people are more focused on the task itself without feeling that their sense of self-worth is tied to their initiative.

One of the core assumptions underlying self-determination theory is that human beings innately strive to develop an integrated core self (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995). The authors refer to this innate striving as an organismic integration process (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory, however, posits that this integrative tendency cannot be taken for granted and there are factors that help and hinder the process. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007) showed that mindfulness supports this integrative process and, over the years, mindfulness has become viewed as a foundational enabler of the integrative process (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

A person's sense of autonomy and autonomous choice has often been used to capture where actions stem from. Choices and actions are seen as autonomous when they are congruent with a person's authentic interests and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989), whereas actions are seen as being controlled when they are driven by an internal or external pressure to act, such as external demands or internal ego involvement in a task (Ryan, 1982). Through

helping people free themselves from internal and external controlling forces, mindfulness practices have been shown to support a feeling of autonomy (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007), and engagement in more autonomous behavior (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness facilitates autonomous choice through its more open and less defensive processing style (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). While people may normally avoid or suppress perceived negative experiences, Weinstein, Brown and Ryan (2009) detected that mindfulness facilitates an openness to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, which will help the individual act in accordance with the core self. Ryan and Deci (2017) argue that when an individual is aligned with their core self, proactivity naturally arises. This openness to experience can also be argued to support individuals in recognizing more opportunities in their environment. In the second article, I thus examine the mediating role of autonomous choice in both the relationship between mindfulness and opportunity recognition and mindfulness and proactive behavior.

2.2.3 Job Demand-Resources Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory is based on a conception that individuals use personal resources to contend with workplace challenges. Job demands are defined as “those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004: 296). In contrast, job resources are “physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that may: a) be functional in achieving work goals, b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001: 596). Job resources are thus seen to mitigate the strain caused by job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli & Schuurs, 2003).

The two core outcomes studied within JD-R theory are burnout and engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The early research focused on how external job demands and job resources contributed to these two outcomes. More recently, the effect of personal resources (see Schaufeli & Taris, 2014 for a review) have been examined. A personal resource is defined as “psychological characteristics or aspects of the self that are generally associated with resiliency and that refer to the ability to control and impact one’s environment successfully” (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014: 49). These personal resources are seen to increase individuals’ control and ability to successfully navigate their own environment. In the third article of this thesis, building on this new line of research within JD-R (Bandura, 1997; Judge, Bono & Locke, 2000), I examine mindfulness as a personal resource and its potential to influence both burnout and work engagement.

3 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SETTING

3.1 Selection of research setting

This thesis draws on data collected as part of two different research projects on mindfulness in the organizational context. The focus of the first empirical article in this thesis is to examine the effect of mindfulness on change-oriented behavior; here I examine change-oriented behavior in the form of opportunity recognition and proactive behavior. In order to capture both outcome variables, I chose a context where recognition of new opportunities and proactivity are central to everyday work. The cross-sectional data for this study were thus collected at the R&D department of a Nordic multinational software corporation.

The second empirical study approaches mindfulness as a personal resource that can be cultivated, examining the effects this resource has on key work outcome variables. I chose to focus on people working in managerial positions across a variety of industries as managerial work can be argued to both require and possibly deplete personal resources (Byrne, et al. 2014). To capture the extent to which mindfulness can be cultivated as a personal resource, the study employs a randomized controlled field intervention whose subjects took part in an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course.

3.2 Data collection

This section describes the data collection process for the two empirical studies this thesis rests upon.

3.2.1 *Mindfulness and change-oriented behavior*

The first empirical study relies on cross-sectional questionnaire data collected from the R&D unit of a Northern European multinational software corporation in November, 2017. The questionnaire was sent out to the whole R&D department, comprising 280 persons; 128 questionnaires were completed, yielding a response rate of 46 per cent. Of the respondents 87% were male and the majority of the respondents had either a BSc (39%) or and MSc degree (52 %). 34% of the respondents had spent up to 5 years with the company and 55% of the respondents had been with the company for more than 10 years.

Operationalization of key variables

Opportunity recognition. Opportunity recognition was measured using Ma, Huang and Shenkar's (2011) 3-item scale. Ma, Huang and Shenkar (2011) created this scale by combining items from the Ozgen and Baron (2007) and Singh et al. (1999) scales to capture both the ability to recognize opportunities and the alertness to opportunities. The scale includes items such as "While going about day-to-day activities, I see potential new ideas (e.g., on new products, new markets, and new ways of organizing our work) all around me" and "I have a special alertness or sensitivity toward new opportunities (e.g., about new products, new markets, and new ways of organizing our work)". The questions were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". Cronbach's alpha was 0.81.

Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS). In addition to being a state that can be practiced and developed through mindfulness meditation, mindfulness is also seen as a dispositional characteristic and individuals are seen to naturally display different levels of mindfulness. This study uses the short form (Van Dam et al., 2010) of the Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003), to measure individual-level trait mindfulness. MAAS is the most widely used scale to measure trait mindfulness. The respondents were asked to reflect on their everyday experiences and evaluate how frequently they have each experience. The scale includes items such as "It seems I am 'running on automatic', without much awareness of what I'm doing" and "I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing". The respondents answered these questions on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = "almost always" to 6 = "almost never". Cronbach's alpha was 0.86.

Proactive behavior. To measure proactive behavior, I employed Bateman and Crant's (1993) 17-item scale. The scale includes items such as "I tend to let others take the initiative to start new projects", "Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change", and "Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality". The response scale ranged from 0 = "never" to 6 = "every day". Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

Autonomous choice. To assess autonomous choice, I employed Chen et al.'s (2015) 8-item scale. This scale captures both needs satisfaction and needs frustration and has, thus, been viewed to give a holistic view of the core needs in different cultural contexts (Chen et al., 2015). The scale uses items such as "I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake", "I feel my choices express who I really am", and "My daily activities feel like a chain of obligations". The questions were answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "completely untrue" to 5 = "completely true". Cronbach's alpha was 0.86.

Approach to data analysis

Data analysis applied ordinary least square regression analysis. I first tested the direct relationship between mindfulness and the three outcome variables: autonomous choice, opportunity recognition, and proactive behavior. Next, I tested the possible mediating effect of autonomous choice on opportunity recognition and proactive behavior, introducing it as a second independent variable to the two separate regressions on opportunity recognition and proactive behavior. In line with the requirements for a mediating effect, the effect of mindfulness on both opportunity recognition and proactive behavior was completely absorbed by the autonomous choice variable. Finally, a Sobel's test confirmed the mediational effect of autonomous choice.

3.2.2 Mindfulness as a personal resource

This study is a field intervention and employed a randomized wait-list control intervention design. Reflecting the prior workplace studies (e.g., Hülshager, Feinholdt & Nübold, 2015; Klatt, Buckworth & Malarkey, 2009), I used an abbreviated version of the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program as the intervention. The training was modified to suit the workplace context by eliminating the full day of practice, shortening daily practice requirements from 45 minutes to 10-15 minutes, and shortening classes from 2.5 hours to 1.5 hours. A certified MBSR teacher, who for the past three years had focused exclusively on providing mindfulness training in the workplace, conducted all four interventions. After enrolling, managers were randomly assigned to complete the MBSR intervention or to a wait-list that would allow them to participate in the course after the study.

The study was conducted in four large organizations operating in Finland, including a bank, consulting firm, hospital, and retailer. Of the 152 managers who signed up for the research project, 130 (86%) completed both the training and the pre and post questionnaires. I collected survey data in the two weeks prior to the first MBSR class, and the two weeks immediately after.

Operationalization of key variables

Stress. To capture managerial stress levels, I used the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Managers were asked to reflect on their feelings and thoughts during the past two weeks, and rate how often they had felt a certain way. The scale included items such

as “How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?” and “How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?”. The questions were rated on a scale ranging from 0 = “never” to 4 = “often”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.82 and for time 2 was 0.84.

Burnout. I used Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) 9-item emotional exhaustion scale to operationalize managerial burnout. The participants were asked to state how frequently they experienced things such as “I feel emotionally drained from my work”, “I feel used up at the end of the workday”, and “Working with people all day is really a strain for me”. The questions were rated on a scale ranging from 0 = “never” to 6 = “every day”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.88 and for time 2 was 0.89.

Engagement. Engagement is a positive measure of energy and focus devoted to an individual’s task performance (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-romá & Bakker, 2002). To measure work engagement, I used the short form of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, comprising nine items, such as “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”, “I am immersed in my work”, and “I get carried away when I am working” (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The response scale ranged from 0 = “never” to 6 = “every day”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.91 and for time 2 was 0.94.

Psychological detachment. To measure psychological detachment, I used Sonnentag and Fritz’s (2007) 4-item scale. The scale prompts the respondent to reflect on their relationship with work outside working hours, and includes items such as “During time after work, I forget about work” and “During time after work, I don’t think about work at all”. Items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 = “totally disagree”, to 5 = “totally agree”. Cronbach’s alpha for both time 1 and time 2 was 0.81.

Approach to data analysis

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to assess the hypotheses using R. Outcome variables and job demands were modelled at each time point as level 1 variables, and each manager’s stable personality and demographic characteristics as level 2 predictors. All level 1 variables were assessed at both time points, to evaluate and control for changes in the characteristics before and after the intervention. Level 1 job demands, including surface acting and workload, were assessed and assumed to vary across both time points. To control for between-person effects, these variables were individual-mean centered (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). Manager characteristics, including personality and

demographics, were assessed only before the intervention. Time before the intervention was coded as 0, and after the intervention as 1. Participation in the wait-list condition was coded as 0, and the MBSR intervention as 1.

Both fixed-effects and random-effects models were tested for all analyses (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Random variation was assumed for the focus of our analyses – the group x time interactions. However, modeling this parameter as a random coefficient never yielded a significant improvement in model predictiveness. Therefore, only the results of the fixed-effects models are reported.

4 SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES

This PhD thesis is based on three articles, all of which shed light from slightly different angles on its research questions. This section provides a summary of each of the articles. The overview in Table 1 below displays the theoretical framework, outcomes studied and data for each article.

Table 1 Summary of articles

Article	Focus/Contribution	Theoretical framework	Outcomes studied	Data
1	Explores the possibility of endogenously triggered agency through the cultivation of mindfulness, and how mindfulness may support institutional awareness	Institutional theory	Institutional awareness	Conceptual article
2	Shows how mindfulness supports opportunity recognition and proactive behavior through promoting autonomous choice	Self-determination theory	Autonomous choice, opportunity recognition, proactive behavior	Cross-sectional data from R&D department
3	Demonstrates how mindfulness may function as a personal resource that can be cultivated, and its effects on key workplace outcomes	Job Demand-Resources theory	Stress, emotional exhaustion, detachment, engagement	Intervention study

4.1 Article 1: Embodying institutions – Mindfulness as a trigger of institutional awareness?

Authors: Ahlvik, C.

This article studies agency and awareness in institutional theory conceptually by examining what Seo and Creed (2002) refer to as a “reflexive shift in consciousness”. Scholars have to date identified several different triggering factors for this shift, such as institutional contradiction (Seo & Creed, 2002), conflicting logics (Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003), and exogenous shocks (Fligstein, 1991). The common thread in these factors is that they are dependent on events external to the individual. However, the question I explore here is if and how the shift could be triggered endogenously. I adopt an embodied view of institutions, and recognize that it is people who cognitively carry (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Colomy, 1998) and emotionally embody (e.g., Voronov & Weber, 2016; Creed, DeJordy & Lok, 2010; Creed

et al., 2014) the institutions they inhabit (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). Following research by Ruebottom & Auster (2018), who highlight the importance of emotional and cognitive disembedding for reflexivity to occur, I argue that the practice of mindfulness may support disembedding.

The article explains how mindfulness may function as an endogenous trigger for institutional awareness, and builds a typology depicting the conditions required to enable a reflexive shift in consciousness, thus allowing institutional awareness to surface. I look at how the different levels of mindfulness, in terms of internal and external awareness, correspond to actions taken or not taken by individuals in organizations. I also examine how these can function as the springboard for different types of institutional change or alternatively foster adherence to the status quo.

The resulting typology displayed in Figure 1 shows that when both internal and external awareness are narrow, the individual is more likely to adhere to the status quo. Unintentional institutional change can arise when internal awareness is wide but external awareness narrow. On the other hand, when external awareness is wide and internal narrow, the result is most likely bandwagon behavior; that is, jumping on interesting and potentially disruptive new trends without necessarily having the ability to create such institutional disruption. The greatest likelihood for breaking the taken for granted and for intentional institutional change to occur is when both internal and external awareness are wide.

Internal awareness	Wide	Boutique movement	Breaking the taken for granted
	Narrow	Replication of status quo	Bandwagon effect or Bricolage
		Narrow	Wide
		External awareness	

Figure 1 **Theorized model**

This article contributes to our understanding of agency in institutional theory, by exploring how institutional awareness may be endogenously triggered, and building a typology around how mindfulness could function as that endogenous trigger.

4.2 Article 2: Shaping the future: Mindfulness and how it supports change-oriented behavior

Authors: Ahlvik, C.

Mindfulness has a non-judgmental component, which makes some researchers and practitioners worry that mindfulness practice may lead to complacency in the workplace (Brendel, 2015; Carette & King, 2004; Doran, 2017; Purser & Loy, 2013). Thus, a key question is whether mindfulness supports change-oriented behavior, and if it does, what kind of change-oriented behavior it supports. From a theoretical standpoint, mindfulness should support change-oriented behavior that is in line with an individual's core self, that is to say, actions that are autonomous.

This study addresses the relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior by theoretically and empirically unpacking the relationship and examining the mechanisms that may affect it. I show empirically that mindfulness has a direct effect on opportunity recognition and proactive behavior. Further, I theorize this transpires through creating a wider scope of awareness that alters the quality of individual action, making it more autonomous rather than controlled.

Autonomous and controlled action are two of the key components of self-determination theory. Choices and actions are seen as autonomous when congruent with the authentic interest and values of a person (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989), whereas actions are seen as controlled when driven by an internal or external pressure to act, such as external demands or internal ego involvement in a task (Ryan, 1982). Through helping people free themselves from internal and external controlling forces, mindfulness practices have been shown to support a feeling of autonomy (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007) and engagement in more autonomous behavior (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness is seen to facilitate autonomous choice through a more open and less defensive approach to processing experience (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). Ryan (2005) explains that meeting your own experiences with attitudes such as non-judgementalism may diminish impulsive or defensive reactions and thus promote "insight into self, others and the human condition" (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007: 213). Figure 2 displays the theorized relationship.

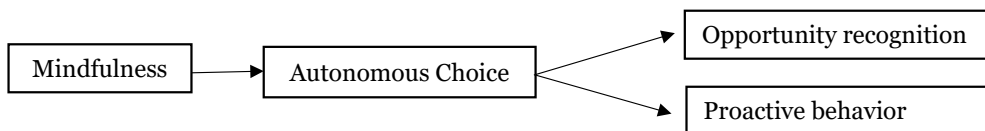


Figure 2 Mindfulness, mediating model

The key contribution of this article is, thus, that it shows mindfulness supports opportunity recognition and proactive behavior in large organizations, and does so through facilitating autonomous choice. A limitation of this study is that the findings are based on cross-sectional data, which means the theorized causal relationship cannot be empirically established. To address this limitation, I chose to conduct the last study of this thesis as a field intervention.

4.3 Article 3: Mindfulness as a personal resource: A mindfulness intervention for managers

Authors: Ahlvik, C., Lyddy, C., Reina, C., Good, D., Knappert, K., Reb, J. & Wincent, J.

In this article, we build on and contribute to the Job Demand-Resources theory (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). The Job Demand-Resources theory is one of the most well-known job stress theories (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014) and it was originally developed to understand when the balance, or rather imbalance, between job demands and job resources predicted burnout. Job demands are defined as “those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004: 296). Job resources are defined as “physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that may: a) be functional in achieving work goals, b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001: 596). Job resources are thus seen to diminish the potential strain caused by job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli & Schuurs, 2003).

A more recent addition to the theory is to, in addition to job demands and job resources; examine the effects personal resources has on workplace outcomes. A personal resource is defined as “psychological characteristics or aspects of the self that are generally associated with resiliency and that refer to the ability to control and impact one’s environment successfully” (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014: 49). In this article, we approach mindfulness as a personal resource (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), and examine the extent to which it is related to workplace outcomes. Specifically we examine the effect mindfulness, as a personal resource, has on burnout, stress, engagement, and the ability to detach from work outside working hours.

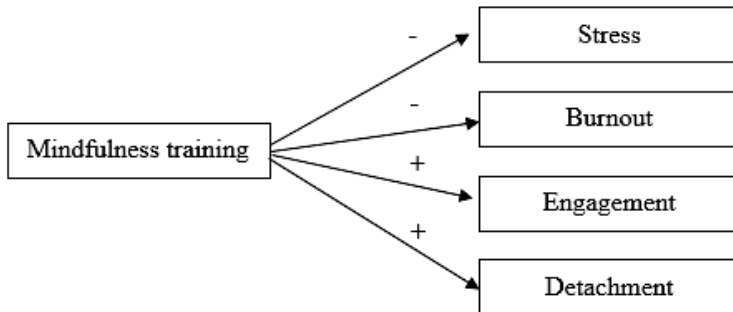


Figure 3 Hypothesized model, JD-R and mindfulness

To test our hypothesis, we conducted a large-scale controlled field intervention, where 130 managers from four Northern European organizations completed an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. Data were collected using a questionnaire before and after the intervention.

Our study shows that mindfulness does function as a personal resource, and that it is negatively related to stress and burnout, positively related to detachment, and marginally related to workplace engagement. This study makes an important contribution to the mindfulness literature in several ways. First, it uses a rigorous controlled field intervention research design, based on which we, with confidence, can determine that the observed changes were based on the mindfulness training provided. This study thus, not only shows that mindfulness can be viewed as a personal resource from the point of view of the Job Demand-Resources theory, but also that this is a personal resource that can be trained and developed. Furthermore, by tying this study to the Job Demand-Resources theory this article starts to build theory around why we witness the beneficial outcomes of mindfulness training in the workplace context. Namely, that mindfulness, as a personal resource, seems to be balancing the impact of job-demands.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Contribution of this thesis

The main purpose of this thesis was to shed further light on mindfulness in the organizational context. With this thesis, I set out to answer two research questions. First, what is the relationship between mindfulness and agency in organizations? And second, what is the effect of mindfulness as a personal resource on workplace well-being? The findings and contributions related to the first research question, which was explored in the first and the second articles, are discussed in section 5.1.1. Similarly, those findings and contributions related to the second research question examined in the third article are discussed in section 5.1.2. I will then broaden the discussion to reflect on the larger potential of mindfulness in the organizational context, and circle back to the title of this thesis, *The power of awareness – Unlocking the potential of mindfulness in organizations*. This will be followed by a discussion on the limitations of the thesis, and on avenues for future research. Finally, I will discuss further practical implications of this thesis.

5.1.1 *What is the relationship between mindfulness and agency in organizations?*

To explore the first research question, the first article examines the emergence of agency from an institutional theory perspective, and draws on dual-process theory and mindfulness to advance our understanding of how individuals can become aware of the institution within which they are embedded.

This theoretical examination indicates that certain degrees of mindfulness, or the lack thereof, may lay the foundations for becoming an active agent or, alternatively, for adhering to the status quo. This article contributes to theory in two important ways. First, it contributes to the ongoing discussion on the emergence of agency in institutional theory. The article shows that at a theoretical level, mindfulness might be able to endogenously trigger a reflexive shift in consciousness (Seo & Creed, 2002). This is an important addition to the current literature as it indicates that agency can be endogenously triggered, in addition to the many exogenous triggers that have been previously identified. Furthermore, as called for by Lawrence, Leca and Zilber (2013), this article explores both the cognitive and emotional aspects necessary to birth a reflexive shift in consciousness. It is, however, also important to note that although mindfulness may trigger institutional awareness, for agency to manifest the consecutive steps identified by e.g. Dimaggio (1988) and Seo and Creed (2002), in terms of both perceiving an alternative solution and actor mobilization, need to be taken.

The second article in this thesis empirically tests some of the propositions put forward in the first article. Thus, the larger underlying question was whether mindfulness supports action, and not just any kind of action, but autonomous action. To answer this research question, I collected data in the R&D department of a Nordic software corporation. The R&D department was seen as the ideal setting, since the creation of the new is part of its daily operations. In this setting, I examined the effect mindfulness had on change-oriented behavior in the form of recognition of new opportunities and proactive behavior. According to expectations, mindfulness was positively related to both opportunity recognition and proactive behavior, and this relationship was fully mediated by autonomous choice.

From these findings, it can be inferred that there is a positive relationship between mindfulness, agency and action. The empirical results further show that mindfulness supports change-oriented behavior in the form of opportunity recognition and proactivity. A more detailed review of the theoretical explanations for this relationship can be found in the second article. Even more interestingly, mindfulness does not just support any form of action but action that is grounded in autonomous choice. That is to say, action that is in line with an individual's own subjective beliefs, values and experiences (Wood et al., 2008). These results are in stark contrast with concerns over mindfulness leading to complacency (Brendel, 2015; Carrette & King, 2004; Doran, 2017; Purser & Loy, 2013). It is important to point out that the speculations regarding mindfulness leading to complacency are exactly that, speculations, and have never been empirically supported.

5.1.2 How does mindfulness as a personal resource affect workplace well-being?

The second research question sought to examine how mindfulness, as a personal resource, could support workplace well-being. In this article, I examined the extent to which mindfulness could reduce stress and burnout, while increasing engagement and the ability to detach from work outside working hours.

To test these hypotheses, I conducted a large-scale randomized control trial intervention where 130 managers in four different organizations located in Northern Europe participated in an 8-week mindfulness training program. Our results show that as predicted, mindfulness reduces stress and burnout, while increasing the ability to detach from work outside working hours. The results for engagement showed marginal support. This study above all shows that mindfulness as a personal resource can be cultivated in the organizational context, and underlines the usefulness of providing mindfulness training in companies.

5.1.3 What is the potential of mindfulness in organizations?

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the practice of mindfulness in the organizational context is part of a bigger shift in organizational life, were a new approach to being in organizations is emerging. Key characteristic of this new approach is a shift in focus from the outside in and a more holistic approach to organizational life. Research within the field of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Dutton, Glynn & Spreitzer, 2008) would refer to this as the study of “life-giving” phenomena in organizations. This shift in focus encourages a revisiting of some of the foundational questions regarding the purpose of organizations and at the same time allows a completely new set of questions regarding organizational life to emerge.

Questions that naturally emerge are questions like “what does a life-giving organization look like?”. In positive organizational scholarship, the focus has been on all levels, that is to say, the individual, relational and organizational. On the individual level topics that have been examined are meaning (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010), flourishing (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005) and mindfulness (Good et al., 2016). On the relational level, topics such as compassion (Dutton, Worline, Frost & Lilius, 2006; Rynes, Bartunek, Dutton, Margolis, 2012) and high quality relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) have been examined and on the organizational level focus have been placed on identifying the organizational practices that support and enable individual and relational flourishing (Worline & Dutton, 2018).

The practice of mindfulness specifically comes into play when we try to understand what it means to shift the focus from the outside in. This thesis shows that mindfulness can support the individual level investigation and understanding of what it is that is truly in line with one’s own values and needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989), through diminishing the influence of internal and external pressure to act (Ryan, 1982). Furthermore, this thesis underlines and starts to unpack the potential mindfulness holds for developing personal resources.

A question also worth asking is what a holistic approach to organizational life would look like? If the so called “role play” is removed from organizational life, where people act out the appropriate behavior in accordance with the title of their business card, and are instead encouraged to bring in their whole being, their whole humanness to the organizational arena. Frederec Laloux (2015), for example, observed that in organizations where the professional masks were dropped and wholeness allowed more conflict emerged and with this, new creative solutions for how to both allow and navigate conflict. In light of this observation, it might be understandable that we have introduced role behavior to the organizational arena, as allowing

the whole plethora of human emotions and behavior requires skills that at the moment aren't taught. Here I would also encourage a deeper understanding and examination of emotions, the workings of the mind, of shadow behavior and of trauma behavior, as well as of how this can play out in group settings and how it can be healed (see Heller & LaPierre, 2012 for a review). In this sense, mindfulness can be seen as a first step that opens the door to a more holistic understanding and requires a deeper examination and education of what it means to be human. A skill set that arguably would be as important to learn and to be taught in schools as algebra.

5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This thesis is subject to some limitations and opens up several avenues for future research. First, a few comments regarding the data sets on which this thesis draws. Although the data sets can be considered strong and representative, future studies may consider a few further adjustments. For example, the data in the first study are cross-sectional and rely on data from a single respondent, which may introduce common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To better capture change over time, researchers might consider a longitudinal approach and applying a process perspective (see e.g. Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). Approaching mindfulness as a process would enable researchers to capture the different stages mindfulness practitioners move through, and thus give a more representative picture of how the practice unfolds. A qualitative approach in the form of a diary study would be able to capture detailed individual-level variance in experience over time. Furthermore, one way of reducing the risk of common method variance would be to gather data for the independent and the dependent variables at different time points, or potentially find a more objective way of measuring the dependent variables, for example using the number of patents registered as a proxy for opportunity recognition. That being said, the variance inflation factor (VIF) of this study was very low, thus suggesting that common method variance may not have been present.

The main purpose of the research design for the second data set was to address some of the shortcomings of the first data set. There are, however, also shortcomings to randomized intervention studies. One shortcoming is that I measure at only two time points, two weeks before and immediately after the intervention. Future studies might want to add a third measurement point, three or up to six months after the intervention, as some behavioral changes may be expected to occur on a time lag. Furthermore, a third measurement point would also let us know if the observed changes hold over time. In terms of geographical spread, the companies examined are all located in Northern Europe. Future studies may wish to

explore the extent to which the findings presented in this thesis would also hold for companies in other locations.

Qiu and Rooney (2017) critique mindfulness research in general for its predominant focus on positive outcomes. In their article, the researchers made an attempt to map the different developmental stages a practitioner moves through when practicing mindfulness, and how these may influence both the practitioner and the workplace. Future research should continue mapping this process to capture all the nuances of experience. This would help us understand, for example, what the process for arriving at stress reduction looks like, and it may capture the challenges a practitioner might meet along the way. This may also reveal to what extent a reduction in stress is due to a change in attitude towards the situation, and to what extent it is a change in behavior, where the practitioner realizes the current situation is not sustainable and needs to change.

Furthermore, an alternative to longitudinal research would be to conduct retrospective interviews with individuals with 2000-10000 lifetime meditation hours. Interviews with so-called “expert meditators” could help in mapping the true potential of mindfulness practice in the workplace. Future studies also need to continue mapping the mechanisms of mindfulness. We need to understand what the mediating and moderating variables are of the outcomes we are seeing. It would also be important to expand the study to include research on interpersonal effects. Research could examine the effect of leader mindfulness on subordinate outcomes or how team mindfulness affects team climate and team outcome variables.

In their study, Hülshager et al. (2015) found psychological detachment to be an antecedent to mindfulness, as a result of which the authors argue that the relationship between mindfulness and recovery experiences seems to be reciprocal rather than unidirectional as suggested by previous research. I would take this argument one step further, and suggest that there might be clusters of variables that dependently co-arise and support each other. I would thus encourage future research to examine what factors support the arising of mindfulness, this could be behavioral factors such as psychological detachment as implied by Hülshager et al. (2015), but they could also be environmental factors, such as the presence of a physical place for the practice of mindfulness in the workplace. This development would be in line with traditional mindfulness practice, where a number of elements are put in place to sustain and support a deepening of the practice. Some of the elements that are seen in more traditional settings are having ongoing practice groups, a physical place for these groups to meet, longer retreats which supports a detachment from one’s everyday physically and psychologically environment. Other elements that are often seen in traditional settings are, aspects related to diet, i.e. eating lighter often vegetarian food and perhaps engaging in silence, as outward

silence supports the emergence of inward silence. Future research on mindfulness in the organizational context could thus study how the environment within which mindfulness practitioners live and practice hinder or support the emergence of mindfulness.

5.3 Managerial implications

This thesis confirms the potential mindfulness training holds for organizations. Not only does mindfulness support managers in building personal resources to help them combat stress and burnout, but they also experience increased engagement, and mindfulness facilitates detaching from work outside working hours. The findings show mindfulness is instrumental in developing the business, in that it supports proactivity and the recognition of new opportunities. Here it is also important to note that the development of the business in the form of proactive behavior and the recognition of new opportunities is not happening at the expense of the worker, but rather in line with the worker's subjective values, beliefs and experiences. This highlights the potential mindfulness has for creating a win-win situation and a positive spiral, where what is good for business is also good for the individual. Using terminology from positive organizational scholarship, this win-win situation could be referred to as individual and organizational co-flourishing.

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**EMBODYING INSTITUTIONS – MINDFULNESS AS A TRIGGER OF
INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS?**

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Abstract

In trying to understand the “reflexive shift in consciousness” argued to be a key foundational mechanism for the birth of agency in institutional theory, past research has identified different exogenous triggers to evoke this shift, such as position in the field, conflicting logics or socio-economic shocks. Nascent research focusing more on the embodiment of institutions has also begun to explore the influence of cognitive and emotional factors in helping or hindering agency. Following this stream of research and introducing institutions as embodied realities, I argue that this reflexive shift in consciousness can also be endogenously triggered through contemplative practices such as mindfulness. I develop a typology to depict conditions that need to be met to enable a reflexive shift in consciousness to emerge, and argue for how the varying levels of mindfulness in the form of internal and external awareness may manifest as distinct responses to the institutional environment in which the actor is embedded.

Key words: agency, awareness, embodiment, cognition, dual-process theory, institutional awareness, mindfulness.

Introduction

“A stone on the road that happens to meet our glance will have a claim on our attention only if it obstructs our progress or is of interest to us for some reason. Yet if we neglect these casual impressions too often, we may stumble over many stones lying on our road and also overlook many gems.”

Nyanaponika Thera, 1972:6

The question of how actors can become aware of and change the very institutions within which they are embedded (Holm, 1995; Jepperson, 1991; Seo & Creed, 2002) is still one of the most intriguing in institutional theory. In trying to understand actor-led institutional change, Dimaggio (1988: 14) famously stated that “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests they value highly”. Seo and Creed (2002), however, criticize research that takes Dimaggio’s (1988) quote as its starting point, i.e. individuals or organizations *wanting* to change the institution within which they are embedded. This point of departure directs the focus towards the skills and resources available to mobilize institutional change (Garud, Jain & Kumaraswamy, 2002; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004; Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002), as well as towards the political nature of the process (Fligstein, 1991), neglecting the critical transition from passive actor to active agent (Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009; Seo & Creed 2002). This article focuses on that point of transition. More specifically, I examine the role mindfulness (e.g. Good et al., 2016) may play in endogenously triggering this transition, thus creating what I refer to as *institutional awareness*.

To better understand agency in relationship to institutions, and how agency in the form of purposeful action can trigger institutional change, several authors have developed a breakdown of the process. Seo and Creed (2002) break it down into four stages leading to intentional institutional change, starting with i) a potential change agent, ii) reflexive shift in consciousness, iii) actor mobilization, and iv) collective action. It is the second stage, the “reflexive shift in consciousness”, which can be seen as the birth of agency, where a passive actor becomes an active agent. Reflexivity can be defined as an awareness of the sociohistorical reality that shapes an individual’s life, and the notion of your ability to change that reality (Freire, 1970). In the past, authors have identified how different exogenous factors, such as disruptive events (e.g., Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), position in the field (e.g., Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, King, 1991; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006), or institutional contradictions (e.g., Reay & Hinings, 2009; Seo & Creed, 2002), can trigger reflexivity (for a review, see Micelotta, Lounsbury & Greenwood, 2017). More recently, researchers have also drawn attention to the embodied nature of institutions, and how individuals, by inhabiting institutions (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), carry the institutional blueprint both cognitively and emotionally. This stream of research has also

triggered interest in the role cognitive and emotional factors may play in giving birth to reflexivity (Lawrence, Leca and Zilber, 2013; Ruebottom & Auster, 2018). Researchers have noticed this embodiment of institutions creates an attachment to the institutional setting, and highlight the importance of cognitive and emotional disembedding for change to be perceived as desirable (Creed, DeJordy & Lok, 2010, Voronow & Yorks, 2015, Ruebottom & Auster, 2018). In further exploring the embodiment of institutions and how reflexivity can be endogenously triggered, I argue that mindfulness may both give rise to the primary awareness of the individual's institutional setting, and facilitate cognitive and emotional disembedding from that setting.

In what follows, I explain the central themes of this article, beginning with institutional awareness and agency in institutional theory, and followed by the central research on emotions and cognition with regard to reflexivity. In exploring the cognitive aspect, I draw specifically on dual process research. After this, I introduce mindfulness and explain how it could function as a potential trigger for institutional awareness and support emotional and cognitive disembedding. Finally, I develop a typology that highlights how the different levels of awareness, foundational for mindfulness, may create different institutional responses.

Institutional awareness and agency in institutional theory

The role of agency and social structure in changing social realities has long been subject to investigation in institutional theory (Dimaggio, 1988; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). On the one hand, institutional arrangements create a taken-for granted “rule-like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977: 341), which limits all forms of agency and, on the other hand, institutional change triggered or even led by actors has been empirically documented (see Battilana et al., 2009 for an overview).

Institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Hardy & Maguire, 2008), and institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2009), are two streams of research within institutional theory that have been dedicated to examining agency in relation to institutional change. Institutional entrepreneurship is defined as “agents who initiate, and actively participate in the implementation of, changes that diverge from existing institutions...” (Battilana et al., 2009: 72). A defining characteristic of institutional entrepreneurship is that the agent has been involved in initiating and implementing the observed institutional change; participation may, however, be both intentional and unintentional (Battilana et al., 2009). Institutional work is defined as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and

disrupting institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 215). A distinguishing characteristic between the two streams’ definitions is that the research on institutional work makes reflexivity central to the rise of agency, whereas the presence of reflexivity is not as pronounced, although it is often assumed, in the literature on institutional entrepreneurship. Although the research on institutional work puts reflexivity center stage, Lawrence, Leca and Zilber (2013) noted that the majority of research to date is retrospective, and draws on archival and interview data to recount the unfolding of institutional change (for exceptions see Dacin et al., 2010; Raviola & Norbäck, 2013; Zilber, 2009). Accordingly, they state that these kinds of data make it difficult to capture how agency arises, and thus how reflexivity is born. So, there is a need to empirically and theoretically unpack the birth of reflexivity.

In this article, I introduce the concept *institutional awareness*, defined as the ability to be aware of the institution in which you are embedded. In taking an embodied approach to institutions, I also argue that in addition to being aware of how the institution in general produces habitual, repetitive, taken-for-granted enactments of scripts and rule systems (Colomy, 1998), and outlines appropriate behavior (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; March & Olsen, 2006), this also entails an awareness of the impact the institutional arrangement has on the individual’s inner landscape, in the form of emotion and cognition. With an embodied view the definition of institutional awareness thus is, *the ability to be aware of the emotional and cognitive impact of the institution in which you are embedded*. Thus, an embodied approach to institutional awareness also entails an awareness of your own, often automatic, stimulus-response reaction, a form of awareness that can be attained through mindfulness practice (Brown et al., 2007).

Institutional awareness can, but does not have to, contribute to action. Furthermore, should it contribute to action, there is no guarantee of a successful outcome in terms of institutional change. I thus argue that from reflexivity, institutional awareness arises and exists, as a potentiality for action. Without institutional awareness, there can be no purposeful and intentional effort to create, maintain or disrupt institutions. Next, I examine reflexivity from an emotional and cognitive perspective, and explain why mindfulness may be able to endogenously produce emotional and cognitive disembedding and, thus, facilitate institutional awareness.

Embodied institutions, the role of emotions

The most recent addition to our understanding of institutions and institutional change is the role emotions play in both maintaining institutions and driving change (e.g., Voronov & Vince,

2012; Voronov & Yorks, 2015; Creed, DeJordy & Lok, 2010; Creed et al., 2014). This focus brings the individual level to institutional theory and draws our attention to how, when institutional arrangements are internalized, they become embodied realities for the people who inhabit the institutions (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). Voronov and Weber (2016) note this is exemplified in people feeling shame when they feel unable to live up to the institutional expectations, or pride when they are. For example, Creed et al. (2010) researched gay ministers who tried to repress their sexual orientation due to the shame produced by being unable to live up to the institutionalized behavior of their faith. Institutions are thus lived and reproduced through the people enacting the institutional arrangements (Voronov & Weber, 2016). Creed et al. (2014) explain that through emotions, people are disciplined into appropriate role behavior, and explicate the role shame plays in aligning behavior with prescribed norms. From an institutional theory perspective, shame thus facilitates conformity and internalization of the institution (Creed et al., 2014).

Voronov and Vince (2012) note the importance of emotional disengagement from current institutional orders in enabling reflexivity. Ruebottom and Auster (2018) show how an awareness-raising event called *We Day* produced a so-called “free space” (Furnari, 2014) that facilitated cognitive and emotional disembedding through storytelling, and individual as well as collective empowering. Disembedding is here facilitated through a physical space, an event (Ruebottom & Auster, 2018). From the mindfulness perspective, the question becomes whether this could be endogenously induced through the practice. A key feature of mindfulness is that it is an embodied practice where both emotional and cognitive movement are allowed to arise without any filter (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). This is also commonly referred to as having a non-judgmental attitude toward your own experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). A non-judgmental attitude or attitudes such as acceptance, self-kindness or self-compassion are qualities that can facilitate contact with an uncomfortable experience. Ryan (2005) explains that meeting your own experiences with such qualities may diminish impulsive or defensive reactions, thus promoting insight into the self, others and the human condition (Brown et al., 2007). Thus, a non-judgmental attitude does not refer to complying with potentially disharmonious external conditions; rather, it enables turning towards and experiencing the present circumstances exactly as they are.

Cognitive approach to reflexivity

Research on cognitive psychology underlines the potential mindfulness may have in awakening reflexivity. In cognitive psychology, this shift in consciousness is referred to by Stanovich (2011) as a shift from System 1 to System 2 processing (also commonly referred to

as reflexive to reflective processing). System 1 processing is often called the automatic mind and is closely related to what Giddens (1990) refers to as the reflexive character of all human activity. Giddens notes that human beings continuously reflect on their actions as an integrated part of the actions they undertake, and calls this mechanism a “reflexive monitoring of action”, comparing it to what Goffman termed “the never-to-be-relaxed – monitoring of behavior and its context” (Giddens, 1990: 36-37). Such monitoring is a highly automated process requiring limited active conscious engagement. It covers information, rules and conditioning learned to automation (Stanovich, 2011), which surface as choices being made without a person’s conscious involvement or awareness of alternatives (Kahneman, 2003). System 1 can thus be seen as triggered by the institution within which the individual is embedded, as the institution is seen to “set bounds on rationality by restricting the opportunities and alternatives actors perceive and thereby increasing the probability of a certain kind of behavior” (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983: 94).

System 2 processing, on the other hand, is defined as a conscious and non-autonomous processing system, and can be compared to what Dennett (1984) refers to as reflective, meta-thinking, thinking about thinking or thinking about a desire or emotion instead of automatically reacting to it. Dennett (1984) refers to this act as “becoming conscious of our reason” (Dennett, 1984: 36). Although the majority of the research has focused on trying to understand these distinct cognitive processing modes, the spotlight has also been trained on the so-called switching mechanism, that is, how the individual shifts from System 1 to System 2 processing. One such switching mechanism is *mindfulness*. Mindfulness interrupts habitual adherence to thoughts and behavioral patterns, this happens when individuals depart from heuristic to more systematic modes of processing (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Brown et al., 2007; Siegel, 2007). Thus, mindfulness can also from a cognitive perspective be seen to have the potential to trigger institutional awareness.

In what follows, I will explain what mindfulness is and why it can trigger institutional awareness. This potential of mindfulness has largely been ignored, as contemporary organizational mindfulness research has primarily focused on the salutary effects of the practice (Good et al., 2016), overlooking the fact that its historical purpose was liberation.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist psychology, and the initial purpose of the practice is to *gain insight into the human condition, understand and enable the cessation of suffering, and ultimately achieve liberation* (Anālayo, 2014). In essence, mindfulness is a particular state of

consciousness (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Weick & Putnam, 2006), and as such can only be fully understood experientially (Varela & Shear, 1999); explanations can, however, both point towards and help others arrive at this state of consciousness. According to Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007), consciousness encompasses both *awareness* and *attention*. *Awareness* is our direct contact with this existence and encompasses all internal and external stimuli, such as thoughts, feelings, emotions, input from our five senses and the kinetic sense (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). When a stimulus is strong enough, our *attention* is turned towards it. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007) explain that normally a stimulus holds our attention only briefly, if at all, before habitual emotional and cognitive responses are triggered based on past experiences and conditioning. Mindfulness enables people to become aware of the rising and falling away of emotional and cognitive activity (Gunaratana, 2002), without the overlay of past conditionings. Dreyfus (2011) states that mindfulness is the ability to be present to whatever is, a “turning towards” your own present experience. This willingness to be non-judgmentally present has prompted some scholars to refer to mindfulness as *open* or *receptive* awareness (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997).

It is the cultivation of this willingness to be present to whatever is, that is key to understanding how mindfulness may trigger insight into the emotional and cognitive embodiment of the institutional setting. Whereas people may normally avoid or suppress perceived negative experiences, Weinstein, Brown and Ryan (2009) detected that mindfulness facilitates an openness to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. This may facilitate contact with emotions such as shame, rather than letting the emotion create compliance to the institutionalized way of being, as in the example given by Creed et al. (2010). Brown et al. (2007) further explain that it is because of this avoidance or suppression that certain phenomena remain hidden from our awareness, and that individuals adopt this response strategy when experiences “represent threats to the self-concept or to aspects of the self that are ego-invested” (Brown et al. 2007: 213). Thus, the power of mindfulness lies in facilitating contact with uncomfortable experience through diminishing impulsive or defensive reactions (Brown et al., 2007).

From a technical standpoint, mindfulness prolongs the gap between stimulus and response, thus helping a person respond consciously in the situation rather than automatically out of habit and institutionalized expectations. Brown et al. (2007) outlined the stimulus-response reaction in four steps. First, when a stimulus is strong enough, our mind turns towards it. Second, the mind classifies the stimulus as good, bad or neutral for the self. Third, all past experiences are drawn on to place the stimulus in context. Fourth, existing behavioral schemas are applied. Bargh and Chartrand (1999) point out the problem with this process is that

previous conceptions of concepts, labels, ideas and judgments are often automatically placed on everything we encounter.

The open awareness that mindfulness creates can be directed both inwards and outwards, to internal experiences and external events. Both are needed for mindfulness to be “complete”. Dane (2011) refers to this form of awareness as *wide*. In this state, awareness is expanded. Thus, it is important to note that the width of both internal and external awareness can range from narrow to wide, and it is only when both dimensions are wide that the state can be said to be mindful. Internal awareness refers to the ability to be aware of different phenomena in your own body and mind, which manifest as thought processes, reactions and affective states. Brown et al. (2007) thus note that people in a mindful state are more aware of their own emotions. External awareness, on the other hand, refers to being aware of phenomena occurring in your own environment, and when the internal and external awareness merge, you are aware of your own inner states, the external environment, and impact the external environment has on internal state.

Mindfulness and disembedding

In addition to wide internal and external awareness, there are certain qualities or ways of relating to a person’s own experience that are cultivated in mindfulness practices. Though they are seldom mentioned in contemporary organizational mindfulness research, these qualities are seen as key to deepening the state of mindfulness. To understand them, it’s useful to examine what can be considered the most influential texts on mindfulness, namely the “Discourse on the establishment of Mindfulness” (pali: Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta) (Bodhi, 2011). A part of the text that illuminates the qualities of awareness to be cultivated, here in relationship to attention placed on the body, has been translated by Anālayo (2014:92) as follows:

“In this way, in regards to the body he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both externally and internally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that “there is a body” is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. He abides independent not clinging to anything in the world.”

From this text, it becomes apparent there are four different qualities of mindfulness: i) internal and external, ii) arising and passing away, iii) bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness, and iv) independent, not clinging. While there are many interpretations of these four qualities, I shall point out a few of the central ideas from Anālayo’s (2014) commentaries. I have already referred to the first quality, internal/external, which is also familiar to most organizational

scholars as Dane (2011), Brown and Ryan (2003) and Brown et al. (2007) use it in their definition of mindfulness.

From an institutional theory perspective, the second quality is especially interesting and sheds further light on the depth of awareness cultivated through the practice and how it may facilitate disembedding. The second quality refers to awareness of the impermanent nature of experiences and to the temporal quality of all phenomena. Anālayo (2014) explains that the comprehension of this quality marks the distinction between the mere establishment of mindfulness and the full development thereof. Seeing the arising and passing away of all phenomena uncovers their impermanent nature and leads to a growing degree of *disenchantment*, which in turn reduces identification with your own experiences of reality. Anālayo (2014) explains that if something is impermanent, it cannot produce lasting satisfaction, and thus does not qualify to be seen as “I”, “mine” or “my self”. In Anālayo’s (2014) further explanation of this quality, it is clear how it enables disembedding: “sustained contemplation of impermanence leads to a shift in one’s normal way of experiencing reality, which hitherto tacitly assumed the temporal stability of the perceiver and the perceived objects. Once both are experienced as changing processes, all notions of stable existence and substantiality vanish, thereby radically reshaping one’s paradigm of experience” (Anālayo, 2014: 105). The cultivation of mindfulness can thus facilitate a detachment and disidentification from your own experience, considered key features for institutional disembedding (Ruebottom & Auster, 2018).

The third quality, bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness, sheds further light on how disidentification can be deepened, and underlines the importance of just noting that there is a body, feelings, mind or mind-objects present without getting caught up in thoughts or associations (Anālayo, 2014). This calls for a non-reactive and objective approach to all phenomena, and the recommendation is to simply note or label experiences and so facilitate disidentification (Anālayo, 2014). This third quality is also commonly displayed in current definitions of mindfulness with words such as receptive (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007), open (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997), or non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

When all of the previous qualities are established, the fourth quality of independence and “not clinging to anything in the world” arises. These four qualities of mindfulness can be seen as a sequential progression of a deepening practice. Qiu and Rooney (2017) also highlight the importance of noting there is a sequential process to the deepening of the practice of mindfulness. This is, further, one of the key arguments as to why longer mindfulness interventions, as opposed to short experimental inductions, give a more representative picture of the power of the practice.

Development of propositions: Mindfulness and institutional awareness

As stated, the open awareness that mindfulness creates can be directed both inwards and outwards. Only when both are present can awareness be labeled mindful. For an individual who has not cultivated this form of awareness, one or both directions may be lacking. I now present a typology that draws on the notion of either a lack or presence of internal and external awareness. I follow Dane (2011) in stating that both internal and external awareness can range from narrow to wide, and propose that differences here are likely to produce distinct institutional responses. Although the key is to understand the rise of institutional awareness, the typology also sheds light on the bordering conditions, how the differing levels of internal and external awareness may function as a springboard for different types of institutional response, or alternatively foster an adherence to the status quo. The theorized typology is presented in Figure 1.

Internal awareness	Wide	Boutique movement	Breaking the taken-for-granted
	Narrow	Replication of status quo	Bandwagon effect or Bricolage
		Narrow	Wide
		External awareness	

Figure 1. Theorized model

In presenting the typology and derived propositions, I first discuss the state produced when both internal and external awareness are narrow. I have termed this state “replication of the status quo”. Next, the state where internal awareness is wide but external awareness narrow, is termed “boutique movement”. Third, “bandwagon effect or bricolage” describes the state where internal awareness is narrow but external awareness wide. Last, I discuss the state of mindfulness, that is to say when both external and internal awareness are wide, termed “breaking the taken for granted”. It is important to note that this separation into the four categories presented in Figure 1 is an analytical distinction drawn to help advance our

conceptual understanding. The cultivation of mindfulness allows us to attain the necessary width of both internal and external awareness, as well as the consecutive qualities that develop with a deepening of the practice.

Replication of the status quo

A narrow internal awareness coupled with a narrow external awareness surfaces when individuals are unaware of their own cognitive and emotional states. In addition, they are not well acquainted with the nuances of the external reality and how it shapes and triggers their behavior. This state of being, from an institutional theory perspective, governs most of our conduct and sustains the “taken-for-granted” nature of everyday reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Berger and Luckmann (1967) further posit that “institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 54), which implies the “taken for granted” reality is socially constructed and, as such, only real to the individuals that participate therein. Institutionalized ways of doing things control human conduct, taking it in one direction as opposed to any other theoretically possible. Interestingly, the familiar nature of the institution creates a preference towards it, as the familiar creates a sense of security (Huberman, 2001). When the institutionalized way of doing things becomes internalized, preferences and beliefs are attached to that particular way (Kostova, 1999), which makes it even harder to shift.

If the taken-for-granted were questioned, the rigidity of the span of awareness would likely lead either to some form of denial of the situation or to outright dismissal. At an emotional level, this may take the form of repression of unwanted emotions, as in the case reported by Creed et al. (2010), where gay ministers repressed their own sexual preferences due to the shame it produced.

Proposition 1: A narrow internal awareness coupled with a narrow external awareness is likely to reproduce the status quo by preventing a rise of institutional awareness

Boutique movement

In this category, I discuss the state where internal awareness is wide, whereas external awareness is narrow. In terms of institutional change, this category is arguably where most failed attempts would land, as there is a deep understanding of the internal combined with a limited understanding of the influences of the external environment. Here, individuals who

feel they do not fit in, but are unable to put their finger on why they feel this way, would land. If a person in this state is able to create their own space, and in a sense separate themselves from the external, it is here we could expect to see unique individual expressions. From an institutional change perspective, this is where unique boutique style movements could arise, and also where institutional change that has been unintentionally triggered is most likely to be found (Battilana et al., 2009). One example of an institutional change that could fit this category was the rise of the active money management practices in the mutual fund industry (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007). Lounsbury and Crumley (2007) describe how the guiding principles of the industry were on the preservation of wealth and conservative investment strategies, but a few individuals started experimenting with active money management. For 15 years, this experimentation was considered unproblematic, after which it triggered a political conflict in the industry and later shifted the guiding principle of the whole industry. This example well illustrates how a wide internal awareness coupled with a more limited external awareness may lead to unintentional institutional change, as the primary actors never intended to shift or change the institutional blueprint of the industry. Rather, the change was a function of them following their own internal inclinations, which later caused a shift in the entire way the field operated.

Institutional change that sprouts in this manner is likely to grow more organically without purposeful social movements and the mobilization of people. Thus, without necessarily triggering reflexivity, others are drawn to these causes which speak to and reflect the actors' internal state.

Proposition 2: A wide internal awareness coupled with a narrow external awareness can give rise to non-intentional institutional change without triggering institutional awareness.

Bandwagon effect or bricolage

The bandwagon or bricolage effect can surface when narrow internal awareness is coupled with wide external awareness. This manifests as individuals being able to “read” the environment. They may continuously expand their understanding of it, seeking inspiration and ideas outside themselves, reading the latest management books, following the actions of other persons and players in the market. This category entails a certain degree of choice and freedom, the freedom to choose from available alternatives. It is here we are most likely to see bandwagon and trend following behavior, where ideas, products or practices are adopted due to perceived pull produced by the number of organizations that have already adopted (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993).

When external awareness is wide and internal awareness narrow, individuals are more likely to be influenced by social and symbolic pressures from the institutional setting within which they operate (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Selznick, 1949). In this state, the focus is likely to be on benchmarking, following trends, and implementing best practices. Although benchmarking may increase firm performance, it is unlikely to help an individual or organization upset the status quo, as it is by definition a form of mimicry, where the behavior and practices of the current best players in the field are identified and adopted.

In management research, attention is often directed to the external environment. For example, in decision-making, the focus has been trained on how to enhance organizations' scanning and information procession functions (e.g., Sutcliffe, 1994; Thomas et al., 1993). In a similar manner, the innovation literature encourages organizations to expand their external search extent, but notes that most organizations search too little and too close by (Benner & Tushman, 2002; Nerkar & Paruchuri, 2005). It is important to note that these kinds of advocacy may also lead to a shift in consciousness, if the search becomes so distant that it reaches the periphery of or even extends beyond the boundaries of the field within which the organization operates. In such cases, the search may contribute to a collision with and incorporation of a conflicting logic. The result would be an institutional bricolage (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011; Christiansen & Lounsbury, 2013), where concepts that are not only geographically but also conceptually distant, are mixed and matched. Institutional bricolage can thus be seen as the creation of something new through the assembly of readily available elements (Christiansen & Lounsbury, 2013). In line with these arguments, I advance the following two propositions:

Proposition 3a: A narrow internal awareness coupled with a wide external awareness is likely produce a felt sense of freedom, where individuals can choose from available institutionally accepted ways of acting.

Proposition 3b: If the external awareness is so wide that it extends beyond the boundary of the field within which the actor is operating, consciousness can be shifted though the merging of conflicting logics.

Breaking the taken-for-granted

In this category, wide internal awareness is coupled with wide external awareness. Here, individuals have a deep embodied awareness and understanding of their own emotional and cognitive states, of the environment within which they are embedded, and of the interaction

of these two. It is where we are most likely to find endogenously triggered institutional awareness. Whereas exogenously triggered reflexivity occurs through contradiction (Seo & Creed, 2002) or jolts (Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), mindfulness triggers reflexivity endogenously through facilitating contact with the more subtle inner experiences. One of the key practices in cultivating mindful awareness is becoming aware of your own emotions and thoughts, by labeling, locating and feeling them in your own body.

Brown et al. (2007) explain, “certain phenomena remain hidden from our conscious awareness because they represent threats to the self-concept or to aspects of the self that are ego-invested” (Brown et al., 2007: 213). The openness to and awareness of experience that is produced through mindfulness practice may thus facilitate contact with uncomfortable experiences, and so moderate the defensive reactions produced by such contact (Brown et al., 2007). In the case of the gay ministers suppressing their sexual orientation due to the shame produced, mindfulness might have brought awareness of the rising emotion and the pain created by the fear of otherness and exclusion. Furthermore, the practice of mindfulness produces a personal space to embrace the experience with kindness and compassion directed towards your own suffering. The practice also helps in disidentifying from emotional and cognitive experience, by recognizing their transient nature (Anālayo, 2014). This kind of practice may have revealed to the ministers the humanness of their experience, and thus reduced the time expended on inner conflict and shame, sparking the will to reach out to others experiencing the same kind of struggle.

Through enabling contact with and disembedding from emotions and thoughts that may be in contradiction with the institutionalized acceptable way of being, mindfulness can manifest institutional awareness. I thus propose:

Proposition 4: A wide internal awareness coupled with wide external awareness enhances the possibility of creating institutional agency through supporting a reflexive shift in consciousness.

Discussion and conclusions

This article sheds light on what Seo and Creed (2002) refer to as a “reflexive shift in consciousness”, arguably a key foundational mechanism for the rise of agency in institutional theory. I argue here that in addition to previously identified exogenous triggers, this reflexive shift can also be endogenously triggered through contemplative practices such as mindfulness.

In connecting contemplative practices and reflexivity, I draw on research examining the role cognitive and emotional factors play in helping or hindering agency. I develop a typology to depict conditions that need to be met to enable a reflexive shift in consciousness to emerge, and argue for how the varying levels of mindfulness in the form of internal and external awareness may manifest as distinct responses to the institutional environment.

This article delivers several theoretical implications worthy of consideration. To begin with, by identifying endogenously triggered institutional awareness, it offers a counterpoint to a number of claims made in institutional theory, where agency is most often seen as triggered by some form of external involvement (Fligstein, 1991; Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003). I also discuss how the varying levels of mindfulness, in the form of differing degrees of internal and external awareness, may give rise to distinct types of institutional change. I argue that unintentional institutional change is most likely to spring from a situation where wide internal awareness is coupled with narrow external awareness. Furthermore, I suggest narrow internal awareness coupled with wide external awareness may give rise institutional change in the form of bricolage incorporating elements of different institutional logics.

Having identified how the varying levels of mindfulness are likely to give rise to distinct responses to the institutional environment in which an actor is embedded, the question of how an actor can move between the identified quadrants arises. As mindfulness is viewed as a trainable quality (Purser & Milillo, 2015), it is be possible to cultivate mindfulness through practice, and thus increase the possibility of endogenously triggered institutional awareness.

Directions for future research

The ideas presented in this article offer a number of future research avenues. First, a central question is how a reflexive shift in consciousness, and thus a rise in institutional awareness, can be captured empirically. As suggested by Lawrence et al. (2013), historical accounts in the form of archival data and retrospective interviews are unlikely to capture such a shift. Real-time participant observations and ethnographic data are more likely solutions. For example, Raviola and Norbäck (2013) adopted an ethnographical approach when studying the role of technology and meaning in the institutional work undertaken at an Italian business newspaper.

Another way possibly to capture the shift is through a specific interview technique known as the elicitation interview method (Petitmengin et al., 2013), whose purpose is to capture the lived experiences of the respondents by helping them “leave the level of representation and

beliefs to become aware of the way he really carries out a given cognitive process, and describe it with precision” (Petitmengin et al., 2013: 656). Varela (1996) argues this method is essential for us to progress in our understanding of the human mind. Petitmengin et al. (2013) further explain that when respondents “are asked to describe their cognitive process, the natural tendency is to slip from description of the actual experience toward the verbalization of justifications, beliefs, explanations, and generalizations about the experience” (Petitmengin et al., 2013: 6). The key elements of this interview technique are first to have the respondent recall a specific moment in time, thereafter helping them evoke that particular experience (Petitmengin, 2006), and finally, the respondent should be assisted in redirecting their focus from what took place to how it happened (for a more detailed description, see Petitmengin et al., 2013).

To build on the typology presented in this article, researchers could, when examining the lived experiences of the participants, be it through ethnographical accounts or with the help of elicitation interviews, pay particular attention to how the respondents describe their attentional state. In doing so, researchers might be able to empirically unpack the importance of internal and external awareness in enabling the different kinds of institutional change discussed in this article.

Furthermore, to understand the rise of institutional awareness, it is essential to examine the cases of institutional change at the micro level. As Felin and Hesterly (2007) pointed out, the level of analysis we choose for our studies is a decision not to be taken lightly, as the chosen level assumes homogeneity at lower levels. If the analysis is conducted at the field level, homogeneity is assumed at the organizational and individual levels. Similarly, if the analysis is at the organizational level, homogeneity is assumed at the individual level. That being said, it is important to understand how phenomena at different levels of analysis affect each other. Future research could pay particular attention to how mindfulness at different levels of the organization affects institutional awareness.

This article has looked to further our conceptual understanding of endogenously triggered institutional awareness. More empirical research is, however, required to help us advance our understanding of the cognitive and emotional dynamics of the examined reflexive shift in consciousness.

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SHAPING THE FUTURE: MINDFULNESS AND HOW IT SUPPORTS CHANGE-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR

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Unpublished essay

Abstract

The interest in mindfulness, defined as “receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience” (Brown & Ryan, 2003), is continuously attracting more attention both among scholars and practitioners. Recently, concerns have been raised regarding the relationship between mindfulness and complacency in the workplace. Drawing on self-determination theory, this article sheds both theoretical and empirical light on this concern by examining the relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior. This study is based on cross-sectional questionnaire data collected in the R&D department of a multinational software corporation. The findings show that mindfulness is positively related to both opportunity recognition and proactive behavior through the mediated effect of autonomous choice.

Key words: mindfulness; change-oriented behavior; autonomous choice; opportunity recognition; proactivity; self-determination theory

Introduction

The promotion and application of mindfulness practices in the workplace has exploded during the past few years (Kudesia, 2019). Alongside this explosion of interest, questions and concerns regarding the impact of this practice in the workplace have also surfaced. One key concern regards the relationship between mindfulness and action, or rather non-action. This stems from the notion of mindfulness having a non-judgmental component, which has been feared to create complacency in the workplace (e.g., Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015). This is, however, a misunderstanding of the practice, as non-judgement in this context refers

to how a person may skillfully relate to their own experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). A non-judgmental attitude or attitudes such as self-kindness are qualities that can facilitate contact with uncomfortable experiences. Ryan (2005) explains that meeting your own experiences with such qualities may diminish impulsive or defensive reactions, thus promoting insight into the self, others and the human condition (Brown et al., 2007). Thus, a non-judgmental attitude does not refer to complying with potentially disharmonious external conditions; rather, it enables turning towards and experiencing the present circumstances exactly as they are. To date there have, however, not been any attempts to investigate the relationship between mindfulness and action. The purpose of this article is thus to theoretically and empirically examine the extent to which mindfulness is related to change-oriented behavior in the form of proactive behavior and opportunity recognition in the workplace.

Research on the secular form of mindfulness practice in the West, which stems from clinical work by Jon Kabat-Zinn, mainly explores the physical, mental and emotional health-related benefits of the practice (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan & Creswell (2007); Good et al., 2016). Organizational researchers have also started exploring mindfulness effects on organizational variables such as leadership (Boyatzis, 2015; Eisenbeiss & Knippenberg, 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Dane & Brummel, 2014), decision-making (Karellaia & Reb, 2015; Kudesia, 2019), turnover intention (Dane & Brummel, 2017), and work engagement (Leroy et al., 2013) (for a recent review see Good et al., 2016).

Although this emergent research on mindfulness in organizations is helping us shed much needed light on the functioning of mindfulness in the workplace, we still know little about the underlying mechanisms (Good et al., 2006). We know even less about the relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior. Drawing on self-determination theory, this article examines the relationship between mindfulness, proactive behavior, and opportunity recognition. The study contributes to the growing field of mindfulness research by addressing the concern regarding the relationship between mindfulness and complacency, and shows there is a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior in the form of proactivity and opportunity recognition. Furthermore, this study shows that these relationships are fully mediated by autonomous choice, suggesting it is the increase in intrinsically aligned choices that enables both proactive behavior and opportunity recognition.

Mindfulness and change-oriented behavior

The concerns regarding the relationship between mindfulness and complacency (e.g., Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015) often stem from the non-judgmental component of mindfulness practice. Jon Kabat-Zinn's (2013) well-known definition of mindfulness is "paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). A common misunderstanding is that non-judgement here refers to external circumstances or events, when in fact it refers to one's own experience (Dreyfus, 2011). Brown et al. (2007) further explain that "certain phenomena remain hidden from our conscious awareness because they represent threats to the self-concept or to aspects of the self that are ego-invested" (Brown et al. 2007: 213). A non-judgmental attitude, acceptance, self-kindness or self-compassion are qualities that can facilitate contact with an uncomfortable experience. This may then diminish impulsive or defensive reactions (Ryan, 2005), which is seen as key for developing deeper self-knowledge and understanding others (Brown et al., 2007).

Self-determination theory and autonomous choice

Self-determination theory is instrumental in helping us understand how mindfulness is related to autonomous choice, as the theory is dedicated to understanding where action stem from. According to self-determination theory, individual expression of the self will range from a core, integrated self to a highly fragmented, passive, reactive, and alienated self (Ryan & Deci, 2002). When, what the authors refer to as, the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are fulfilled, actions are more likely to stem from the core, integrated self rather than from the fragmented self. Action that stem from the core self, is authentic and in line with the individual's own being (Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2017). However, if the self is fragmented and the basic psychological needs are not fulfilled, action will be directed towards filling the core needs with "needs substitutes" that can provide a sense of self-worth. Action will then arise from desires and strivings (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser & Deci, 1996). Actions that arise from the fragmented self will thus alter the reason for which the person initiates the action, and increase the likelihood that it stems from ego-involvement rather than task-involvement (Ryan, 1982). When a person becomes ego-involved, they will feel the need to behave in a certain way and their sense of self-worth becomes dependent on the performance of the initiative. Whereas, in task-involvement, people are more focused on the task itself without feeling that their sense of self-worth is tied to their initiative.

One of the core assumptions underlying self-determination theory is that human beings innately strive to develop an integrated core self (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Deci & Grolnick, 1995). The authors refer to this innate striving as an organismic integration process (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory, however, posits that this integrative tendency cannot be taken for granted and there are factors that help and hinder the process. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007) showed that mindfulness supports this integrative process and, over the years, mindfulness has become viewed as a foundational enabler of the integrative process (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

A person's sense of autonomy and autonomous choice has, therefore, often been used to capture where action stem from. Choices and actions are seen as autonomous when they are congruent with the person's authentic interests and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989), whereas actions are seen as being controlled when they are driven by an internal or external pressure to act, such as external demands or internal ego involvement in a task (Ryan, 1982). Through helping people free themselves from internal and external controlling forces, mindfulness practices have been shown to support a feeling of autonomy (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007), and engage in more autonomous behavior (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness facilitates autonomous choice through its more open and less defensive processing style (Ryan & Rigby, 2015). While people may normally avoid or suppress perceived negative experiences Weinstein, Brown and Ryan, (2009) detected that mindfulness facilitates an openness to both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, which will help the individual act in accordance with the core authentic self. In line with previous research, I thus expect mindfulness to be positively related to autonomous choice:

H1. Mindfulness is positively related to autonomous choice.

Opportunity recognition and mindfulness

To be able to create new things, an opportunity first has to be recognized. The identification and exploitation of new opportunities is a foundational construct, both in the strategic management (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Zahra & Dess, 2001) and entrepreneurship literatures (Kirzner, 1979; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Venkataraman, 1997). Mindfulness can be expected to have a direct effect on opportunity recognition through increasing the scope of attention. Mindfulness alters an individual's internal and external attention span from narrow to wide (Dane, 2011). Internal attention refers to the ability to be aware of different phenomena in your own body and mind that manifest as thought processes, reactions and affective states. Brown et al. (2007) thus note that people in a mindful state are more attentive towards their

own affective states. External attention, on the other hand, refers to being aware of phenomena occurring in your own environment. Studies have found that people, when in a mindful state, become aware of more stimuli in their environment (Slagter et al., 2007).

The kind of attention alluded to in mindfulness research is often referred to as bare attention (Weick & Putnam, 2006), a form that is non-conceptual, a state of attention in between noticing a certain stimulus and your response to it. Brown et al. (2007) specify the process from stimuli to reaction in four different steps. First, when a stimulus is strong enough, our mind turns towards it. Second, the mind classifies the stimulus as good, bad or neutral for the self. Third, all past experiences are drawn on to place the stimulus in a context, and fourth, existing cognitive schemas are applied. Bargh and Chartrand (1999) point out that the problem with this process is previous conceptions of ideas, concepts, labels and judgments are often automatically placed on everything we encounter. The result is that familiar situations are not questioned; rather, the familiarity is strengthened with every consecutive stimulus reacted to in the same way. Consequently, when something new or different arises, our default response is applied; depending on the circumstances, that will either be to reject or move towards the stimulus (Grabovac, Lau & Willett, 2011). Alternatively, when something neutral arises, we devote no attention to it (ibid.).

Mindfulness is important as it prolongs the gap between stimulus and response, and thus helps the person respond in a conscious way rather than automatically out of habit. Siegel (2007) refers to mindfulness as a key interruption mechanism. It develops response flexibility, a meta-cognitive awareness that allows the individual to pause before taking action. Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) further state that mindfulness weakens the tendency to simplify events into familiar events.

In entrepreneurial research, it has been argued that entrepreneurs as alert individuals may have more accurate mental models or schemas, and that understanding the content and dynamics thereof can help researchers distinguish an entrepreneur from a non-entrepreneur (Gaglio & Katz, 2001). The research on mindfulness asks us to expand this understanding to examine the pre-schematic states and individuals' ability to be aware of their own schemas, as well as how and when they are triggered. Mindfulness may thus enable opportunity recognition through 1) strengthening the pre-schematic awareness to diminish habitual interpretation of the environment, and 2) enabling a meta-cognitive awareness of the schemas triggered to prevent habitual reactions. Mindfulness is thus likely to provide response flexibility, so rather than reacting habitually to a stimulus, the mindful individual is able to interrupt the habitual process and interpret the situation more accurately.

Thus, mindful individuals can be argued to notice opportunities in their environment more easily due to the response flexibility enabled by their wider scope of awareness, and I therefore present the following hypothesis:

H2. Mindfulness is positively related to opportunity recognition

Proactive behavior and mindfulness

Proactivity is defined as “*self-initiated and future oriented action that aims to change and improve the situation or oneself*” (Parker et al., 2006:636). Ryan and Deci (2017) state that proactivity is considered one of the basic underlying assumptions of self-determination theory. The authors explain that when actions stem from the core, integrated self, proactivity will occur naturally as the actions are then intrinsically motivated and in line with the person’s core values and beliefs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Dimaggio (1988), who studied larger actor led institutional changes and coined the term institutional entrepreneurship, also highlighted the importance of personal value alignment in triggering such action. His famous quote states that “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to *realize interests they value highly*” (Dimaggio, 1988:14, italics added).

In their conceptual work on proactivity at work, Grant & Ashford (2008) draw our attention to a link between mindfulness and proactivity. In their model, they depict proactivity as a three phase process – anticipation, planning, and action. The authors help the reader understand that mindfulness might be particularly beneficial in the first phase of the process, where it may help individuals anticipate the effects of their actions on future events, by visualizing the future event and bringing it to the present experience (Grant & Ashford, 2008). In this way, the possible future outcome becomes a presently lived experience. This touches on a common misunderstanding regarding mindfulness, namely that mindfulness can temporally only be located in the present moment, and that it cannot be projected into the past or the future. Mindfulness can in fact be projected to past, present and future, as the present-moment attention alluded to in mindfulness refers to the experience, not the temporality of the event. Thus, both past and future events can be brought into the present-moment awareness to examine the impact it has on your experience (Bodhi, 2011). Kang & Whittingham thus clarify that mindfulness “includes both retrospective memory of the past and prospective memory of the present and future” (Kang & Whittingham, 2010, p. 165). Bringing past and future events into the present-moment experience can thus help individuals get a felt-sense of which actions

are most in line with their own core values and beliefs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). I thus present the following hypothesis:

H3. Mindfulness is positively related to proactivity

Autonomous choice as a mediator

In the context of established firms, corporate entrepreneurs are referred to as those who do not follow the status quo set by their co-workers, but instead envision taking the firm in a new direction (Kuratko & Goldsby, 2004). One of the key enabling factors is thus the ability to withstand and see beyond current operational modes. Garud and Karnøe (2000) argued that the majority of activity is path-dependent as individuals are embedded in their environments, which are governed by structural, relational and cognitive taken-for-granted norms. This tendency may be expected to be even stronger within firms, and the ability to take autonomous action may thus be seen as instrumental for corporate change-oriented behavior.

Autonomous choice is defined as choices that are congruent with a person's authentic interests and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989), compared to controlled choices, which are driven by an internal or external pressure to act, such as external demands or internal ego involvement (Ryan, 1982). Autonomous choice may thus act as a key interfering variable, enabling the individual to withstand the ever-present pressure to conform, and thus trigger both opportunity recognition and proactive behavior in organizations. Grant and Ashford (2008) also put forward autonomy as a key antecedent for proactivity. I thus hypothesize the following:

H4a. Autonomous choice mediates the relationship between mindfulness and opportunity recognition.

H4b. Autonomous choice mediates the relationship between mindfulness and proactivity.

Research design and data collection

Research design

This study relies on cross-sectional questionnaire data collected from the R&D unit of a Northern European multinational software corporation in November, 2017. The questionnaire was sent out to the whole R&D department, comprising 280 persons; 128

questionnaires were completed, yielding a response rate of 46 per cent. Because of the industry of the company, the sample was male dominated, 87 per cent of the respondents and due to the location of the company 79 per cent of the respondents were northern European. More than half of the sample had a Master's degree (52%), followed by a Bachelor's degree (36%), and a PhD (5%); the remaining 7 per cent had a high school or upper secondary school certificate. Regarding tenure, 45 per cent of the sample had worked up to ten years for the company, and the remaining 55 per cent had spent more than ten years there.

Operationalization, dependent variables

Proactive behavior. To measure proactive behavior, I employed Bateman and Crant's (1993) 17-item scale. The scale includes items such as "I tend to let others take the initiative to start new projects", "Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change", and "Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality". The response scale ranged from 0 = "never" to 6 = "every day". Cronbach's alpha was 0.907.

Opportunity recognition. Opportunity recognition was measured using Ma, Huang and Shenkar's (2011) 3-item scale. Ma, Huang and Shenkar (2011) created this scale by combining items from Ozgen and Baron (2007) and Singh et al. (1999). The scale captures both the ability to recognize opportunities and the alertness to opportunities when they appear to exist. The scale included questions such as "While going about day-to-day activities, I see potential new ideas (e.g., on new products, new markets, and new ways of organizing our work) all around me" and "I have a special alertness or sensitivity toward new opportunities (e.g., about new products, new markets, and new ways of organizing our work)." The questions were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". Cronbach's alpha was 0.814.

Operationalization, independent variable

Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS). In addition to being a state that can be practiced through mindfulness meditation, mindfulness is also seen as a dispositional characteristic and individuals are seen to naturally display different levels of mindfulness. This study thus uses the short form (Van Dam et al., 2010) of the Mindfulness Awareness and Attention Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) to measure individual-level trait mindfulness. MAAS is the most widely used scale to measure trait mindfulness. The question asked the respondents to reflect on their everyday experiences and evaluate how

frequently they have each experience. The scale uses questions such as “It seems I am ‘running on automatic’, without much awareness of what I’m doing”, “I rush through activities without being really attentive to them”, and “I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing”. The respondents answered these questions on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = “almost always” to 6 = “almost never”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.858.

Operationalization, mediating variable

Autonomous choice. To assess autonomous choice, I employed Chen et al.’s (2015) 8-item scale. This scale captures both needs satisfaction and needs frustration and has, thus, been viewed to more accurately capture the core needs in different cultural contexts (Chen et al., 2015). The scale includes questions such as “I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake”, “I feel that my decisions reflect what I really want”, and “Most of the things I do feel like I have to”. The questions were answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = “completely untrue” to 5 = “completely true”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.856.

Control variables. I controlled for tenure in the corporation and education as both of these may be related to both a person’s readiness to engage in proactive behavior and how adept the person is at recognizing opportunities.

Analysis and results

Data analysis applied linear regression. The correlation matrix of the variables in the study indicates that the analysis does not suffer from multi-collinearity, since all correlations in the model were below 0.68, and Kline (2005) suggests indications of substantial multi-collinearity are correlations above 0.85. The correlation matrix and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mean	3.45	4.90	5.01	4.84	13.77	3.56
s.d.	0.79	0.78	0.94	0.72	10.32	0.72
Opportunity Recognition						
Proactive behavior	0.68**					
Autonomous Choice	0.42**	0.39**				
Mindfulness	0.18*	0.22*	0.43**			
Tenure	0.05	-0.06	0.01	0.03		
Education	0.13	0.22*	0.01	-0.08	-0.29**	

All two-tailed tests. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations

Furthermore, all the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were low, ranging between 1.10 and 1.24 in the regression presented in Table 3. The full models were highly significant ($F = 7.84$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.20$ and $F = 6.55$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.21$).

To test the hypothesized mediational model, I first tested the direct relationship (hypotheses 1, 2 & 3) between mindfulness and the three outcome variables: autonomous choice, opportunity recognition, and proactivity. As shown in Table 2, the results revealed there is a positive and significant relationship between mindfulness and autonomous choice ($B = 0.58$, $p < .001$), and Hypothesis 1 is thus supported. I also found a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and opportunity recognition ($B = 0.28$, $p < .001$), and mindfulness and proactivity ($B = 0.22$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 are also supported.

	Autonomous Choice	Proactive behavior	Opportunity Recognition
Constant	2.00**	2.67***	1.63*
Tenure	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education	0.06	0.26**	0.19
Mindfulness	0.58***	0.28**	0.22*
F	9.37***	4.91**	2.76*
R	0.43	0.33	0.25
R ²	0.18	0.11	0.06

All two-tailed tests. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2. The effect of Mindfulness on autonomous choice, proactive behavior, and opportunity recognition

I then tested the possible mediating effect of autonomous choice on opportunity recognition and proactivity by first introducing it as a second independent variable to the two regressions. In line with the requirements for a mediating effect, the effect of mindfulness on opportunity recognition and proactivity was completely absorbed by the autonomous choice variable. This can be seen in Table 3.

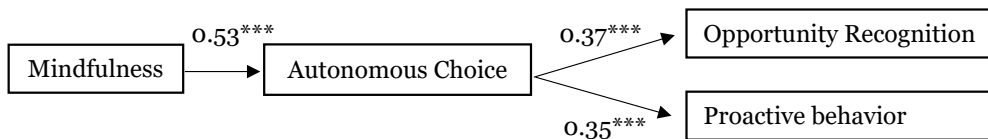
	Proactive behavior		Opportunity recognition	
Constant	2.67***	2.01***	1.63*	0.95
Tenure	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Education	0.26**	0.24**	0.19	0.17
Mindfulness	0.28**	0.11	0.22*	0.02
Autonomous Choice		0.29***		0.35***
F	4.91**	7.84***	2.76*	6.55***
R	0.33	0.45	0.25	0.46
R ²	0.11	0.20	0.06	0.21

All two-tailed tests. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Full models: Dependent variable proactive behavior and opportunity recognition

Finally, I performed a Sobel's test to confirm the mediational effect of autonomous choice. The Sobel's test value for opportunity recognition was 0.37 ($p < 0.001$) and for proactivity was 0.35 ($p < 0.001$). As depicted in Figure 1, the results thus show that autonomous choice mediates the relationship between i) mindfulness and opportunity recognition, and ii) mindfulness and proactivity.

Figure 1: The mediating effect of autonomous choice on opportunity recognition and proactive behavior, Sobel's test statistics



Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this article was to examine the relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior in established firms. More specifically, I examined the relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior in the form of opportunity recognition and

proactivity, using autonomous choice as a mediating variable. This article addresses in three important ways the concern in the mindfulness literature regarding the relationship between mindfulness and complacency (Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015). First, I shed light on a common misunderstanding of what non-judgement means in the practice of mindfulness, namely that it refers to allowing your own experience of a situation to be exactly as it is, not a non-judgement or in-action when it comes to the situation itself (Dreyfus, 2011). Attitudes such as non-judgement help people get in touch with uncomfortable feelings that might otherwise be rejected or suppressed, especially if they represent threats to sense of self (Brown et al., 2007). Non-judgement can thus be seen as integral to integrating new experiences (Ryan, 2005). When integrated, these experiences help the person build an integrated core self, and actions that stem from it are in line with the person's values and beliefs (Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2017).

Second, this article shows there is a positive significant relationship between mindfulness and change-oriented behavior, measured here as proactivity and opportunity recognition. With these findings, this article enters the sometimes heated discussions on the effects of mindfulness in the workplace (Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015). Numerous authors have raised the concern of mindfulness leading to complacency and conforming to the status quo (Purser & Loy, 2013; Purser & Milillio, 2015; Brendel, 2015), without any empirical material to back up their claims. This study shows that mindfulness has completely the opposite effects. Namely, there is a positive relationship between mindfulness and activity rather than passivity. While the question of mindfulness being able to trigger larger institutional changes that would lead to more wholesome and ethical approaches to business and organizational life (Purser & Loy, 2013) still remains unanswered, this study at least shows that at the individual level, change is more likely to occur than is conformity to the status quo.

With these findings, this study also helps break new ground in the field of mindfulness in organizations, as it moves away from examining the well-being effects of mindfulness practice and towards studying other behavioral variables. This specific focus on change-oriented behavior also opens up completely new avenues for mindfulness research, and begs the question of what kind of role mindfulness could play in the entrepreneurial or innovation context. Given the findings of this study, there is reason to expect a positive relationship between mindfulness and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition (Gaglio & Katz, 2001; Hills & Sharder, 1998) and perhaps entrepreneurial alertness (Gaglio & Katz, 2001; Kirzner, 1979).

Third, and perhaps most interestingly, this study shows that the relationship between mindfulness and the change-oriented variables opportunity recognition and proactivity is fully

mediated by autonomous choice. This finding speaks to the underlying quality of the changes initiated, and shows that they are deeply rooted in the person's own authentic interests and values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Cornell, 1989). In their thought-provoking article "Beyond McMindfulness", Purser and Loy (2013) write "Mindfulness training has wide appeal because it has become a trendy method for subduing employee unrest, promoting a tacit acceptance of the status quo, and as an instrumental tool for keeping attention focused on institutional goals." The findings in this study undermine the validity of this statement, as they show that mindfulness is more likely to support people to get in touch with their own authentic interests, and it is from this space that change is initiated.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

The most notable limitation of this study is its cross-sectional and single-source research design, which raises questions regarding causality and common method variance. The relationship between mindfulness and autonomous choice seems to be quite clear, as mindfulness can theoretically be argued to be an antecedent for autonomous choice, and previous studies have also confirmed this relationship (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Brown & Ryan, 2003). However, an intervention design would be needed to confirm the causal relationship between mindfulness, opportunity recognition, and proactive behavior, and whether mindfulness training can increase these change-oriented behaviors. That being said, previous research has identified autonomy as an antecedent to proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008), which would support the relationships put forward in this article. Having an objective measure of change-oriented behavior, such as patents registered or projects initiated, would also enable future studies to expand beyond single-source respondent data. With regard to common method variance, the VIF-values of the studies suggest the model does not suffer from collinearity. However, future studies may also address this through collecting data at different time points or applying an intervention design.

Although further research is needed to shed more light on the relationships between the variables put forward in this article, it does not diminish the existence of strong positive relationships between mindfulness, autonomous choice, proactive behavior, and opportunity recognition. Intervention research would further reveal whether these change-oriented behaviors can be developed with the practice of mindfulness or. Such a study may also reveal whether mindful individuals are by nature more proactive, or proactive individuals are by nature more mindful. In designing future studies, it is also important to consider whether a traditional 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training would be enough to develop these qualities, or whether the engagement would have to be longer. Another

alternative to intervention research would be to sample long-term meditators and use lifetime meditation hours as the independent variable, a sampling method that is more widely used when investigating the effects of meditation in the field of neuroscience (e. g. Grant et al. Courtemanche, 2010; Lutz et al., 2004).

Future studies may also want to explore a wider range of change-oriented behaviors such as voicing, taking charge, personal initiative, feedback seeking, and issue selling (Parker & Collins, 2010). Having established a connection to change-oriented behavior, future research may find it fruitful to explore further links to the entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and institutional entrepreneurship literatures. In the entrepreneurship literature, research on mindfulness may shed new light on the cognitive underpinnings of the opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial alertness discussions. The extent to which entrepreneurs are higher in trait mindfulness than non-entrepreneurial individuals would be an interesting research question to explore. Another interesting issue is the relationship between mindfulness and social entrepreneurship. This article shows there is a strong positive relationship in aligning action with your own authentic interests, and previous studies have shown mindfulness is positively related to ethical decision-making (Lampe & Engleman-Lampe, 2012; Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010; Moberg & Seabright, 2000). This raises an interesting question that merits further research on whether mindful entrepreneurs are more likely to engage in social entrepreneurship.

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APPENDIX 3 ESSAY 3**MINDFULNESS AS A PERSONAL RESOURCE:****A RANDOMIZED MINDFULNESS INTERVENTION FOR MANAGERS**

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Abstract

This randomized controlled field study explores mindfulness as a personal resource for middle managers. Drawing on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, we anticipate mindfulness training as a resource for managers, and predict it corresponding with lower stress and burnout, and higher engagement. Reflecting this conception, we also expect mindfulness training to result in an increased ability to detach from work outside working hours. We tested these hypotheses with 130 middle managers, drawn from four large organizations in Northern Europe, who were randomly assigned to an abbreviated 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training or to a wait-list control. Data were collected before and after the intervention. Consistent with the hypotheses, results showed that mindfulness training correlated with lower stress and burnout, and increased detachment, while the relationship between mindfulness training and engagement was marginally significant. This study contributes to both JD-R and mindfulness at work literature by demonstrating the role mindfulness training can play in enhancing managers' personal resources.

Introduction

The large majority of managers work between senior executives and front-line employees, making them a vital connection between organizational strategy and daily operations (Floyd

& Wooldridge, 2000). As the conduit between organizational levels, the role expectations of middle managers are numerous, covering everything from innovation and organizational learning (Nonaka, 1994), to strategy implementation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004), and strategy-making processes (Currie & Procter, 2005; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O' Neill, Hayes & Wierba, 1997). Middle managers must therefore simultaneously balance day-to-day operations and implement change initiatives (Huy, 2002). In addition, middle managers manage up the organizational hierarchy to sell strategic issues (Dutton et al., 1997), and pass down decisions that they were excluded from making (Westley, 1990).

Given the vital role middle managers play in navigating both the organizational and emotional space in organizations (Huy, 2002), it is very important for organizations to ensure those managers have the necessary resources to recover from the demands of their job. Organizational interventions to support employees commonly draw on research utilizing the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R; Bakker, Demerouti & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). JD-R theory classifies individual and organizational factors into demands and resources, and seeks to understand how combinations thereof contribute to both employee burnout and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To identify how to support middle managers, we draw on JD-R theory to test a potentially valuable recovery intervention: mindfulness training (Bakker et al., 2014).

Both JD-R theory and mindfulness research strongly suggest mindfulness training may be an effective intervention for this population. Conceptualized as *receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience* (Brown & Ryan, 2003), mindfulness has attracted growing interest from organizational researchers due to its significant benefits for workplace functioning (Good et al., 2016). While mindfulness can be reliably increased through validated training programs such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR; Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012), the efficacy of mindfulness programs within the context of workplace managers has been almost ignored. To address this gap and test a practical strategy to provide resources for middle managers by supporting recovery from job demands, we conducted a randomized intervention study with 130 middle managers across four organizations. Managers participated in either an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) intervention or a wait-list control condition. Participants completed pre- and post-intervention surveys of their job demands and resources and associated outcomes, including stress, burnout, psychological detachment, and engagement.

Our current work makes two important contributions. First, we contribute to JD-R theory by investigating whether mindfulness training can serve as an important resource to support middle managers at risk of stress, burnout, and disengagement. Second, we contribute to the

growing mindfulness at work literature by investigating whether an 8-week mindfulness training program for managers has organizational impacts.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Work is demanding, and can leave individuals feeling stressed, burned out, and disengaged. These experiences are endemic and costly. Eight out of ten employees in the US experiences stress at work (Gallup, 2017), and 51% of European workers report workplace stress to be common (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2013). Goh, Pfeffer & Zenios (2015) estimate workplace stress is responsible for up to \$190 billion in annual healthcare costs in the U.S., while the annual direct and indirect costs of workplace stress in Europe are estimated at 618 billion euros (Matrix Insight, 2012). Engagement statistics are similarly sobering: a mere 11% of European workers report being engaged, only slightly lower than the global average of 13% (Gallup, 2013). The impacts of these characteristics are significant to organizational outcomes. Stress predicts motivation and learning (Lepine, Podsakoff & Lepine, 2005). Burnout can predict depression, while engagement can predict organizational commitment (Hakanen, Schaufeli & Ahola, 2008) and job performance (Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). All three constructs have been linked to absenteeism (Schaufeli, Bakker & van Rhenen, 2009) and safety (Nahrgang, Morgeson & Hofmann, 2011).

Middle managers may face a particularly taxing situation connecting an organization's executive and operational levels (Huy, 2002). They face the normal job demands handled by rank and file employees, such as performance demands, time pressure, work overload, cognitive demands, and role conflict/ambiguity (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009; van Veldhoven, Jonge, Broersen, Kompier & Meijman, 2002). They also face additional job demands stemming from interpersonal interaction, such as power stress, ethical decision making, authority/procedural justice, emotional demands, and potential interpersonal conflicts (e.g., Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; Brett, Uhl-Bien, Huang & Carsten, 2016; Dean, Beggs & Keane, 2010).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory offers a comprehensive framework for assessing how to intervene. This theory is based on a conception that job demands produce strain and may lead to burnout, while job resources can counteract that strain and lead to work engagement. Job demands are defined as "those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004: 296). In contrast, job resources are "physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that may: a) be

functional in achieving work goals, b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; c) stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001: 596). Job resources are thus seen to mitigate the strain caused by job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli & Schuurs, 2003).

There have been two recent additions to JD-R theory that guide our study. First, JD-R research initially focused on external work-related demands and resources, such as workload and feedback, but there has recently been a growing emphasis on personal resources. They are defined as “psychological characteristics or aspects of the self that are generally associated with resiliency and that refer to the ability to control and impact one’s environment successfully” (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014: 49). To date, research has mainly focused on characteristics such as extraversion, optimism, self-efficacy, and organizational-based self-esteem (Bakker, van Veldhoven & Xanthopoulou, 2010; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009), and now mindfulness has also been proposed as a potential personal resource (Bakker et al., 2014).

Second, while there has been a long-standing focus on organizational-level interventions regarding optimizing job demands and resources, such as workload and control, there has been a growing focus on individual-level interventions centered around recovery (Bakker et al., 2014).

Proposing mindfulness as a JD-R intervention

Within JD-R theory, there are two processes that operate fairly independently of one another, one leading to burnout and the other to engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In earlier models, the former process tends to be largely predicted by job demands, and the latter predicted by the presence of job resources. But more recently, with the introduction of personal resources (see Schaufeli & Taris, 2014 for a review), there has been an increased focus on aspects of the self which increase individuals’ control and ability to successfully navigate their environment. Building on this new line of inquiry within JD-R and past research that has suggested individuals’ resources can influence how they perceive job characteristics (Bandura, 1997; Judge, Bono & Locke, 2000), we propose that mindfulness represents an especially potent personal resource with the potential to affect both the strain and motivational processes. Further, in a recent review of JD-R theory, mindfulness training was proposed as an effective individual-level intervention from the JD-R perspective (Bakker et al., 2014).

Mindfulness may help managers utilize a cognitive mode alternative to the typical goal-directed mode dominating organizational functioning, one which can support recovery (Lyddy & Good, 2017). An alternative mode of that nature permits the expression of mindfulness-related properties such as present-centeredness and acceptance. A typical reaction to, say, a manager or their subordinate falling short of a goal would be an increase in negative emotions, and managing these can tax resources (Grandey et al., 2012). Mindfulness may allow managers to view such goal frustration as undesirable and necessitating an alternative strategy, while *also* calmly accepting this experience as a reality, resulting in less negative emotion and ultimately less expenditure of personal resources. This psychological quality may facilitate a faster recovery of resources after escaping from demanding work situations. In what follows, we present our hypotheses.

Mindfulness and its effect on stress and burnout

A recent multi-disciplinary review found strong evidence overall linking mindfulness to reduced stress and burnout (Good et al., 2016). A meta-analysis shows mindfulness training, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs, work as expected, reducing stress levels of diverse populations (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012). Despite large numbers of studies from clinical psychology and medicine demonstrating efficacy, including some limited work showing the benefits for managers (Hülsheger, Feinholdt & Nübold, 2015; Pipe et al., 2009; Shonin & Gordon, 2015; Shonin, Gordon, Dunn, Singh & Griffiths, 2014), there has been virtually no mainstream organizational scholarship assessing the benefits of mindfulness interventions on stress in leaders or managers.

Hülsheger and colleagues (2013) showed that a brief mindfulness intervention reduced burnout by reducing one common job demand: emotional labor. Roche et al. (2014) found that trait mindfulness corresponded to increased psychological capital resources among various leaders, including middle managers, corresponding to lower burnout. Research outside the field has shown mindfulness reducing burnout in teachers (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus & Davidson, 2013; Roeser et al., 2013) and health professionals (Cohen-Katz, Wiley, Capuano, Baker & Shapiro, 2005; Goodman & Schorling, 2012). In line with this research, we expect mindfulness training to decrease stress and burnout, and we advance the following two hypotheses:

H1: MBSR participants will report decreases in stress at time 2 relative to control participants, such that the condition \times time interaction coefficient will be negative.

H2: MBSR participants will report decreases in burnout at time 2 relative to control participants, such that the condition x time interaction coefficient will be negative.

Mindfulness and its effect on work engagement

While mindfulness has been widely shown to avert stress and burnout, evidence linking it to increased engagement has to date been limited. Work engagement can be defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002: 74). Leroy et al. (2013) showed mindfulness to have both a direct and indirect effect on work engagement, and argued that the direct effect may be due to the enhanced experience of immersion and attentiveness mindfulness produces. In their study, this relationship was mediated by increased authentic functioning, showing mindfulness enhance the ability to be true to yourself at work, which in turn has a positive influence on work engagement (Leroy et al., 2013). Dane and Brummel (2014) also found a positive correlation between dispositional mindfulness and two facets of engagement, vigor and dedication. Furthermore, Malinowski & Lim (2015) found that the non-reactivity facet of mindfulness corresponded to elevated work engagement. In line with this direction of research, we predict the positive relationship between mindfulness and work engagement to hold also, when a control condition is in place.

H3: MBSR participants will report increases in engagement at time 2 relative to control participants, such that the condition x time interaction coefficient will be positive.

Mindfulness and its effect on psychological detachment

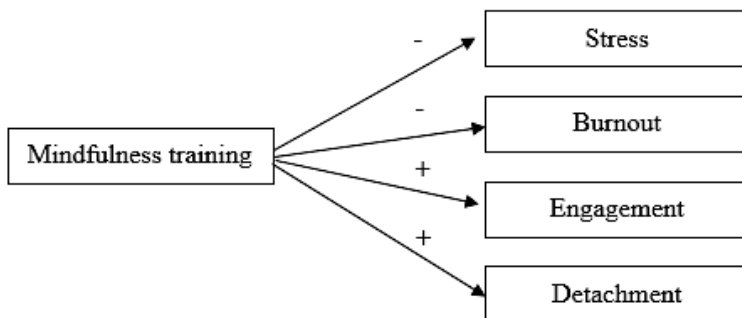
Workplace events often lead to negative emotional responses (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which can be taxing to manage and over time predict burnout (Grandey, Foo, Groth & Goodwin, 2012). Mindfulness may help individuals recover from such emotional events, as it generally reduces the intensity and duration of negative emotional reactions (Good et al., 2016). Therefore, individuals would be more likely to use recovery time more effectively after facing a job demand. This in turn should help restore resources faster and avoid stress and burnout.

A factor potentially contributing to that recovery is psychological detachment from work (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007, 2015). The ability to be fully present, and quickly put aside upsetting work events from the past day or week, is crucial to effective recovery. As mindfulness fosters

present-centered attention, and weakens the relationship between environmental events and emotional reactions (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007), mindfulness training should help managers gain greater distance from the challenges of the day. We therefore expect mindfulness training to increase the participants' psychological detachment from work.

H4: MBSR participants will report increases in detachment at time 2 relative to control participants, such that the condition \times time interaction coefficient will be positive.

Figure 1. Hypothesis and the expected role of mindfulness.



Method

To rigorously test whether all of these effects jointly manifest for middle managers, we conducted a field intervention study with a sample of 130 middle managers. Given the methodological limitations of the prior work on mindfulness in the workplace (Good et al., 2016; Van Dam et al., 2018), and unknown generalizability of findings from other fields, we tested these effects using a randomized controlled trial with a standard mindfulness intervention (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, MBSR) delivered across multiple organizations. Our aim was to address whether mindfulness training predicted multiple beneficial outcomes for middle managers, above and beyond established job demand and resources predictors. If so, this would provide support for the overall proposition that mindfulness is an effective individual-level personal resource intervention for managers.

This randomized wait-list control intervention study was conducted with middle managers, defined as managers below those holding company-wide responsibilities, ranging from first-level supervisors to executives (Frohman & Johnson, 1992). The study was conducted in four

large organizations operating in Finland, including a bank, consulting firm, hospital, and retailer. Of the 152 organizational leaders who signed up for the research project, 130 (86%) completed both the training and the pre- and post-questionnaires. We collected survey data in the two weeks prior to the first MBSR class, and in the two weeks immediately after.

Reflecting the prior workplace studies (Hülshager et al., 2015; Klatt, Buckworth & Malarkey, 2009), the intervention was an abbreviated version of the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program used globally (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). The training was modified to suit the workplace context by eliminating a full day of practice, shortening daily practice requirements from 45 minutes to 10-15 minutes, and shortening classes from 2.5 hours to 1.5 hours. A certified MBSR teacher with extensive experience provided the mindfulness training in the workplace for all four interventions. After enrolling, managers were randomly assigned to complete the MBSR intervention during the study period, or to a wait-list that would allow them to participate after study completion.

Measures

Stress. To capture managerial stress levels, we used the 10-item Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Managers were asked to reflect on their feelings and thoughts during the past two weeks, and rate how often they had felt a certain way. The scale included items such as “How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?” and “How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?”. The questions were rated on a scale ranging from 0 = “never” to 4 = “often”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.82 and for time 2 was 0.84.

Burnout. We used Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) 9-item emotional exhaustion scale to operationalize managerial burnout. The participants were asked to state how frequently they experienced things such as “I feel emotionally drained from my work”, “I feel used up at the end of the workday”, and “Working with people all day is really a strain for me”. The questions were rated on a scale ranging from 0 = “never” to 6 = “every day”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.88 and for time 2 was 0.89.

Engagement. Engagement is a positive measure of energy and focus devoted to an individual’s task performance (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-romá & Bakker, 2002). To measure work engagement, we used the short form of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, comprising nine items, such as “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”, “I am immersed in my work”, and “I get carried away when I am working” (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The response

scale ranged from 0 = “never” to 6 = “every day”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.91 and for time 2 was 0.94.

Psychological detachment. To measure psychological detachment, we used Sonnentag and Fritz’s (2007) 4-item scale. The scale prompts the respondent to reflect on their relationship with work outside working hours, and includes items such as “During time after work, I forget about work” and “During time after work, I don’t think about work at all”. Items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 = “totally disagree”, to 5 = “totally agree”. Cronbach’s alpha for both time 1 and time 2 was 0.81.

Control variables. To capture the role of mindfulness over and above normal workplace demands, we controlled for two such demands, *workload* and *surface acting*. *Workload* is a major job demand often linked with emotional exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2014). We operationalized this variable using the Quantitative Workload Inventory (Spector & Jex, 1998), with questions such as “How often does your job require you to work very fast?” Responses ranged from 1 = “less than once per month” to 5 = “several times per day”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.86, and for time 2 was 0.88. *Surface acting*, also linked with emotional exhaustion, was measured with four items from Hülsheger et al. (2013). These included three from Brotheridge and Lee (2002), and a fourth from Lee and Brotheridge (2011), to help probe the faking aspect of surface acting. An example item was “I pretend to have emotions that I did not really have”. To capture the multifaceted role-expectations of middle managers, we adapted the wording to include all workplace interactions. The wording of the question was “On an average day at work, how frequently do you do each of the following when interacting with others?” Responses were on a scale ranging from 1 = “never” to 5 = “always”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.87, and for time 2 was 0.88.

We also controlled for *positive and negative affectivity* of leaders. Disposition characteristics such as *positive affect* capture individual-level differences and have been shown to be strongly linked to work engagement (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). To assess positive affectivity, we used five items from Thompson’s (2007) short version of the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS), which asks respondents to assess how frequently they experience feelings such as being alert, inspired, and determined. The response scale ranged from 1 = “never” to 5 = “always”. Cronbach’s alpha for time 1 was 0.74 and for time 2 was 0.79.

To measure *negative affectivity* of leaders, we again used the short version of the PANAS developed by Thompson (2007), which includes five items from Watson, Clark & Tellegen’s (1988) original scale. Negative affectivity has been found to significantly influence key variables and relationships in the JD-R model, including stress, burnout, and engagement (Bakker et al., 2014). Cronbach’s alpha for positive affectivity at time 1 was 0.74 and for time

2 was 0.79. The corresponding values for negative affectivity were 0.78 for time 1 and 0.84 for time 2. We also controlled for leader gender and tenure in their position.

Analytical strategy

We employed hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) to assess the hypotheses using R. We modeled outcome variables and job demands at each time point as level 1 variables, and each manager's stable personality and demographic characteristics as level 2 predictors. All level 1 variables were assessed at both time points to evaluate and control for changes in the characteristics before and after the intervention. Level 1 job demands, including surface acting and workload, were assessed and assumed to vary across both time points. To control for between-person effects, these variables were individual-mean centered (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). Manager characteristics, including personality and demographics, were assessed only before the intervention. We coded time before the intervention as 0, and after the intervention as 1. Participation in the wait-list condition was coded as 0, and the MBSR intervention as 1.

We tested both fixed-effects and random-effects models for all analyses (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). We assumed that the focus of our analyses – the group x time interactions – would exhibit random variation. However, we found that modeling this parameter as a random coefficient never yielded a significant improvement in model predictiveness. Therefore, we report only the results of our fixed-effects models.

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables are reported in Table 1. As a preliminary analysis to determine whether level 1 outcome variables showed significant within-person variance to justify modeling with HLM, we examined the results of null models to compare within- and between-persons variance. These showed as significant, ranging from 46% of variance for psychological detachment to 77% for engagement. As these variables generally showed equal or greater within-subjects variance, this suggests that HLM is an appropriate analytical approach (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This accommodated the nested data structure of job demands, resources, and outcomes collected at multiple time points within individual managers, and partitions variance to within- and between-individual levels.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 MBSR	0.50	0.50									
2 Negative Affectivity	2.11	0.48	0.14								
3 Positive Affectivity	2.92	0.99	-0.05	-0.34**							
4 Gender	2.75	0.76	-0.19*	0.07	-0.12						
5 Tenure in Position	5.38	0.80	0.05	-0.15	0.03	-0.15					
6 T1 Stress	3.61	0.82	0.12	0.63**	-0.44**	0.04	-0.15				
7 T1 Burnout	2.44	0.54	0.20*	0.44**	-0.13	0.54**	-0.13	0.54**			
8 T1 Detachment	1.94	0.47	-0.18*	-0.06	-0.16	0.00	0.07	-0.14	-0.27**		
9 T1 Engagement	2.84	0.98	-0.08	-0.53**	0.63**	-0.07	0.22*	-0.6**	-0.39**	-0.01	
10 T1 Workload	2.99	0.74	0.07	0.04	0.15	-0.04	0.00	0.27**	0.47**	-0.29**	0.02
11 T1 Surface Acting	5.44	0.87	0.03	0.41**	-0.29**	0.07	0.06	0.35**	0.38**	-0.08	-0.34**
12 T2 Stress	3.53	0.76	-0.18*	0.55**	-0.30**	0.09	-0.17	0.62**	0.35**	0.07	-0.41**
13 T2 Burnout	2.41	0.69	0.03	0.46**	-0.22*	0.12	-0.16	0.44**	0.72**	-0.17*	-0.40**
14 T2 Detachment	2.74	0.74	0.23*	0.00	-0.03	-0.04	-0.09	-0.01	-0.05	0.51**	-0.07
15 T2 Engagement	5.13	0.59	0.02	-0.47**	0.57**	-0.11	0.18*	-0.49**	-0.33**	-0.08	0.77**
16 T2 Workload	1.21	0.41	0.02	0.09	0.09	-0.11	-0.01	0.17	0.30**	-0.2*	-0.01
17 T2 Surface Acting	4.42	4.58	0.01	0.34**	-0.29**	0.16	-0.02	0.26**	0.25**	0.02	-0.31**

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Table Continued

	M	SD	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
10 T1 Workload	2.99	0.74							
11 T1 Surface Acting	5.44	0.87	0.06						
12 T2 Stress	3.53	0.76	0.10	0.35**					
13 T2 Burnout	2.41	0.69	0.28**	0.34**	0.55**				
14 T2 Detachment	2.74	0.74	-0.08	-0.05	-0.15	-0.16			
15 T2 Engagement	5.13	0.59	0.12	-0.35**	-0.51**	-0.45**	-0.03		
16 T2 Workload	1.21	0.41	0.59**	0.00	0.17**	0.34**	-0.09	0.08	
17 T2 Surface Acting	4.42	4.58	-0.06	0.68**	0.46**	0.39**	-0.03	-0.41**	0.01

* p < .05; ** p < .01 N = 130

MBSR was coded as 1 if a manager participated in MBSR, 0 if on the wait-lis

Table 3. HLM Regression results

	Outcome: Stress			Outcome: Burnout			Outcome: Engagement			Outcome: Detachment		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t
Intercept	2.23	0.33	6.78***	1.64	0.83	1.97*	2.62	0.59	4.48***	3.56	0.70	5.07***
Time	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.12	0.08	1.42	-0.04	0.07	-0.53	-0.07	0.09	-0.80
MBSR	0.00	0.06	0.05	0.26	0.15	1.80*	-0.02	0.11	-0.21	-0.26	0.13	-2.04*
Negative Affectivity	0.32	0.04	8.44***	0.54	0.10	5.54***	-0.33	0.07	-4.86***	-0.06	0.08	-0.68
Positive Affectivity	-0.17	0.05	-3.61***	-0.20	0.12	-1.64	0.65	0.09	7.62***	-0.15	0.10	-1.51
Workload	0.09	0.05	1.97*	0.31	0.08	3.63***	0.02	0.07	0.22	-0.10	0.09	-1.11
Surface Acting	0.22	0.06	3.35***	0.38	0.12	3.24***	-0.20	0.10	-1.97*	-0.11	0.12	-0.91
Gender	-0.07	0.07	-0.99	0.12	0.17	0.72	-0.02	0.12	-0.12	0.02	0.15	0.13
BA/Tech	-0.03	0.11	-0.28	0.39	0.25	1.55	0.06	0.19	0.30	0.45	0.22	2.00*
MA	0.03	0.11	0.27	0.48	0.26	1.89	0.05	0.19	0.27	0.16	0.22	0.70
PhD	0.12	0.17	0.71	0.92	0.41	2.23*	-0.03	0.30	-0.11	0.36	0.36	1.01
Tenure in Position	-0.01	0.01	-0.96	-0.01	0.01	-0.83	0.01	0.01	1.32	0.00	0.01	0.21
Company 2	0.05	0.08	0.60	0.08	0.20	0.41	0.33	0.14	2.34*	-0.02	0.17	-0.14
Company 3	-0.08	0.08	-1.03	0.19	0.20	0.98	0.34	0.14	2.44*	0.00	0.17	0.01
Company 3	-0.06	0.10	-0.66	0.39	0.24	1.60	0.24	0.17	1.41	0.15	0.21	0.75
Time x MBSR	-0.29	0.06	-4.45***	-0.31	0.12	-2.62**	0.19	0.10	1.89	0.59	0.12	4.94***

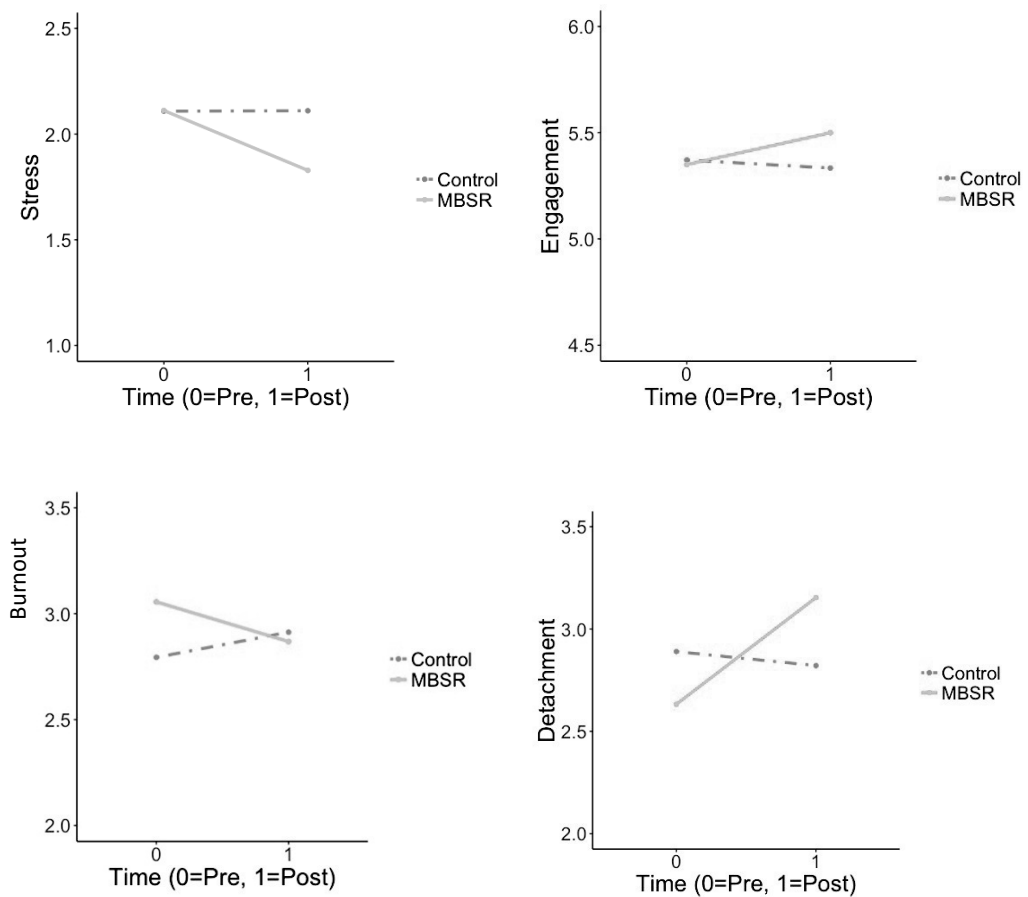
* p < .05; ** p < .01. *** p < .001 N = 130

Tests of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 posited that mindfulness training would correspond with lower stress, reflected in a negative interaction between time and condition. We found support for Hypothesis 1, as this term was negative and significant ($B = -.29$, $p < .001$; see Table 2 and Figure 2, Stress).

Paralleling these findings, Hypothesis 2 stated that mindfulness would predict lower burnout, operationalized as a negative interaction between time and condition. This hypothesis was also supported, as the time by condition coefficient was significant and negative ($B = -.31$, $p < .01$; see Table 2 and Figure 2, Burnout).

Figure 2. Stress, Engagement, Burnout and Detachment by Time and Condition



These findings reflected that mindfulness training corresponded to lower aversive outcomes; hypotheses 3 and 4 explored whether mindfulness training related to higher desirable outcomes. Specifically, Hypothesis 3 predicted that mindfulness training would elicit higher engagement, with a positive coefficient on the interaction of time by condition. While the coefficient was positive, the relationship only approached significance ($B = .19$, $p = .062$; see Table 2 and Figure 2, Engagement). Finally, Hypothesis 4 proposed that mindfulness training would predict higher psychological detachment, specifically that the interaction of group by condition would predict higher detachment. We found strong support for this hypothesis, as this coefficient was significant and positive ($B = .59$, $p < .001$; see Table 2 and Figure 2, Detachment).

In sum, this pattern showed support for our overall contention that mindfulness training may act as an individual-level resource intervention, with a significant and beneficial effect on three of four outcomes (stress, burnout, detachment), and a trend toward significance for the fourth (engagement).

Discussion

Our results support the efficacy of mindfulness training as an individual-level intervention replenishing the resources of middle managers. As expected, mindfulness training led to a significant decrease in reported stress and burnout, an increase in detachment, and a marginally significant increase in engagement. Below we discuss theoretical and practical implications of our findings and finish with some suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Implications

This study makes important contributions to both the JD-R and mindfulness at work literatures. While Bakker et al. (2014) suggest that mindfulness may function as an individual-level recovery intervention, this contention has not been empirically documented until now. Further, this intervention explained benefits to JD-R outcomes after controlling for typical job demands, including workload and surface acting, as well as personality. The intervention had significant desirable impacts on stress, burnout, and psychological detachment, and marginally significant benefits for engagement. Having a broad spectrum of benefits further points to the intervention being valuable for managing how individuals recover from job demands. Although the two-wave design did not permit testing relationships between these four outcomes, previous work suggests the mediating role that psychological detachment plays

in transmitting the beneficial effects of mindfulness to important outcomes (Hülshager et al., 2014). In line with JD-R theory, we suggest that our mindfulness training reduced the level of strain employees experience in response to the job demands they face. In other words, rather than directly reducing job demands, mindfulness diminished the strain experienced as a result of those demands, so that they no longer had such strong negative effects. This finding is in line with previous work demonstrating that mindfulness is associated with reduced negative affect and ruminative thought (Long & Christian, 2015), which frees up resources and reduces the strain of demands such that burnout and stress are decreased (Bakker et al., 2014). Thus, our study further contributes to JD-R work in the realm of individual-level interventions that seek to better understand how employees can recover from or learn to deal more effectively with strain at work (Hahn, Binnewies, Sonnentag & Mojza, 2011).

The study has obvious contributions to make to the rapidly growing mindfulness at work literature. While it is not the first to assess mindfulness training in relation to outcomes like burnout (e.g., Flook et al., 2013; Hülshager et al., 2013), the study shows that mindfulness training explains significant variance in these outcomes, even after controlling for an array of control variables typical to organizational science. All results were beneficial for individual managers. Further, due to its randomized controlled intervention design, the study provides strong evidence for the causal impacts of mindfulness training. This addresses a major limitation of prior management research on this construct, which has largely relied on self-reported cross-sectional designs ill-suited to assessing causality, and more susceptible to common method variance. The study also addresses the translation of mindfulness training to the workplace context.

While the general efficacy of mindfulness training has been firmly established (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012), there is very little research demonstrating the impacts of standard mindfulness training programs in organizational contexts. The efficacy of such programs should hardly be considered a given; qualitative research suggests that the self-efficacy and competence of mindfulness practices varies widely by individual and organizational context (Lyddy & Good, 2017). Nonetheless, these results support the view that mindfulness training can be effective, even as professional development delivered to busy working populations in diverse organizational contexts.

Practical Implications

JD-R theory presents a clear accounting of numerous factors that typically influence burnout and engagement (e.g., workload, surface acting), and consequently identifies a number of

possibilities for influencing these important outcomes in organizations. However, these factors can in practice be very difficult to influence even with full organizational commitment, let alone by the middle managers in this study. Mindfulness offers an alternative individual-level intervention approach that pivots from typical JD-R interventions that influence the external organizational context, instead directing managers' attention to their personal experience of the present moment. Doing so may at first glance seem trivial, but prior research suggests this may induce a new relationship with work that is highly beneficial for individuals (Good et al., 2016). The study results suggest this shift was indeed consequential, leading to lower stress and burnout, potentially induced by higher detachment. The results trending towards significance are also suggestive of increased engagement following mindfulness training. While managers may not always be able to change their context, mindfulness training gives them a practical way to change how they relate to their context, in a way that facilitates greater recovery from job demands.

Limitations and Future Directions

JD-R theory suggests that individuals experience stress, burnout, and disengagement when encountering excessive demands with inadequate resources. While employing a rigorous randomized intervention design, the study nonetheless exhibited several sample and design limitations that can be readily addressed in future studies to further increase knowledge of mindfulness interventions at work. The modest sample size of 130 participants was adequate in detecting strong relationships between mindfulness and stress, burnout, and detachment, but the relationship with engagement showed a smaller coefficient that was marginally significant. This may reflect a weak relationship or simply inadequate power. This pattern points to the need for larger randomized intervention studies within the work context.

Likewise, conducting the trainings only in one country with middle managers may have limited the generalizability of the results. Nordic organizations may be viewed as relatively favorable contexts for mindfulness training because they are generally amenable toward employee well-being initiatives, yet they may also exhibit relatively high levels of well-being which may limit the potential upside of mindfulness training. Future cross-cultural research may be valuable to clarify whether mindfulness training is more or less effective in such environments – and their opposites. Similarly, senior managers or front-line workers may be faced with differential demands and resources that may moderate the efficacy of mindfulness training, which deserves attention within the mindfulness at work literature.

The study design also contained several limitations that could be addressed in future work. While the results demonstrate that mindfulness may act as a resource helping middle managers experience reduced stress and burnout, the two-wave study design precluded formal tests of why this training worked effectively. While prior theory suggests that detachment may be a mediating mechanism, this could not be confirmed due to the study design. Future intervention studies should employ designs with three or more waves to test detachment and other characteristics as mediators operating between mindfulness training and JD-R outcomes.

While our study did include a wait-list control condition, which represents significant advancement on the largely correlational research on mindfulness, subsequent studies should employ an active control condition. Mindfulness training may yield effects resulting from other features of the training beyond mindfulness practices. For example, feeling supported by the organization or socializing with classmates might have similar effects, which could be derived from an array of trainings. Subsequent studies should therefore include an active control condition to guard against this possibility.

Finally, while the study employed a rigorous overall design, we were unable to collect objective or other-rated data regarding our outcome variables. Although the design guarded against potential common method variance through temporal separation and substantial manipulation of employees' psychological state, future designs would benefit from assessing the impact of mindfulness interventions with more diverse sources of data.

Conclusions

Middle managers inhabit the middle strata of an organization, caught between imperatives for strategic change and the daily grind of getting things done. From a Job Demands Resources (JD-R) perspective, this can saddle middle managers with excessive job demands without the necessary resources for recovery. Mindfulness appears to help them become less caught up in these job demands, and instead recover and recharge. Doing so leaves them less stressed and burned out, findings potentially explained by increases in psychological detachment. These results show that mindfulness training may be a beneficial intervention for middle managers, and potentially for other populations at work. By encouraging employees to go within and address their internal landscape, managers may discover a rich resource that can leave them less stressed, burned out, and with higher levels of energy to tackle their work challenges.

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Catarina Ahlvik

The Power of Awareness

Unlocking the Potential of Mindfulness in Organizations

Today, the word mindfulness is so widely used that the profundity of this practice is sometimes overlooked. Furthermore, some articles, mostly in practitioner-oriented journals, have raised the concern of mindfulness practice having a pacifying effect on employees. This concern often stems from the notion of mindfulness having a non-judgmental component and the fear that this component may create complacency in the workplace. This is, however, a misreading of the practice, as non-judgement in this context refers to how to skillfully relate to one's own experience. A non-judgmental attitude or attitudes such as acceptance and self-compassion are qualities that can facilitate contact with uncomfortable experiences and may thus diminish impulsive or defensive reactions. Thus, a non-judgmental attitude does not refer to complying with potentially disharmonious external conditions; rather, it enables turning towards and experiencing the present circumstances exactly as they are.

In this thesis, I tackle this question in detail both theoretically and empirically, and show that mindfulness develops personal resources and may indeed be a power-

ful trigger for agency. Agency here refers to purposeful engagement with the social context, aiming to alter or maintain that context. Specifically, I argue that mindfulness may trigger what I refer to as institutional awareness, that is the ability to be aware of the emotional and cognitive impact of the institution in which you are embedded. Furthermore, I empirically show that mindfulness supports change-oriented behavior in organizations and that it does so through facilitating autonomous choice. Choices and actions are seen as autonomous when they are congruent with a person's authentic interests and values.

In line with previous research in clinical settings, I also show that mindfulness reduces, stress, burnout and increases the ability to detach from work after working hours. These findings are the result of a large-scale randomized field intervention, where 130 managers from four organizations in Finland participated in an 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course.

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