

***FROM REIFIED SELF TO BEING MINDFUL:
A DIALOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MBSR VOICE***

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ABSTRACT. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs are being incorporated into healthcare systems worldwide. To cultivate present-moment, non-judgmental awareness, MBSR is taught using meditation instructions couched in particular forms of language. Yet the scholarly literature, while replete with empirical validation studies, has little to say about MBSR discourse. Further, although the program may be seen as a cultural hybrid, drawing as it does upon traditional mindfulness practices and concepts, MBSR research paradoxically employs methods which presuppose Western notions of self. In contrast, we identify conceptual similarities between the Buddhist notion of *anatta*, or non-self, and Dialogical Self Theory's (DST) treatment of self as an ongoing process of changing positions in dialogue with each other. DST is ideally suited to studying discourse aimed at diminishing self-reification. Interviews with MBSR practitioners ($N = 20$) yielded self-narratives which were subjected to a DST analysis, guided by the research question, "How do MBSR practitioners portray themselves when discussing their mindfulness practice?" Our intention was to delineate how practitioners take up the unique "MBSR voice" in their self-portrayals. Our findings could be laid out along a developmental continuum: portrayals were seen to range from unreflective voicing of a reified self, to more developed self-narratives in which mindful awareness (a meta-position) was portrayed in dialogue: bringing an inquisitive, present-focused, and compassionate awareness to habitual reactions. The *telos* of development, as seen from both theoretical perspectives, entails de-positioning: describing simple awareness of being. Our analyses display how the MBSR voice de-reifies self, and how that voice may be taken up by practitioners, to varying extents. Concurrently, DST is demonstrated to be theoretically and methodologically applicable to studying MBSR discourse.

Keywords: self narratives; mindfulness meditation; MBSR; dialogical self; Buddhist Psychology

The works comprising this volume delineate overlaps and contrasts between Western dialogical and Eastern approaches to the processes through which we constitute selves (e.g., Ellis & Stam, and McCown & Ahn, both this volume). This paper displays how Dialogical Self Theory (DST) can enhance research into

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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a Western intervention whose theoretical roots are in Buddhist psychology. DST (Hermans, 2001; 2008; Hermans & Gieser, 2012; Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992) seeks to integrate William James' (1890/1950) and Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) ideas by highlighting the social embeddedness of constitutions of self. For this paper, dialogicality and discourse are emphasized: persons are seen explicitly as comprised of varying perspectives that are in dialogue with each other. Specific forms of language are assumed to constitute different aspects of self (Bakhtin, 1981; Bertau, 2007; 2008; 2014a; 2014b; Vološinov, 1929/1986). We discuss how DST's ability to examine self-positioning in discourse is consistent with the theoretical foundations of MBSR. As such, it is uniquely suited to resolving an important paradox which sits at the intersection between theory and methodology. Following an overview of MBSR and the research methods used to study it, we highlight the important concept of non-self, embodied in Buddhist psychology, to clarify the relevance of this paradox. We follow with an empirical example demonstrating DST's utility for broadening the MBSR framework.

Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction

MBSR programs have recently been incorporated into various healthcare systems worldwide (e.g., Europe, Scandinavia and North America). MBSR, which teaches contemplative practices to develop present-moment, non-judgmental awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Santorelli, 1999; Santorelli & Kabat-Zinn, 2007), is an eight-week course that employs five main practices: sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful movement, the body scan, and lovingkindness meditation. Each employ varying degrees of focused awareness (on, for example, breath, body, sound, thoughts, or emotions) and open monitoring (sometimes called choiceless awareness) of experience (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne & Davidson, 2008). Mindfulness practices encourage inquiry into, and acceptance of, all experience, whether positive, negative or neutral, while discouraging identification with a self perceived to be experiencing those states. MBSR has been widely accepted in part because the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society developed a comprehensive teacher-training program, and in part because the founder, Jon Kabat-Zinn, was careful since its inception to assess the program's effectiveness with colleagues from various disciplines. The Western psychological and medical literatures are replete with outcome studies empirically validating MBSR as an adjunct to treatment in clinical populations and for improved quality of life in non-clinical populations (Hempel, Taylor, Marshall, Miake-Lye, Beroes, Shanman, ... & Shekelle, 2014; Salmon, Sephton, Weissbecker, Hoover, Ulmer & Studts, 2004).

MBSR is intrinsically a cultural hybrid: designed by an American molecular biologist (Kabat-Zinn, 2011), who trained with American meditation teachers, most of whom studied and practiced with Buddhist teachers in Southeast Asia. This

deliberately secular course aimed to teach contemplative practices to a Western audience of medically ill patients within the U.S. hospital setting. The goal was to help patients respond to their suffering differently: moving from habit-driven reactions to the world and to their own pain, toward more intentional, compassionate and equanimous responses to stressors. These roots incorporate aspects of Eastern and Western philosophies. However, while the curriculum does make some of these explicit (e.g., delineating aspects of “mindfulness”), most theoretical foundations [e.g., the four foundations of mindfulness found in the *Satipatthana Sutta* (Thera, 1965)], were deliberately left implicit (Santorelli & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). As an educational clinical intervention, the MBSR curriculum contains little theorizing about the nature of the self, but the mindfulness practices are intended to move practitioners toward taking a less reified view of pain, distress, problematic behavioral patterns, and ultimately a less reified view of the self.

Some Buddhist scholars have critiqued MBSR as not being quite Buddhist enough. They question the use of mindfulness practices in the absence of an overt ethical framework, a result of the program’s secular design (e.g., Gethin, 2014). While we appreciate this broad theoretical debate, our concern as MBSR teachers is more circumscribed. Specifically, we see a contradiction in the way MBSR research is being conducted: between an implicit theory of self, embodied in particular ways of speaking, on the one hand, and the research tools used to investigate MBSR, on the other. By employing techniques based in Cartesian assumptions, most studies inadvertently impose Western formulations of self despite the program’s implicit aim to uproot the reified self. While pedagogically-minded MBSR teachers do discuss the distinctive linguistic patterns (“linguaging”) they use (Kabat-Zinn, 2004; McCown & Reibel, 2010; McCown, Reibel & Micozzi, 2010; see also Mamberg, Dreeben & Salmon, 2014, for a pedagogical analysis), empirical work has not employed the theoretical and methodological tools which can examine such discourse. To understand how DST can address this paradox, we briefly review the research methods most commonly used.

Methods Employed to Study MBSR. While ample work has demonstrated the efficacy of the MBSR program overall, the complex phenomenon of mindfulness itself has eluded operational definition, posing a challenge to experimental researchers who seek to understand what exactly about the program is so effective. Mindfulness is not amenable to standard methods of assessment since it is not reducible to an objectively measurable state, trait or behavior. Yet much of the MBSR research employs traditional quantitative designs: pre-/post- outcome measures (often using forced-choice inventories), randomized clinical trials designed to control subject variables, and neuropsychological imaging which seek to map brain networks engaged during meditation. Precisely *how* mindfulness facilitates change has been difficult to quantify, so three decades worth of MBSR studies have mainly focused on program outcomes (usually symptom reduction), while wholly ignoring the inherently social and linguistic

processes which go on during mindfulness training (McCown & Reibel, 2010). Verification of the MBSR program's effectiveness using experimental methods was a valuable contribution in that it facilitated acceptance by the medical establishment. However, demonstrating an intervention provides benefits is not the same as studying the experience of mindfulness, nor can it address how mindfulness practice operates psychologically to develop a new way of being.

Grossman (2008, 2010, 2011) has critiqued the current state of MBSR research methodology for being too reliant on such third-person perspective studies, since they ignore practitioners' subjective experience. His work highlights the sociocultural embeddedness of MBSR and advocates closer examination of first-person experiential reports of the phenomenology of mindfulness practice. In response, a cottage industry of qualitative research has blossomed exploring self-reports about mindfulness practice in diaries (Kerr, Josyula & Littenberg, 2011; Morone, Lynch, Greco, Tindel & Weiner, 2008) and interviews (Allen, Bromley, Kuyken & Sonnenberg, 2009; MacKenzie, Carlson, Munoz & Speca, 2007; Smith, Graham & Senthinathan, 2007). This progress of including newer methods for understanding practitioners' reports of the benefits they experience from mindfulness has been a valuable addition to the repertoire of approaches. Yet these methods carry problematic baggage: namely, the presumption of a reified Western self.

Implicit Theories of Self in MBSR Research. Each of these primary methodological approaches, whether experimental or content analytic, carry the same theoretical difficulty: mainstream psychological approaches tend to reify the self. Cognitive-behavioral studies, in particular, treat the self as a fixed entity whose (overt or covert) acts can be unproblematically measured and changed. Whether measures use symptom checklists or endorsements of particular self-judgments, they remain steeped in the individualistic language of cognitive theory that reifies the self whose worldview it seeks to change. Meanwhile, neuro-psychological studies seemingly replace "self" with the "default mode network": brain regions noted to be active during wakeful rest in Westerners undergoing fMRI. Given the program's basis in a medical context, and the plethora of neuro-scientific studies used to validate the program experimentally (for a review, see Lutz, Slagter, Dunne & Davidson, 2008), most of this literature embodies an assumption that mindfulness will eventually be reducible to brain functioning (van Beek, 2014). Such an assumption leaves little need for theorizing about the nature of self.

Although deliberately less reductionistic, content analyses generally seek to depict first-person accounts of the perceived improvements gained from MBSR. Valuable though the move toward qualitative work has been, theoretically they remain reliant on the assumption of an individualistic, bounded Western self (Cushman, 1990; Sampson, 1989). By studying only the thematic content of narrative data (e.g., reported benefits, perceived changes in thoughts, beliefs and behaviors), they leave practitioners'

portrayal of a mindful self unexamined. Most of mainstream psychology persists in treating the idea of a socially constructed self (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) as irrelevant to the scientific enterprise. It is no surprise, then, that MBSR studies steeped in traditional paradigms simply presume the existence of a core self and go about seeking to demonstrate improvements to that self. The paradox is that these methods, whether quantitative or qualitative, inhibit a full exploration of the phenomenon they most want to study: the direct experience of mindfulness. Neither approach directly addresses what may be seen as a second-person perspective: the dialogical development of specific discursive formulations of self embodied in mindfulness practice (but see McCown & Ahn, this volume, for a novel approach).

Buddhist Psychology: Selfing as Reification

A brief discussion is in order to highlight why the paradox described is so troubling: presuming a Western self when researching a Buddhist-inspired program risks missing *how* MBSR impacts practitioners. In everyday life, Westerners typically portray many processes as entities. We have a proclivity for reifying: perceiving momentary experiences as events, then portraying them as objects which seem to exist through time. We tend to use nouns, rather than verbs. Buddhist psychology presents an alternative view: the self which we perceive as a unity is merely a collection of processes – conditioned reactions to what the person has experienced. This particularly important concept of *anatta*, or non-self, appears to be all but ignored in the empirical literature. From a Buddhist perspective¹, the importance of gaining insight into *anatta* is seen as vital to understanding how to reduce (one's own and others') suffering (Gunaratana, 1996; Jinpa, 2002; Olendzki, 2010). A distinction is made between the "self" – the unexamined convention by which we talk about our agency, and treat it as an entity which persists over time – and the philosophical understanding of "Self," which is taken to be a process, not a thing (Gyatso, 2014). In Olendzki's words, "[s]elf might be a useful word for referring to a person's body, feelings, perceptions, behavioral traits, and consciousness, but it cannot be construed as something underlying or transcending these manifestations" (2010; p.9). In other words, we may refer to self as a noun in the moment, but should not confuse such linguistic convention with a theoretical view that selves are independent entities, existing outside of conditions which are dynamic and interdependent. Olendzki suggests we see self as a verb: an ever-changing process which is neither permanent nor independent of the conditions that produce it, moment to moment.

As Jinpa (2002) describes, Buddhism has been characterized by internal philosophical disputes on the nature of self for millennia and has thus developed

¹ For simplicity, we draw upon Tibetan and Vipassana traditions here, though Zen and certain other lineages would also fit with this argument. While we recognize the variety of Buddhist philosophies, our aim is to develop the common thread with which to compare DST.

sophisticated arguments against the assumption that some core entity of self exists. Specifically, he details how self in this view is seen as “fabricated,” “impermanent,” and as having no “intrinsic nature” (p.93) because it is conditioned. Since the experiential process we label “self” can only exist in relation to others, including the body and the social world generally, then self has no status as an independent object, outside of the immediate context in which we experience self-ness. In short, this self which in everyday life we cling to as though it is permanently stable, is best seen as a constantly fluctuating process.

While there may not be consensus among Buddhist scholars about the precise articulation of non-self, there are some generally accepted points upon which the MBSR curriculum rests. Buddhist psychology relies on the fact that in every moment we apprehend the world through our perceptual apparatus. In addition to the five senses Westerners consider basic (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling), Buddhist psychology adds a sixth sense, thinking. For Buddhists, mental formations (i.e., thoughts) are just another perceptual tool; they arise in response to the world. Becoming aware of a sense object (e.g., a sound) creates a “moment of contact” which Olendzki (2010) describes as

the elemental unit of experience upon which our world ... is constructed, and is an event that occurs rather than an entity that exists. Perception and feeling also arise in conjunction with this moment of contact, and the whole arisen bundle is further conditioned by a particular intentional stance or attitude. (p.132)

The process of constituting oneself, then, rests on a host of mental formations about the world, all of which are embodied in discourse. In MBSR teacher training, this temporary reification of experiential processes has been labeled “selfing.” Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes this as the “inevitable and incorrigible tendency to construct out of almost everything and every situation an ‘I,’ a ‘me,’ and a ‘mine,’ and then to operate in the world from that limited perspective which is mostly fantasy and defense” (p.236). When we believe the stories we construct, when we identify with and become attached to these stories and ourselves as their protagonist, we are said to be selfing. The Buddhist teaching of non-self is then a corrective to the inaccurate view that we “have” or “are” a self. In Buddhist psychology, the goal of development is to fully comprehend *anatta* and thereby reduce selfing. In Olendzki’s words, deep insight into the concept of non-self “is merely pointing out the limitations of this reflexive view we hold of ourselves” (Olendzki, p.131). In sum, MBSR discourse as embodied in its curriculum and teacher training makes explicit the importance of non-self, yet MBSR researchers’ methods have not studied how this perception of experience is conveyed or developed.

Dialogical Self Theory

DST addresses both the methodological and theoretical aspects of this paradox in which a reified self is presumed when researching a Buddhist-inspired practice.

Because DST shares with Buddhism a process-focused inquiry into the shifting experience of self, it facilitates a dialogical portrayal of self while encouraging a developmental analysis of such portrayals. Both DST and Buddhist psychology assume that conscious experience is a relationship between knower and known, between observer and object of observation. This relational process is not reducible to a single position or perspective; both see language as embodying that relationship and temporarily stabilizing the flux of experience. Both also assume that in everyday life, our linguistic signs become rigid; language is treated unreflectively as product, thus reifying self, other, observer and object.

The DST concepts most relevant to our work – meta-position, voice, and de-positioning – will each be briefly delineated. The first advantage of DST (Hermans & Gieser, 2012) is its ability to conceptualize various aspects of self (often termed *I*-positions) as interacting with each other. Their relationships with each other may be located along a developmental continuum from monological (isolated from each other) to dialogical (engaged with each other). This concept of dynamic *I*-positions in dialogue with each other facilitates the identification of particular centralizing and integrating *meta-positions* (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & DiMaggio, 2004). The concept of meta-position can be summarized as “...observing the functioning of a limited set of interacting internal and external positions that are simultaneously available to awareness...”² (Raggatt, 2011, p.32). A meta-position involves a perspectival shift beyond a previous position, this shift allows distancing, reflection, even questioning. It

...permits a certain distance from one or more other positions.... [And] provides an overarching view so that several positions can be seen simultaneously and relevant linkages between positions become visible. [In addition,] a person can take different meta-positions [which enable] ... the person to delay immediate reactions or gratification and facilitates the *organization* of the self beyond the moment. (Hermans & Gieser, 2012, p.16; italics in original)

Importantly, meta-positions are “not to be considered a ‘control centre’ of the self or an agency that guarantees the unity and coherence of the self in advance” (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p.148). That is, the meta-position is not a substitute meant to reinstate our typical sense of a sole agent, but rather should be seen as the process of integrating potentially conflicting positions. Gonçalves & Ribeiro (2012) have applied this concept to their exploration of “innovative moments” in psychotherapy clients’ self-narratives. They describe “...the presence of a contrast between a previous self-narrative and a new emergent one, and the access to the process which allowed for the transformation from the former to the last” (p.81) That is, their

² Here internal and external refer to the degree to which the person owns or adopts a position; external positions are in the process of being taken up from some outside source, while internal positions are taken for granted as “mine” (Raggatt, 2011).

microanalysis of discursive processes in psychotherapy yields insight into how a previously rigid portrayal of self is transformed through dialogue. They go on to describe how innovative moments entail a meta-position which facilitates change in psychotherapy by “(1) providing a narrative structure for change; (2) bridging the past and present self-narratives; [and] (3) facilitating the progressive identification with the new self-narrative...” (p.81). Their work displays clients’ movement toward identifying with a healthier meta-position in psychotherapy, providing a model for our display of similar processes as practitioners adopt MBSR discourse.

Adding to this idea of meta-position, we work with the concept of *voice*. Bertau (2014a; 2014b) highlights that Bakhtin’s and Vološinov’s works insist on a process-oriented formulation. Voice is seen as the shifting socio-psychological linguistic positioning taken up by an individual speaker. This process entails dynamics elucidated by DST as “...a process of change... voice and position are the basic notions constructing the space of Self, its perspectivity, its stories, its coherence...” (Bertau, 2007, p.133-134). We bring this concept to our data wherein a new, more encompassing, perspective comes into dialogue with practitioners’ previously-held sense of self. From here on the discourse taken up – i.e., “interiorized” (Bertau, 2014a; 2014b) – by practitioners which facilitates a meta-position of mindful awareness will be described as the “MBSR voice.” We understand the MBSR voice as originating with the instructor’s classroom discourse, then displayed by practitioners in their reports of inner dialogues.

Finally, Hermans & Gieser (2012) provide a third important concept. Resonating fully with Buddhist psychology, they equate a process of *depositioning* with Krishnamurti’s experience of transcendental awareness. Distinguishing the depositioning of such awareness from meta-positioning, they state:

[w]hile a meta-position requires a self-reflexive distance towards more specific positions in the form of thoughts, considerations and comparisons, awareness is direct, non-conceptual, non-categorizing and unmediated by explicit signs or symbols. While meta-positioning requires some conceptual ‘work’ on the self, awareness can only take place by pure attention. In addition, meta-positions can be influenced and coloured by specific positions..., in contrast to awareness, which is ... non-evaluative. (pp. 19-20)

In this way, the DST concept of depositioning already points to the type of non-conceptual, nonjudgmental awareness implicit in Buddhist understandings conveyed by MBSR teachers, and embodied in what we are calling the MBSR voice. Taken together, these DST concepts of meta-position, voice, and de-positioning provide a coherent perspective from which to approach the paradox resulting from the mainstream imposition of an assumed reified self on the relational experience of practicing MBSR.

To summarize, then, both Buddhism and DST understand self as a process occurring in social context, rather than a decontextualized object; both approaches seek to reveal and deconstruct processes of constituting selfhood; each, in its way, seeks to distinguish automatic selfing from the more complex, developed process of experiential awareness. We use the term *MBSR voice* here to capture both explicit and implicit languaging (including meta-linguistic qualities of approaching experience) that have been interiorized by our participants. Our phrasing is not to be interpreted as an attempt to delineate some static (or even ideal) discourse of MBSR instructors. To explicate these commonalities, the current project sought to analyze the MBSR voice via systematic examination of research interviews. In order to locate this discernable, though often implicit languaging of self, we approached our data with the guiding question, “How do practitioners portray themselves when discussing their mindfulness practice?”

Method

In-depth, conversation-style interviews were conducted to elicit practitioners’ stories of cultivating mindfulness. First, general content analyses of this data were conducted. These analyses allowed us to display participants’ assertions of the importance of social interaction in the learning process (Mamberg, Bassarear & Schubert, 2013), their identification of helpful pedagogical aspects of MBSR (Mamberg & Bassarear, 2014a; 2014b), and allowed us to examine changes in the intentions practitioners brought to their practice (Field, Mamberg, & Bassarear, 2014; Mamberg, Field & Bassarear, in preparation). Having previously coded the transcripts’ meaningful content, we were able to conduct the present DST-discursive analysis to reveal how practitioners portray the self in these discussions (Georgaca & Avdi, 2014).

Participant Interviews

Participants ($N = 20$; 13 women, 7 men) were either students ($n = 9$) or faculty/staff ($n = 11$) at a small liberal arts campus, all of whom had completed the MBSR program prior to the interview (ranging from six months to four years earlier). A process of purposeful sampling was used to maximize the depth and richness of the research conversations. Practitioners were recruited from a list of one author’s (TB) former MBSR participants who had given prior consent to be contacted for research participation. Of the 148 former MBSR participants who had agreed to be contacted at some future point, 19 students and 20 faculty/staff were directly recruited. These 39 were selected based primarily on their having expressed at the end of the course that they found it to be transformative. Selection was also based in part on verbal sophistication and openness of the participants, as these were expected to yield more detailed sharing in the interviews. Whereas quantitative psychological studies would use random selection, our design intentionally solicited participation from

Table 1
Sample Interview Questions

Question	Open-ended, scripted question
3a	What was helpful as you were beginning to learn to meditate?
3b	What was frustrating or difficult in this beginning period?
5a	Let's discuss your perception of meditation from the time you first learned about it until now. Tell me as much as you can recall about your initial thoughts regarding what meditation or mindfulness is (or isn't).
5b	And how do you see it now, what are the biggest changes in your perception of what meditation is and isn't?
7	Thinking about your practice today, what are your primary challenges in your formal and informal practice today?

students who at the time the program ended reported significant benefits from the MBSR program and intentions to continue the practice into their post-program life.

The mean age of all participants was 39.6 years (ranging from 21 to 62 years old). Student participants ranged in age from 21 to 27 (\bar{x} : 22.7); their educational status ranged from Juniors through Master-level graduate students at the time of the interview. The students had taken the MBSR course at varying points in their career, from Freshman to Seniors. Staff participants ranged in age from 44 to 62 (\bar{x} : 53.5 years). All faculty and staff were employed on the college campus, two of whom were also enrolled in graduate programs at the time of the interview. Of the eleven faculty / staff, two were professors, four were higher education administrators, three were higher education professionals, and two were administrative assistants. These highly articulate, still-novice practitioners produced extensive data amenable to a variety of content and discursive analyses.

The MBSR instructor (TB) had 35 years of meditation training in Theravada Buddhist practices and was a college professor for 26 years. He therefore served as the interviewer to maximize the quality and clarity of interviewees' narrative responses, as well as to increase interpretability. This choice facilitated rich discussion of the subtleties of meditation within MBSR, since participants could rely on his knowledge of activities and interactions from their specific MBSR course.

Interviews were semi-structured, using ten open-ended questions to inquire into how interviewees learned to practice MBSR (see Table 1 for sample questions). The questions aimed to elicit their subjective experience of learning to practice mindfulness meditation, as well as their conceptual understanding of mindfulness.

Allowing nearly an hour (\bar{x} = 48 minutes) for open-ended responses and follow-up prompts, yielded numerous brief narratives in which practitioners portrayed their experience of self in relation to mindfulness practice, often quite explicitly.

Analytic Process

The audio-recorded interviews were transformed into text. The digital recordings were loaded into iTunes, enabling use of a USB-linked foot pedal by trained transcriptionists. In Microsoft Word, transcripts were created using a fine-grained Discourse Analytic scheme (based on Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). This yielded detailed verbatim texts, which averaged 24 pages in length. Table 2 (next page) depicts these conventions to help the reader comprehend the exemplars that follow. Both linguistic and meta-linguistic markers capture not only precisely what was said, but how it was said. For example, amplified speech is indicated through the use of capital letters and drawn-out syllables are shown with two colons, while pauses are noted with a period in parentheses when lasting one second or less. Longer pauses are timed with the number of seconds noted in parentheses. Overlaps and cut-offs have symbols which display when a conversational turn ended. Other meta-linguistic features of the text are captured symbolically, indicating when the transcriptionist heard breathing, laughing or other sounds.

The most important transcription convention for our purposes is that the scheme captured vocal intonation changes. The symbol, <vc>, marks the beginning and end of intonation shifts which were interpreted to indicate reported speech (aloud or in thought; Tannen, 1989); these are presented in italics in the exemplars, below. As will become clear in the following analysis, this transcription technique was imperative to a dialogical analysis, as it captured interviewees' reporting of their inner dialogues.

The 20 Word documents were then loaded into a qualitative database (ATLAS.ti, v.6.2, 1999/2015) for storage, data coding, memoing and analytic sorting. Conversational turn, our unit of analysis, was identified as each speaker's stretch of uninterrupted talk. A new turn was marked and coded each time participant or interviewer began to speak. Data were coded using turn-by-turn analysis to systematically capture all meaningful content for the initial content analyses. These turns allowed for detailed coding by breaking transcripts into manageable units; each turn could be assigned multiple codes. A total of 1,874 conversational turns were coded across the 20 transcripts. Having systematically categorized the material in this way, we were able to select out micro-narratives of self (Neimeyer & Buchanan-Arvey, 2004) – brief stories or vignettes covering several conversational turns, that portrayed the interviewees' direct experience – for focused discursive analysis. The DST analyses presented below were based on 83 micro-narratives in which the practitioners explicitly discussed their experience of self. These reduced the immense data set to focus on how participants discussed themselves,

Table 2

Transcription Scheme

Symbol	Description	Example
<i>Stressed Speech</i>		
CAPS	Amplified speech; usually single word or syllable of a word louder than surrounding speech.	P: I found it VERY helpful
::	Lengthened syllables	P: I re::ally did not like the body scan
?	Rising intonation, raised pitch (not a punctuation mark).	P: and how much I care for my family?
!	Stressed / exclaimed utterance followed by pause.	P: And then wham! it just hit me
<i>Pause length</i>		
(.)	Just noticeable pause (untimed, ~ 1 sec.)	P: (.) I think I think it was the support of my family
(#)	Timed Pause, given in seconds (>1 sec).	P: Well (4) I don't know, it's hard to explain
.	Full stop, falling intonation contour (ending)	P: I just found myself sitting and watching the sun set.
<i>Interruptions / Overlaps</i>		
--	Truncation, self-editing marker where speaker stops abruptly, either to interrupt self or yielding to other.	T: So, I was wondering -- if you don't mind me asking
...	Trailing off.	P: I was going to do it but...
[]	Placed at beginning and end of verbal overlap	P: I meditate [and find--] T: [How often] do you meditate?
<i>Meta-transcription Comments</i>		
[]	Non-lexical action which interrupts the text (e.g., [cough] or [knocking])	T: So tell me more about that [cough] experience
<vc>	Voice change; usually indicates speaker is mimicking or quoting someone else – place at beginning and end of stretch of talk that differs from speaker's normal voice	P: So she was like <vc> WHAT?! You so CRAzy! <vc> and so I said...
<i>Audible Breathing</i>		
, -h,	Inspiration (In-breath) or any breath (can't discern in vs. out), set off with commas	P: This is hard to talk about, -h, I guess it really bothered me
, h,	Aspiration (Out-breath), set off with commas	P: What a relief, h, that was something I had trouble with
(h)	Small laugh, chuckle; Note: can be placed within a word, as well	T: (h) It sounds like that was quite an exper(h)ience
(h, h)	Laughter	P: I was walking to class when I saw it (h,h)

allowing for a comprehensive dialogical analysis. For simplicity, these will be referred to simply as *self-narratives* throughout the rest of this paper.

Analysis: Developing the MSBR Voice

Our DST analysis illuminates the MBSR voice as it is taken up by these relatively new mindfulness practitioners. The participants' self-narratives about their mindfulness practice were categorized developmentally. The *telos* we adopted for our developmental continuum, in line with the Buddhist concept of *anatta*, are portrayals of self as an experiential process. Thus, self-narratives employing the traditional western formulation of a *Monological Reified Self* make up the first category (Level 1). Self-narratives which portray inner dialogues, are seen as more developmentally advanced; these were captured in the next two categories: *Decentering From a Reified Self* (Level 2) and *Relating Differently to Experience* (Level 3). The sequencing derives from our assumption that relating in new ways to experience necessarily entail de-centering. The final *Portrayals of Being* category (Level 4) captures what we deem to be the most developmentally advanced type of self-narratives in our data. Here, the speaker not only de-centers and relates to experience in novel ways, the narratives portray reflective engagement with a previously-reified self. Each developmental level will be described and illustrated with exemplars.

Monological Reified Self (Level 1)

Using a discursive unit of analysis (the conversational turn) allowed us to stay with participants' own languaging, showing how they portrayed themselves when discussing moments of being mindful or not mindful (frequently described as "automatic" or "judgmental"). In contrast to moments they considered mindful, interviewees frequently discussed their "reactivity" in everyday life. This term, common in MBSR classes and found in the curriculum text (Santorelli & Kabat-Zinn, 2007), depicts emotional, cognitive and behavioral (including verbal) actions which are conditioned or habitual, and which are generally judged in hindsight to be counter-productive or displaying a lack of awareness.

At this first level, self-narratives did not include dialogue, but rather portrayed the speaker by referencing personality traits (e.g., "I am perfectionistic," "I've always been judgmental") or by describing long-standing behavior patterns disliked by the practitioners and deemed to be out of their control. Self-narratives at this first level depicted monological portrayals of a reified self: rigid, unreflective and perceived (at the time) as permanent and unchangeable. Such self-portrayals were often treated by the practitioners as less developed than some more mindful version of themselves: they are unreflective, impulsively express difficult emotions (usually anger), and habit-driven. MBSR teachers often refer to this automaticity as "being on auto-pilot." This portrayal of self was often disavowed, represented as being "old," a "former" (pre-MBSR) self which the practitioner is attempting to eradicate. Maria, a college student,

provides an example of this reified self from about a year before the interview, when she was unable to moderate her emotional interactions. She reports being inexplicably irritable upon returning to school after spending a summer living in a very positive, loving community, which she experienced as:

Maria: ...this huge family and I have never experienced anything like that (.)
 ...but after ... coming back (.) to scho::ol? I was lashing out again I got
 stressed out I was totally freaked out (.) um got to a point that y'know I
 was (.) my family was worried, my boyfriend was worried, I was worried
 about how? (.) I've turned and I can't get out of the snapping at people
 (.) and so snapping at would be yelling at them for chewing? OR um (.)
 just getting so irritated at [them]... for NO reason

Here, Maria describes a monological self which is portrayed as having little capacity for self-reflection or self-moderation. The “I” that was freaked out is portrayed as an entity that could not change but was also not acceptable. This particular self-narrative reifies that “I” as an entity in need of change: she goes on to engage in a brief course of counseling to “change who I am” where she learns to replace the irritability with self-affirming cognitions.

Paula, a member of the university staff, similarly describes her early reactions to learning MBSR as monological, unquestionable and reified when she realized that incorporating it in her daily life would entail intense concentration and effort. In response to the interview question inquiring about experiences of frustration, she directly voices this self, using vocal changes:

Paula: ...I can't remember REally clearly but (3) um (.) I think (2) probably it
 was (4) the letting go of (.) of a practice (4) that was ingrained and entrenched in
 my everyday (4) and um (3) feeling FRUSTRATED that (.) <vc> *I can't really
 do this* <vc> ... you know this is really <vc> *How am I gonna to do this?* <vc>
 ... y'know? and thinking it was very ha::rd? When in fact it was very simple (.)
 ... y'know?

TB: mmhmm

Paula: in order to eh— a::dopt what you were trying to teach us... I had to
 make some dramatic changes (.) and I really didn't think I could survive them (.)
 and [do my work]

TB: yeah

After voicing this reified self (“I can't really do this” and “how am I gonna do this?”), Paula shifts back into the present voice, stating from her present perspective that “in fact it was very simple” to make major life changes, and she seems to have done so, but contrasts this with the reactive self who feared she would not survive making such changes.

These first examples are likely quite familiar to readers as typical ways that people portray themselves in everyday life. We intend them to provide a useful counterpoint as we describe the more developed self-portrayals which constitute the rest of our analysis. Self-portrayals categorized at the next levels use inner dialogue to display present moment experience, rather than reifying a self who experiences.

De-centering From a Reified Self (Level 2)

A developmentally more advanced self-portrayal entails de-centering from the everyday reified self; this was generally conveyed through descriptions of self-reflection, using terms such as “observing” or “noticing” one’s own reactions. Practitioners described themselves as experiencing a budding recognition of previously habitual impulses, emotions, and thoughts. For example, Linda described noticing her reactive self (however belatedly) which serves as a first de-centering that enables her to take a step back and slow down problematic reactions:

Linda: And even today it it can be helpful because I’m noticing (.) sometimes the um particularly the unpleasant event-- how we pay it so much more attention than it’s really worthy of (h) -h and we can let it just (.) eat at our whole day um and so...

TB: so when you notice that happening what what do you do now?

Linda: um now I’m trying to... I mean some days I don’t recognize that I did it until I get home and I go <vc> *u::gh boy! ... did I get wrapped up on that one!* <vc> um and then if I’m in the middle of it and I’m realizing it now I am trying to just reframe it a little bit and say okay <vc> *yeah this is unpleasant* <vc> but I don’t need to go down that rail train with it and make it even more unpleasant and have it cause that much more, -h, stress to me and those around me

TB: mmhmm (.) and so sometimes just bringing awareness to that process can help slow it down? O::r?

Linda: mmhmm

In his second question, we see the interviewer restates what he has heard, using a phrase that is common among MBSR teachers – “bringing awareness to...” experience. Linda confirms that this highlighting of her self-reification (the I that got so wrapped up in a difficult situation its over-identification increased unpleasantness for self and others), enabled her to see the process and slow it down. MBSR explicitly teaches that noticing reactivity with non-judgmental awareness can diminish such habits.

Relating Differently to Experience (Level 3)

A further developmental advance (beyond merely de-centering from the reified self) was seen when practitioners portrayed themselves as being with stressors and their distress in new ways. At minimum, this took the form of “pausing,” “taking a breath,”

or physically leaving a situation they found upsetting, rather than allowing their habitual reactions to play out. Simply being with an unpleasant experience was depicted by many as a new response. Bonnie's self-narrative, for instance, shows acceptance of her own anxiety, stating that she can deal with it in new ways which thereby allow her to become curious about her anxiety:

Bonnie: ...I've like accepted that (.) ya know (.) I get nervous (.) and I (.) get anxious in situations (.) BUT (.) I CAN'T (.) like maybe it's something I CAN'T (3) like (.) MAKE COMPLETEly better (.) but I can just deal with it in different ways than I would before

TB: yeah

Bonnie: so (.) yeah (.) it's like ACCEPTing:: (.) and like being curious about (.) when:: it happen::s and ,-h, (3) that (.) I mean I never really had (.) HORRIBLE anxiety (.) but (.) I think everyone has a little bit anxiety in certain situations (.) but like we can help it

Her description displays the MBSR voice has been interiorized: she portrays herself as someone who accepts both difficulties and her tendency to react habitually to difficulties. She takes some distance, then evokes curiosity toward her typical reactive self as well as the experience of anxiety. A similar developmental advance was seen when two self-portrayals (the reified self and mindful awareness) were depicted directly in dialogue. Here Kent, a member of the university staff, depicts having a thought about something he wishes for in the future, which cannot be accomplished in the moment. Whereas in the past the thought would plunge him into rumination, here he portrays a new voice that chooses not to form an attachment to that thought. He recognizes the thought does not have to be fueled, nor engaged with, and can be set aside until action is possible.

Kent: being able to um detach from the thought— ... knowing that I'm having the thought but being able to detach from it and say <vc> *okay that's just this and I don't have to think about this right now I can come back to that... <vc> y'know I can come back to where I am right now [and] what can I do right this second?...*

Here, the monological self gives way to de-centering through observation, which allows for acceptance of experience without suppression or further reactivity, all of which enable him to simply come back to the present moment, to his immediate experience. Jordan provides a somewhat more complex example of this type of self-portrayal, indicating a sense of choice and increased sensitivity to reactions in the moment they occur, which enabled some new behavior. In his response to a question about whether he noted any changes in himself after taking the MBSR course, his self-narrative portrays differently approaching his difficult job. He then explains how mindfulness

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practice has given him the ability to question his previous reactions. Jordan depicts himself as less anxious and reactive, enabling him, in the moment, to bring a kinder focused attention and inquisitiveness to his work experiences. After providing a nice summary of his unmindful selfing (the “before picture”), he reports bringing himself fully into the present with his unpleasant experience.

Jordan: Uhm?(.) So before picture would probably [cough] look like just trying to drown it out (.) daze out through my work day as much as I humanly can just try not to realize that I’m actually there? Uhm (1) and unfortunately that even fed into a lot of OTHER parts of life naturally (h) ... after ... the uh unpleasant events part of the course I would say (2.5) that (1) there was (.) the permission (.) to be present. The permission to NOT feel okay about something. Uh to have the unpleasant FEELING inside er even unpleasant THOUGHTS? But notice how the two are feeding in together and make it more or less a LABORatory. So rather than work just being <vc> , *h, here we go again* <vc> Using it as (.) <vc> *if this is my most unpleasant part of my regular typical week ... Then how can I be more focused? How can I can I bring attention here?* <vc> ... Can I be here? Can I be present? And what am I not enjoying? What am I (.) enjoying about this? Is there a part of this moment that isn’t? (.) y’know AS bad.

In short, Jordan reports his inner speech in the form of a dialogue for the interviewer. This portrayal then displays his experience of mindful awareness interacting with habitual reactivity by continually questioning the reification of negative judgments, looking for pleasant or neutral experiences within a difficult moment. Self-narratives which we classified as more developed describe forming a new relationship to specific types of experience, rather than re-enacting old patterns.

These examples display interiorization of *meeting experience* which is often used in MBSR classes to encourage practitioners to develop a new relationship to their own experience – generally one of acceptance, equanimity and friendliness. Once the reified self is noted as reacting and the person de-centers from their habitual position, we see various self-narratives which depict meeting reactivity in novel ways. Frequently practitioners report noticing new choices and options, as well as perceiving reality differently and deliberately shifting attention away from their impulse-driven reactivity. Many self-portrayals classified as Level 3 described “approaching” experience in new ways, or “relating to stress” differently. In some cases, normalizing or reassuring oneself through inner dialogues included directly telling oneself “it’s okay to feel” whatever the practitioner had previously resisted feeling. Kenneth, a college student, nicely displays this while alluding to the MBSR instruction to “be with” stress reactions, without altering, amplifying or repressing them:

Kenneth: ...as you've mentioned you can notice it and just kind of be with it you don't have to necessarily instigate it and you don't have to necessarily say <vc> *alright this needs to be not stressful* <vc> try to push it down and all that stuff you can just MEET it (...)... and kind of BE with it and that's the main thing I've kinda learned out of the-er uh like the unpleasant events...

Kenneth explicitly incorporates his teacher's classroom comments as he refers to one of the MBSR week-long activities, in which participants are asked to fully experience and record at least one unpleasant situation each day. What might be termed "re-perceiving," from a cognitivist perspective, is here seen as a transition away from a habitual self-positioning of reactivity to a recognition that unpleasant events can be fully known; that both the event and the self that wishes to push it away can be embraced with nonjudgmental curiosity.

One important quality with which practitioners met their reactivity was with the intentional cultivation of compassion for their own suffering, and by extension for the suffering of others. These self-narratives included more overtly kind self-talk, and often depicted the practitioners' expression of compassionate presence toward others during social interactions. Here, mindful awareness was portrayed as not simply pausing, taking a breath, calming down intense emotions, but as engaging with an intention to be fully present to, and aware of, one's own emotions and actions so as to diffuse, or be more present during, highly charged social interactions or painful internal experiences. For example, Jordan brings self-compassion to his own thoughts and overtly represents the MBSR instructor's voice to guide his inner dialogue:

Jordan: ...(.) so KINDLY noticing these thoughts uh::m [and] practicing that and really kind'a rePEATing that to myself over and over every time I would hear you say that it (2) it was like <vc> *OH! right now I'm just noticing negatively* (.) so now notice KINDLY! <vc> y'know have that COMPASSION towards yourself have that gentleness ...I would say (.) that was probably the BIGGEST thing t'helped me with the <vc> *darnit* <vc> was okay (.) don't say <vc> *darn it darn it darn it!* <vc> (h) Yeh don't say it like double judging (.) THEN what kinda got me to the next level was uhm the IMS³ retreat [I] got it that-- seeing that as a part of me?

He takes up his teacher's frequent use of the words "kindness" and "compassion" to describe himself as becoming more mindful of his own self-talk. Rather than scolding himself internally, he softly says, "don't say darn it," counter-acting his habitual way of

³ IMS refers to Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA, a Buddhist-inspired meditation center offering extended, teacher-led silent retreats.

judging his self-judging thoughts. Further, Jordan reports eventually being able to embrace his self-judging tendencies during extensive practice on a silent retreat.

This higher developmental level also contained self-narratives in which practitioners described their compassion for self and others as increased from what they had experienced before the course. For example, Samuel, a college student, when asked whether he has noted any changes in his compassion, stated:

Samuel: Uhm (.) Yes. I have. I think uhm [I'm] definitely a lot more forgiving to myself which is- has been helpful. Cus that's often times is a lot a big source of my stress is that I y'know I don't like to-- I don't like to fail at things or to like screw up. So when I do (.) I kind of I'm a little bit better at like y'know <vc> *it was just one thing it was fine.* <vc> You know, don't- I'm not beating myself up over it (.) like kinda realize that even when I do screw up er in yeah any variety of ways that it's like I don't know I can still be a good person y'know so that's been good. And and then I'm more forgiving of other people y'know? like like I had said I haven't gotten in a huge fight with anybody and you know [for] years now (.) at least so uhm yeah just being able ta realize like you know they're a person too. They probably have other things going on that I don't know about. You know? I should just uh why make their life any harder by you know causing them stress? Why not just let it go?

In this example, Samuel explicitly links his developing self-compassion with increased compassion for others, an important assumption of MBSR training. Overall, self-narratives categorized in this third level build on the de-centering that characterized Level 2.

Portrayals of Being (Level 4)

While development in Buddhism is aimed toward deep recognition into *anatta*, the *telos* of our developmental continuum was somewhat more modest. The foregoing analysis begs the question, "If we are interested in non-self, why only examine *self*-portrayals?" We therefore reviewed the data for instances in which the practitioners described something akin to non-self. While less frequent, there were conversational turns (originally coded as "awareness" or "being") which portrayed the practitioners' lived experience or related moment-to-moment processes without referring to the self. Often there were no pronouns used at all, the practitioner was only reflexively implied. While these were generally not even long enough to be called micro-narratives, as they were often contained in a single conversational turn and had no storyline, they clearly represented awareness without self-reification, and so were deemed appropriate for inclusion in this analysis. These brief descriptions of direct experience are seen as developmentally more advanced, and seem a prime example of Hermans & Gieser's

(2012) notion of depositioning. For example, Kent explains, in response to question #5 which inquires about his current definition:

TB: and so now how would you say you understand when you say oh this is meditation this is mindfulness what does this mean to you now?

Kent: mmm (.) just so much about awareness ... just so much about the present moment and accepting everything that's there...

Notice there is no pronoun used in his explanation of mindfulness. Similarly, Kenneth describes initially expecting meditation to be about eradicating thoughts, but goes on to say, "mindfulness is REALLY just about like you know cultivating awareness and when you're that much more aware you're able to like again focus and concentrate and notice..." In a similar vein, Bella stated her definition of mindfulness and seems to voice a mindfulness teacher: "so I think of mindfulness as just the being awake and aware and very very present ... *<vc> past is gone future's not here yet all you have is now <vc>*." While it would be simplistic to conclude that statements of experience which omit the personal pronoun are the most developmentally advanced, this level of our analytic continuum allows us to identify instances of describing the state of being without reifying it into a self.

In summary, our dialogical analysis conveys a developmental progression in self-portrayals which demonstrates the MBSR voice. We begin with the ordinary expression of a reified self which emotes, judges, acts or escapes, seemingly unaware of other possible perspectives or ways of being. This is not seen as dysfunctional, simply a typical portrayal of the Western self, before learning mindfulness meditation. De-centering portrays this ordinary self as being met first with non-judgmental observation. A developmental advance entails voicing a mindful awareness which is depicted as engaging in inner dialogue with the reactive self. This meta-position can question habitual reactivity and choose to first slow or pause the reactive pattern which arises, and then respond differently, either through perspective change, leaving a situation or interacting in new ways. At a still higher developmental level, we see self-portrayals in which mindful awareness increasingly brings specific qualities (curiosity, kindness and compassion for oneself and others) to the inner dialogue. The *telos* of this developmental continuum, in line with the concept of non-self, culminated in the depositioning of narratives which do not refer to a self at all, but which describe the process of being: simple awareness of presence.

Discussion

We began this paper by making the point that MBSR is inherently a hybrid of Buddhist and Western worldviews. Its curriculum incorporates Buddhist psychology's developmental goal of *anatta*, teaching practitioners to reduce suffering by recognizing the impermanent and insubstantial nature of self while encouraging focus on immediate

sensations, rather than fabrications of self to explain present-moment experience (Santorelli & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). Yet the plethora of quantitative and content analytic studies used to explore MBSR inadvertently impose an unreflective view of the Western self because they do not attend to discursive processes. The foregoing analysis served to demonstrate the utility of broadening the MBSR research framework with a DST framework and discursive method. Findings highlighted how practitioners “interiorized” and integrated the discourse of MBSR. Through ventriloquation of the curriculum and, at times, their teacher’s actual instructions, our participants’ languaging displays development toward the *telos* of de-reification of self. At the same time, our work demonstrated an empirical approach which can treat self as a process, rather than a thing, a perspective that better matches Buddhist psychology.

This project displayed practitioners’ self-narratives in relation to mindfulness. Dialogical Self Theory facilitated examination of *how* practitioners challenged their previously reified notions of self as they began adopting an inquisitive, accepting, present-moment-focused position, the MBSR voice. Similar to Gonçalves & Ribeiro’s (2012) psychotherapy micro-analysis, our findings demonstrated the MBSR voice as a meta-position which we conceptualized as aimed toward de-reification and direct awareness. Our analysis displayed how different aspects of the MBSR voice are taken up by practitioners. These were laid out on a developmental continuum from a monological self, through different levels in which a dialogical meta-position of mindful awareness transforms the reified self through inner dialogue toward de-positioning. Finally, we noted descriptions of simply being which dropped the personal pronoun while portraying awareness directly. Displaying these portrayals of self as a process highlights conceptual commonalities between the Buddhist underpinnings of MBSR on the one hand, and DST’s presumption of dialogicality, on the other. DST was designed to theorize about self and other, while remaining deliberately open to a variety of methodological techniques, generally valuing discourse. As such, DST provides a framework for examining MBSR data which resonates with the Buddhist goal of non-self.

Future Directions

Our intention for this study was to examine MBSR discourse, to articulate explicit connections to the Buddhist concept of non-self and to encourage new avenues of research which refrain from imposing a Western view of self. Pragmatically, one immediate implication is that MBSR teacher trainers might consider employing even more explicit languaging about de-reification. Certainly, as teachers of mindfulness practices, we hope our detailed inquiry informs our own understanding of development within students’ discursive constitutions of self.

We encourage mindfulness teachers’ increased awareness of their own dialogical impact on their students’ self-portrayals. Careful inquiry into their own

discourse will deepen their understanding of how the MBSR voice impacts practitioners; we hope this study might help them to develop toward de-positioning experiences of direct awareness. Teaching which encourages participants to view themselves as flexibly fluid, yet agentic and mindful, supports de-reification. Further, the discourse of mainstream Western psychology will be clarified and brought into greater contact with Eastern approaches as it comes to treat the self in a less reified manner, recognizing that self is always a process, (co-)constituted between participants and researchers, teachers and students, as well as within our own inner dialogues.

Some limitations of this study include our interviewing only novice practitioners, which could explain the relatively infrequent turns classified as Portrayals of Being. Similarly, using an interview setting that was somewhat disconnected from the immediate experience of mindfulness practice, may have pulled for more abstract conceptualizations about mindfulness than self-portrayals. While others have been studying brain functioning in expert meditators, or comparing experts to novice meditators, we suggest future research should take a DST perspective to the languaging of more experienced meditators who may have longer or more frequent experiences with moments of non-self. Similarly, this approach would be conducive to analyzing material derived from “elicitation interviews” (Bitbol, 2014; Bitbol & Petitmengin, 2013; Roepstorff & van Beek, 2014) in which experienced meditators are asked questions aimed directly at eliciting specific types of experience during practice, immediately following a meditation session. We also hope that our study raises questions for both the mindfulness and discursive audiences. Among them, “Are there limits to what DST analyses can explore?” – that is, “Can *anatta* be studied empirically?” Such theoretical considerations, though beyond the scope of this paper, are taken up by Ellis and Stam (this volume). Additionally, “Are mindfulness practices conducted by a lone practitioner enough to shift how s/he portrays the self, or must the MBSR voice be grounded in a community of practitioners?” That is, can a person fully take on the MBSR voice simply by, for example, listening to mindfulness practices on his or her iPod, alone? One exciting new path of research in a related vein comes from Stanley (2008) who advocates treating the research process as a mindfulness practice. His work with MBSR teachers (Crane, Stanley, et al., 2015) to examine what we have called the MBSR voice through a Conversational Analysis of classroom inquiry is a promising approach. Beyond raising new questions, we hope our example encourages future MBSR researchers to utilize empirical methods such as Dialogical Self Theory, Discursive Psychology, Discourse Analysis or Conversational Analysis to further illuminate how language use relates to shifting practitioners’ awareness of themselves and others.

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