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# Mindfulness Practitioners Clarify the Concept of “Re-Perceiving”: A Qualitative Interview Study

JOSEPHINE MADONNA

## Introduction

**M**indfulness is a type of awareness that dates back to ancient Buddhist practices. In our era, Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) designed a secular program to teach mindfulness practices called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). He and his colleagues have studied the effects of this training on physical and psychological healing and quality of life. Mindfulness is defined by Kabat-Zinn, as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). This entails moment-to-moment awareness; one’s focus is on non-perceptual experience as it is happening, as opposed to cognition or affect. Mindfulness practice intentionally focuses awareness in a kind and curious way (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). Engaging in meditation practices develops mindful awareness, which is considered

a “freedom of mind... a freedom from reflexive conditioning and delusion” (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009, p. 4). This distinction is crucial in understanding the difference between the actual practice of mindfulness, and the shifts that typically occur as practice develops. Such shifts will be discussed as this paper examines the topics of re-perceiving and self. Through meditation, the mindfulness practitioner learns to isolate their sense perceptions from habitual discursive thinking about whatever is being perceived. Formal practice allows the meditator to become increasingly aware of habitual or conditioned ways of filtering direct experience through concepts. This type of awareness gives the meditator repeated practice with flexibly shifting attention, which can then be incorporated into what is known as informal practice, bringing mindfulness to all aspects of everyday life. To integrate these differing aspects of mindfulness practice and the cultivation of awareness, this paper reviews two theoretical concepts relevant to MBSR: self and re-perceiving. The concept of self is easily taken for granted but needs some review in order to more deeply understand the main topic of this paper, re-perceiving. This concept will then be broken down into three meta-mechanisms posited by Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006), in order to understand specific aspects of re-perceiving. Finally, the literature review will cover mindful awareness as it relates to re-perceiving.

## Literature Review

### Reified Language of Self

The self is often considered in Western psychology to be an unquestioned, immutable entity. There is

an assumption that we are born with a self, and the best we can do is try to accept, if not improve, it. Most psychological theories view the self as a set of fixed characteristics, often judged as favorable or unfavorable. Psychotherapeutic approaches work at changing specific behavior patterns, while integrating the differing aspects of the client's self into a unified whole (Whelton & Greenberg, 2004). While there are some post-modern theories that recognize this self as constructed through language and social interaction, they are in the minority. In contrast, the MBSR program implicitly encourages a more fluid view of self.

The construction of the self assumed by Western psychology can be traced historically. Gulerce (2014) provides some insight into the development of the Western, Christian version of self. With this non-secular underpinning that is present in most Western societies, certain aspects of the self are reified using dichotomous language. An individual living in Western society may strive to be wholly good and dismiss the aspects of self that they consider to be negative in order to appeal to a higher power. The discourse used indicates a particularly rigid self-concept focusing on objective qualities. This contrasts the mindfulness philosophy that self is impermanent, inherently subject to change (Olendzki, 2010); a fluid process, constantly changing moment by moment. Observing the sensations that arise and change during formal meditative practices helps cultivate the recognition that all experiences are fleeting. Practitioners, then, practice accepting any difficulties that arise during meditation that then help them to accept aspects of themselves that they had deemed unde-

sirable. From this view, meditation reduces suffering by helping practitioners to accept rather than deny or avoid their emotions, thoughts, and conflicts.

In keeping with this post-modern approach, research from McCown and Ahn (2015) describes how participants in an American MBSR class will be asked to describe why they joined the class. The inquiry between the instructor and participants often describes reified aspects of self that they deem negative and hope the class will eliminate, revealing how they construct a suffering self using shared language. When an individual begins to shift from maintaining a reified view of the self into recognition of non-self, or a detachment from all of the traits that may typically define the self, one can begin to change the "series of assumptions made about the self that are not sustainable by empirical observation" (Olendzki, 2010, p.10). By recognizing their habitual construction of the self in mindfulness practice, meditators shift towards moment-to-moment awareness.

The construction and perception of the self is made evident through the discourse that an individual uses to reflect and create meaning. Constructivist theory states that the self is created through a multi-level construction built on linguistic interactions that occur moment by moment. Meaning that the process of the reified self is not an arbitrary compilation of traits but is constructed developmentally, influenced by historical and cultural norms and expectations, then described and reified using discourse. One derives meaning from emotions and cognitions that are elicited during linguis-

tic interactions (Whelton & Greenberg, 2004). These meanings then become a basis for the construction of self. In keeping with a constructivist view, MBSR theory suggests that through the formal practice of meditation, there is a process in which the self can be de-reified, experienced, and accepted in the moment as a series of perceptual transitions. These shifts are exemplified by the specific language used to describe self.

### **Re-Perceiving: A Shift in Perception**

The term re-perceiving does involve a cognitive shift, but the concept is far more complex, implying that mindfulness practice impacts emotional and pre-conditioned conceptions as well. Shapiro et al. (2006) define the term as involving de-identifying with conditioned judgments, shifting focus instead to direct perception of sensations in the current moment. In MBSR theory, reactivity refers to automatic, conditioned responses to certain objects or inner states. Re-perceiving refers to the meditator simply observing emotions and the stimuli that elicit them, as they arise, with bare attention. In this sense, bare attention is defined as the non-discriminative awareness that is free from the addition of thoughts or language as means of evaluating and conceptually controlling present moment reality (Brown & Cordon, 2009). The relationship that an individual had with a label or judgment toward themselves becomes less fixed, “identity begins to shift from the contents of awareness to awareness itself” (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 379), experiencing the self non-judgmentally in the moment. Carmody, Baer, Lykins, and Olendzki (2009) make reference to Shapiro’s study, clarifying that re-perceiving refers to “an ability to observe one’s

thoughts and feelings as temporary events in the mind not necessitating particular responses, rather than as reflections of the self that are necessarily true or important” (p. 614). These authors frame re-perceiving as a meta-process that is a psychological process that undergirds affect and thought, perception, and interpretation of perception. The practitioner’s relationship to automatic thoughts is brought into awareness; conditioned thought patterns can be recognized and questioned.

The psychological literature discusses decentering, a term closely related to re-perceiving but differing in important ways. Decentering is a cognitive distancing from reactivity, allowing for a focus on the present moment without engaging in narratives about past or future (Bernstein et al., 2015). Stanley (2012) provides some understanding of how re-perceiving should be distinguished from decentering, which he calls a purely cognitive process and thus “sub-personal”, understanding that thought is occurring but lacking the qualities of introspection (p. 66). Whereas, re-perceiving focuses on direct perception, attending to the arising and dissolving of the contents of consciousness.

Bernstein et al.’s (2015) theory of decentering references Shapiro et al.’s concept of re-perceiving as a similar process but states that decentering is the best term to use due to its emphasis on cognition. Both processes are comprised of three interworking axioms. These include meta-awareness, dis-identification from internal experience, and reduced reactivity to thought content. These three axioms focus on objective shifts in cognition. Shapiro et al. (2006) also propose a three-ax-

iom process that will be discussed in further detail below. Clearly the process of re-perceiving is very similar to the process of decentering, but the two are considered separate terms with some overlapping meaning that primarily focuses on a shift in perspective (Bernstein et al., 2015; Brown, Bravo, Roos, & Pearson, 2014). While earlier researchers used the terms decentering and re-perceiving interchangeably, the processes are markedly different. Re-perceiving is the more comprehensive term, a process that cultivates a shift in perspective in all domains and directly affects an individual's sense of self. To further contrast re-perceiving from decentering, I will more fully describe the three axioms of re-perceiving.

### Three Aspects of Re-Perceiving

Having distinguished the Western construction of self from that implied in mindfulness practice, it is necessary to unpack the concept of re-perceiving. Shapiro et al. (2006) describe several ways that mindfulness benefits practitioners. By breaking down Kabat-Zinn's (1990) definition of mindfulness – “paying attention, in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (p. 4). Shapiro et al. identified three axioms: *intention*, *attention*, and *attitude*. The first of these, intention, is defined as the reason that one decides to engage in mindfulness practice. Derived from the first part of Kabat-Zinn's definition, “on purpose”, intention refers to the purpose for which one initiates and maintains a mindfulness practice. Though MBSR explicitly discourages creating goals, since that reduces mindfulness to a mere means to an end, intention identifies what may motivate a medita-

tor initially and throughout their practice. Typically, the intention that one sets can act as a reminder to the meditator of their initial reasons for beginning the practice in the first place. Kabat-Zinn describes intention as “a personal vision” necessary for the practice to develop (p. 46). Initial intention can often shift as one's practice develops (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). For example, many participants decide to enroll in MBSR with the intention to decrease stress, but such an outcome orientation is countered by the present-moment focus of mindfulness practice. With practice, participants notice subtler intentions to become more aware and accepting, which helps reduce stress (Field, 2015). As the meditator develops more awareness, they may realize their stress level is high because of a habitual rage reaction towards this boss. This realization shifts the initial, broad intention to a more definitive intent to accept his boss' difficult style of interacting. Once the mediator perceives the boss' interactions in new ways, interpersonal communication with the boss will likely improve, and stress reactivity will decrease. For this reason, we need to better understand how practitioners describe moments of re-perceiving retrospectively. Typically, Westerners would not have the specific language to address a reified self (McCown & Ahn, 2015). It stands to reason that re-perceiving would not be accessible as an initial intention for a new meditator, but one that would evolve as the meditator cultivates mindfulness as a way of being.

The second axiom that Shapiro et al. (2006) describe is attention, derived from Kabat-Zinn's (1990) phrase, “paying attention”. During meditation, the indi-

vidual applies bare attention to experience what is happening in the moment and becomes aware that these experiences are often accompanied by a conditioned narrative about such experiences. This experience is often described in Western psychology as experiencing automatic thoughts. Shapiro (2009) states that “one’s patterns have become so ingrained that often one does not realize one is engaging in them” (p.7). This recognition of conditioned patterns as a layer added to the direct experience is crucial to re-perceiving. For example, when fully attending, a meditator will notice that their mind has wandered from an anchor to an extraneous noise and recognize a conditioned response to the noise. In that moment of recognition, habitual conditioning can be noted and replaced with acceptance. It is this capacity to shift focus from merely reacting to observing direct experience on multiple levels that develops through the process of attending.

The third axiom that Shapiro et al. (2006) describe is attitude, which builds on Kabat-Zinn’s phrase “in a particular way”. Attitude describes the mental qualities that the mediator brings to their mindfulness practice. The most relevant qualities for developing “affectionate attention” (Shapiro, 2009, p. 11) include “patience, compassion and non-striving” (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 377). Mind-wandering is a common experience that meditators face, the attitude that one brings to mind-wandering can be critical and judgmental, or it can be warm and compassionate. Kabat-Zinn (1990) describes specific attitudinal foundations that cultivate such an open attitude. When one is able to become aware and shift towards affectionate attention during

meditative practice, this provides insight into how one might attend to daily experience.

These three aspects of re-perceiving mutually influence each other, developing together as mindfulness is cultivated over time. Each aspect provides a lens through which individuals observe subtle aspects of self-construction. Re-perceiving enables shifts that de-reify self. Having clarified the concept of re-perceiving, I will now turn to an exploration of how best to examine this concept empirically. Due to the multi-faceted nature of self-construction, as well as the fact that participants of an MBSR course would not necessarily identify the concepts of self or re-perceiving explicitly, a study of participant narratives was designed to shed new light on how they experience these complex processes. The next section will detail the theory and methodology selected to explore these complex concepts.

### **A Grounded Theory Approach to Interview Data**

The complex process of re-perceiving is best captured using an approach that analyzes self-construals in narrative data (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Freeman, 2014; Marnberg, 2012). Re-perceiving, an inward process, cannot be outwardly observed. Thus, traditional methods of measurements would not capture the shift; the best method to capture these inwardly occurring shifts in self is through participants’ discourse (Stanley, 2012). Qualitative data present a direct look at the subtleties of language in participants’ reports, and then researchers “attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).

The meaning that participants make out of their meditative experiences is best obtained in dialogue about their experience. This contrasts with traditional quantitative research that reifies the self to study objectively-measured behavior. To study meaning-making in lived experience, it is best to use a method that captures the nuances of their talk.

From amongst the range of qualitative methods available, Grounded Theory (GT) provides tools and a framework best suited to the study of re-perceiving. Rather than making statistical inferences drawn from a subgroup then generalized to populations as a whole, GT uses systematic coding to analyze discursive data that allows the researcher to make meaningful descriptive interpretations about a subjective phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Broadly, “coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). This type of coding is driven by the language used by participants in the data set without interpretation from the researcher.

Two types of coding guide the reduction of the data. The first step is *initial coding*; the researcher “remains open to whatever theoretical possibilities we can discern in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). The goal is to describe the data content, using some kind of expressive word to summarize participants’ discourse and avoid drawing any premature interpretations. The second phase of coding is *focused coding*. This is where the researcher identifies themes within the data. Using the content codes that were developed during initial cod-

ing, the researcher can begin to work through the data to draw analytic conclusions. The researcher begins to become more active with the data, interpreting participants’ speech and the researcher’s theoretical concepts; in this case, the language of mindfulness and MBSR. Connections are made within and across interviews, developing analytic patterns and generating new linkages. This second round of coding entails “memoing”, which highlights that the researcher, while staying close to the data, is making notes that are slightly removed from the participants’ statements and is beginning to make analytic sense of the complex phenomenon being studied. GT provides a process for analyzing interview data that is in sync with seeing self as constructed through reifying language. Given that re-perceiving is a process that may serve to de-reify the self, I developed a research question to guide analyses of an existing data set: “What shifts in language indicate that participants experience re-perceiving?”

## **Method**

To address the research question, I used data collected as part of a larger research project. Data collection entailed semi-structured interviews conducted with past participants of an MBSR course. This qualitative data was then interpreted using Grounded Theory analysis. The purpose of the larger study was to focus on two objectives: 1. To learn from participants’ own narrative descriptions what they found to be most helpful during and after the course, and 2. To understand how each participant incorporates MBSR into their life and self-portrayal (Mamberg, 2012, p.1). A brief explanation of the larger study and data collection is provid-

ed; the initial coding had already been completed, and a master code list had been generated prior to the present project. The specific procedures of my study follow.

### **Participant Interviews**

Participants (N = 20) were graduates of one instructor's 8-week MBSR course, conducted over the prior four years. All had provided releases, agreeing to be contacted later for research purposes and were alumni, undergraduates, graduate students, staff, or faculty at a small liberal arts college in New England. There were 7 males and 13 females whose ages ranged from 21-62. The identity of participants has been kept confidential through assignment of pseudonyms. Participants were interviewed (average duration: 48 minutes) by their former instructor, using a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of 10 open-ended questions that inquired about the participants' experience during and after the MBSR course. The selection of an interviewer familiar with the participants' training was intentional; his knowledge of the specific MBSR course and his role as instructor enabled participants to trust he would follow even subtle descriptions of their subjective states, while allowing him to elicit rich and detailed narratives. The researcher hoped to attain information relative to the research question, specifically, experiential descriptions of current engagement in formal and informal practice, the impacts of the program, and how participants defined mindfulness (Mamberg, 2012).

### **Data Reduction Process**

Research Assistants on the larger project were trained on a detailed transcription method using sym-

bols to convert the nuances of spoken discourse into text. As a transcriptionist for the larger project, I had previously listened to two of the audio recordings, using iTunes and a USB-connected foot pedal to type the data into Microsoft Word. Each transcript was uploaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software program. All transcripts were subjected to the Grounded Theory initial coding described above, where a "discursive turn" (DT) was the unit of analysis. A turn-by-turn coding was conducted by the principal investigator and two research assistants independently; inter-rater agreement was established through consensus of each research assistant and the principal investigator on 30% of the data. Across all transcripts, 993 initial codes captured all meaningful content. In this present study, I employed focused coding to isolate a relevant subset of data, where memo-writing enabled the identification of themes across transcripts. To address the research question, I selected content codes that were conceptually relevant, yielding a subset of DTs related to re-perceiving. The data subset consisted of 91 DTs, all of which had been coded with one or more of the following codes: *reperceive, decenter, detach, self, self-reflect, self-compassion, self-acceptance, judging, judge self, perspective taking, and insight*. Focused coding of these turns highlighted patterns of discourse; memoing allowed connections across various interviewee statements that were later categorized into thematic categories to fully describe all participant discourse related to re-perceiving, as presented below.

### **Analyses**

Typically, research studies of MBSR courses

focus on outcomes: how the structure of the course and the practice of meditation decrease practitioner stress levels. The analyses of this study focus instead on reports given by the mindfulness practitioner about the meditation process. To articulate participants' experience with various aspects of re-perceiving, the discourse of lay participants, who would not use the technical term "re-perceiving", was examined so as to detect shifts of language that relate to this concept posited by mindfulness researchers.

The data subset included all talk that related to experiences of re-perceiving. The process of focused coding yielded three main categories which did, indeed, align with Shapiro et al.'s (2006) three axioms: intention, attention and attitude. When the research question was first developed, it was unknown whether Shapiro's concepts would be noted in this data, yet given that Shapiro et al.'s (2006) work was so heavily relied upon to develop the definition of re-perceiving used in this paper, it is not surprising that instances of each axiom were seen. As a direct result of the analytic process, I was able to expand upon and further develop the three axioms based on participant reports. Within each thematic category, subcategories were then identified; in this way, my analyses provide more explicit detail about each aspect of re-perceiving.<sup>1</sup>

### **Category 1: Intention**

The first category, intention, was comprised of

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the data analyses, transcription conventions will be seen in which (.) indicates a brief pause, (#) indicates number of seconds of pause, and <vc> indicates voice change.

37 DTs in which participants discussed becoming more aware of their own initial intentions then using that awareness to respond in new ways. Two subcategories of intention were identified: *Decrease Reactivity* and *Presencing*, the first indicates an intention to moderate or minimize unexamined impulsive reactions, while the second entailed a fuller awareness of emotional experiences.

The first subcategory of intention, decreased reactivity, was comprised of 29 DTs. Such turns described a self-inquiry that questioned habitual, cognitive, emotional, or behavioral reactions through direct experience with the five senses. Contrasting new perceptions of self with outdated self-concepts and conditioned reactivity was common. Typically, judgments are made based off of past interactions, creating perception and meaning making, often leading to automatic reactions. Participants reported practicing cognitive pauses to disconnect from automatic reaction in order to evaluate whether previously conditioned responses were appropriate in the current moment. Some common themes that participants reported were: striving for perfection and defensiveness. Participants stated that striving for perfection often consumed their daily way of being. Participants' statements conveyed an intentional shift away from striving for perfection toward awareness for the needs of the body or the mind in the moment and responding to those immediate needs instead. The practice of meditation, specifically on the anchor of the breath, cultivated decreased reactivity to seemingly common reactions. Participants were able to broaden current moment awareness during meditation

into everyday experiences.

Participants reported re-perceiving when they described separating specific happenings or parts from the whole identity. Participants, for example, recalled making a global statement, “I am tired”, then reported parsing out where specifically in the body or mind they felt tired. This allowed them to dis-identify with the overwhelming sensation of global tiredness. This process of re-perceiving shifted how participants related to their own overwhelming or uncomfortable emotions, reporting experiences of variance; realizing that nothing is all good or all bad. As opposed to feeling aversively toward discomfort, this feeling was used as a means to relay information and then allow for feelings of tenderness toward these uncomfortable sensations. Participants also referenced adopting a new type of self talk that had the quality of kindness and compassion as opposed to judgement; this, too, decreased reactivity. This quality of talk will be discussed more in the 3rd category, attitude. Participants reported a new relationship to self judgement; “letting it go” more often, and moments of negative self-talk were less impactful than they had been in the past. Participants also reported intentionally choosing to speak to others in a kinder manner. Finally, participants reported intentionally quieting the distracting noise of daily life in order to observe inward happenings. The following turn is the clearest example of decreased reactivity. Kent, a 55-year-old college staff member, depicted his process of identifying conditioned patterns and shifting.

Kent: so this allows me that I don't have to that

this next response does not have to be tied to ... every other response I've ever had in my life. That I can thoughtfully look at this and go okay what am I gonna do next? what am I gonna do with this?

Kent reported his awareness of his past responses have been conditioned. He noted that he can be more thoughtful in the moment in order to more appropriately respond to his direct experience. In sum, DTs comprising the subcategory, decreased reactivity, were all characterized by descriptions of catching one's automatic reactions, pausing, or otherwise interrupting the conditioned habit, then taking a curious, present-moment interest in that reaction so as to respond more intentionally.

The second subcategory of intention, presencing, was comprised of 13 DTs. Such turns described an intentional shift in perspective leading to an increased awareness of the present moment. Participants reported fewer instances of fantasizing about the future or remembering the past. They reported this shift in terms of detaching from the need to cling to pleasantness. Instead, they experienced the birth, life, and death of each moment without striving for it to be something else. Participants' DTs described how presencing affects the meaning-making process, stating that they are now “seeing the larger picture”. A shift was often described during the formal practices from their initial attempts to be silent and blank, to setting an intention and using compassionate self-talk to cultivate awareness of whatever arose in the present moment. This led to a

development of a more intentional type of presence in the moment. Participants reported feeling connected to the mindfulness practice; finding everyday shifts that stemmed from the practice. The clearest example of a turn that depicts the subcategory of presencing is this example that Maria, a 22-year-old student-teacher, provided. Maria is responding to the interviewer's question that asked if her original definitions of mindfulness and meditation have shifted now that she has completed the course. Maria responded to that question:

Maria: um (.) I think they complement each other (.) um and I feel that mindfulness -- mindfulness now (.) is ME it's anything that goes around in my life and it's (.) just (.) a way that I can present myself and be around (.) um just noticing everything about the world I live in and HOW I respond to it. Meditation IS a way to practice that formally.

Maria described a new sense of being in the world. She described being more present and realized how she responds to the world as a result of subtle awareness stemming from mindfulness practice. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, presencing, were characterized by descriptions of intentional shifting into present-moment perceptions and sensations within familiar experiences.

## **Category 2: Attention**

The second category, attention, was comprised of 31 DTs in which participants described meta-cognitive awareness for the quality and validity of their thoughts. Three subcategories of attention were identified: *recognizing thoughts*, *attentional flexibility*, and

*accepting mind-wandering*. All of these subcategories included the expansion of present-moment attentiveness that cultivates mindfulness awareness, as Shapiro and Carlson (2009) predicted. However, these data provided subtle differentiation.

The first subcategory, recognizing thoughts, was comprised of 16 DTs. Such turns described participants' increased awareness of the various processes of thinking that are typically overlooked. One such process being the meta-cognitive process of identifying that one is having a thought followed by a purposeful pausing or distancing from the thought. The participants' specific use of the terms "distancing" and "pausing" are interpreted by MBSR instructors as disidentifying with one's thoughts, questioning their validity, and thus de-reifying their relationship to the thought. Thoughts shifted from being considered as a way to define the self into an observable mental event, thus decreasing emotional reactivity to thought. The purposeful language that participants used to introduce thoughts indicated disembodiment of the thought from their whole being; identifying that they are the thinker of the thought, as opposed to believing that the thought defines their whole self. Use of "the thought" or "a thought" as opposed to saying "my thought" was frequently noted. Participants stated that they "had stress" as opposed to saying "my stress". This subtle language choice provided insight into re-perceiving on a cognitive level.

Participants discussed that they were able to notice self-critical thoughts directed towards the whole

self. Having already strengthened the muscle of awareness of thinking, participants were able to delineate the shift to acceptance, curiosity, and kindness. This shift provided insight into the active process of re-perceiving that might not be directly observable; thoughts about the self were perceived with an added layer of judgment or meaning making. These perceptions often create a pattern and could serve to reify the self. When a pattern of thought had been established, it could typically be considered the only way to think. Participants reported a time component when they watched their thoughts, monitored from the first moment of awareness until the thought fades away and eventually dies. Once they had become aware of a thought, participants could decide that they could think about this at another time rather than interrupt their current intent. Bonnie, a 21-year-old, 4th-year college student, described becoming aware of her thoughts, shifting from being previously unaware of thinking into awareness, and then questioning the thoughts' validity. This turn depicts such questioning of conditioned thought processes and the additional layer of perceptual judgments. For example, Bonnie, described the process of increasing recognition of her own thought process:

Bonnie: uh::m (3) before it was probably like (.) I would think something and NOT think anything of it (.) or (.) I wouldn't (2) like uh if I was like judging a situation I would just say ohh yeah (h) that's how IT IS ,-h, but now like (.) I have more of a (.) ya know (.) like a sense of (.) like (.) it's oKAY (...) before the course I guess (.) and then NOW I'm aWARE of it and I can kind of (.) deal with it differently I guess

Bonnie described recognizing that she was having a thought, in contrast to previously when she lacked awareness of conditioned assumptions. Bonnie described that she is now more aware of her thoughts, and that it has helped her cultivate acceptance. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, recognizing thoughts, were all characterized by descriptions of the meta-cognitive process, recognizing that one has thoughts and questioning the validity and the reality of the thoughts in the current moment as well as dis-identifying from reifying thoughts.

The second subcategory, attentional flexibility, was comprised of nine DTs. Such turns described a type of control cultivated through shifting one's focus to any specific anchor (e.g., breath, body, or sound) during the formal sitting practice. Participant turns in this subcategory appeared to have a distinct emotional undertone in regard to the intrusive thoughts during meditation from which they then flexibly shifted away. In these turns, participants report a new relationship with unpleasant events and stimuli in various ways. Participants' discourse revealed that they no longer actively avoided unpleasant events but instead were able to become aware of these moments inquisitively. Conversely, participants realized that they could flexibly shift attention to something else in any given moment; typically a meditative anchor. This means cultivating a focus more intently on whatever is coming up in the moment and exploring the various characteristics of the arising emotion. Not only did participants report cultivating flexible attention between different anchors and emotions but between different domains as well

as shifting between thoughts, affect, or bodily sensations. Also, shifts in cognition were reported, choosing to stop a thought, and knowing they could revisit it at a future time. Taking this shift even further, participants also reported shifting between mental frameworks; typically operating in an analytic framework but strengthening the ability to shift to operate within an emotional framework.

Attentional flexibility differs from distractibility, which is more like a ship blown off its course. Attentional flexibility is the purposeful shifting of attention to and from various events and stimuli. Attentional flexibility is not a synonym for avoidance. Participants did not report ignoring thoughts or emotions, but instead realizing what was happening in the moment and then choosing to return to the moment as opposed to immediately addressing anything that arises. Attentional flexibility often co-occurs with the subcategory, recognizing thoughts. Once the muscle of attentional control had been developed, participants became aware that they were thinking, which is a precursor to choosing to engage a thought or to instead flexibly shift attention to something else. The recognizing thoughts category primarily consisted of turns in which participants became aware of cognitive events, while participant reports in the flexibility of attention category seemed to primarily describe emotional events but did include shifts into all domains. Carol, a 22-year-old student, reported flexibly shifting from working on a homework assignment to noticing what was happening in her body. Carol described that typically if she were working on homework, she would ignore any other sensations in a state

of forced concentration. She described noticing that her body was feeling pain; she stopped working and attended to the pain. Once that had subsided, she returned to her homework. Carol discussed this process of flexibly shifting her attention from homework, to her body, and then back to her homework:

Carol: I think I tried (.) um (.) I think beFORE My (2) my first reaction when I was stressed was to just (.) um (.) y'know if it was because I had a paper or I had a test I would just keep going forward keep- keep writing that paper keep- keep studying rather than (.) taking a break and saying like ok lets just breath? and um (.) so after meditation if I had a stomach ache I would kinda just sit there? like put my hands on my stomach or just kind of just breathe? relax. (.) um (.) and take a step back from whatever I was doing and usually if I (.) focused on it -- it it lessened the intensity of it. and then I'd given it time so then I could go back and do what I was doing.

By taking a moment to observe what was happening in her body, Carol was able to skillfully take care of her pain as opposed to ignoring it. Carol indicated the flexibility she had cultivated through meditation. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, attentional flexibility, were all characterized by statements about flexibly shifting between stimuli, domains, and mental frameworks.

The third subcategory, accepting mind-wandering, was comprised of 10 DTs. Such turns described initial judgmental awareness of mind wandering during

meditation. As their mindfulness practice developed, participants described cultivating acceptance for mind wandering, shifting back and forth from noticing that the mind has wandered to focused attention on the selected anchor. Within this subcategory, there were two differing types of DTs. Some participants described specific direction of attention, a type of increased direct focus, while others described emotional reactions or judgments about mind wandering. The participants who described their experiences with direct focus reported this as an effect from the formal practice. This differs from the subcategory, attentional flexibility, in the way that participants directed their attention purposefully as opposed to just noticing some distraction during formal practice and then choosing to return to the anchor. Those who described their emotional reactions toward the phenomena of mind wandering reported a shift from initial judgments to acceptance and compassion. As opposed to rejecting mind wandering and struggling against it, participants treated mind wandering as a universal experience, a hindrance common to all who practice mindfulness. Once this acceptance was cultivated, participants were able to “watch” the mind wandering just as they are able to watch the birth and death of thoughts described in the category of recognizing thoughts. Jordan, a 27-year-old graduate student, cited a renowned Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, to explain his experience of coming to accept mind wandering:

Jordan: So this mind wandering off. <vc> But I just noticed that wandered off. And now you're back in the present! <vc> And just being com-

pletely happy about that and (...) That kind of avoids the judging altogether and stuff. And (.) I really think that THAT was a HUGE piece...

Jordan described becoming aware that the mind wanders and not chastise himself or express judgment toward the mind wandering. He displayed acceptance and deliberately refocused the mind back to the present. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, accepting mind wandering, were all characterized by descriptions of awareness that the mind wanders and cultivation of compassion for that experience during informal and formal practices.

### **Category 3: Attitude**

The third category, attitude, was comprised of 23 DTs. Each turn fitting in this category described the quality of the speaker's attitude toward their own experience. Four subcategories of attitude were identified: *developing acceptance*, *developing compassion*, *developing curiosity*, and *developing non-judgement*. The first subcategory, developing acceptance, was comprised of 22 DTs. Such turns described a specific quality of attitude; a cognitive and emotional shift from judgement to openness. Participants reported experiencing this shift initially during formal meditation practice, then bringing this quality into everyday interactions, particularly in regard to the self as well as unpleasant experiences. Cultivation of acceptance during formal meditative practices occurred during the practice itself as well as during instructor-led inquiry following classroom meditations. Participant statements conveyed increasing acceptance for each meditation sitting for what it was

in the current moment as opposed to striving to meet a specific goal (i.e., trying to relax or seeking solely to eliminate stress). This extended into acceptance for the meditator. Participants reported decreased striving in their daily lives. Group inquiry fostered new ways of relating to self and others particularly when hearing about how others also struggle with similar hindrances. Conversely, some participants reported that judgement directed at the self resulted from comparing themselves to others, striving for perfection, and feeling worried they were not doing it right. Interestingly, one participant reported using his self-talk as a reminder that meditation is a self-directed process. Participants reported moments of re-perceiving when they described experiences of acceptance for self-processes.

Participants described various aspects of the self as building blocks and used less reified language when describing the self. They observed what was occurring in the moment, as opposed to utilizing a fixed and rigid description of who they were. The wish to reject certain parts of the self in order to mimic someone else gave way to reports of acceptance and decreased need to force certain attributes. Participants realized that judgements directed at the self had been conditioned from past experiences. Participants' reports generally discussed accepting the whole self but, interestingly, many participants also discussed the specific acceptance of unpleasantness and pain as a means to tolerate aversion. Pain or stress are not eliminated during meditation but perception shifts from unmanageable and overwhelming to accepting. These sensations do not have to be eliminated but can be tolerated in the moment, with-

out need to over identify in any other way than noticing how the pain feels in the body. Again, participants reported moments of re-perceiving through subtle shifts in language, using terms that describe aversive events as present moment experience as opposed to global assumptions about the self. Participants were recognizing habitual responses to the unpleasant and meeting those experiences with an attitude of acceptance. The clearest example of a turn that depicts the subcategory of acceptance is this example that Jordan, a 27-year-old graduate student, provided in response to the question about defining mindfulness:

Jordan: It's not about being happy all the time? It's not about being stress free all the time? It's just about noticing and accepting and being aware of what is and therefore living life knowing that by paying attention to the negative moments it will also it will eventually with practice accentuate the future moments

Jordan described that meditative practices cultivate acceptance that he then brings into his everyday life. Jordan described acceptance of present moments, noticing what is actually occurring as opposed to focusing on eliminating aversive stimuli and stress. In sum, data comprising the subcategory developing acceptance were all characterized by descriptions of the qualities of acceptance for the practice, the self, and unpleasant events. Participants shifted from undifferentiated wholes to recognizing specific aspects of themselves and their experience.

The second subcategory, developing compassion

sion, was comprised of 11 DTs. Compassion is another quality of attitude. Participants described developing kindness in the formal practice and then cultivating that for the self and for others. Participants reported initial awareness of compassion during formal practice, particularly the awareness of breath, awareness of body, and Metta (Loving Kindness) meditations. Feeling compassion for the wandering mind versus scorn can have markedly different effects on the perception of formal practice. In this particular category, many participants described being conditioned to feel that the notion of cultivating compassion for the self was selfish. Due to the reified self-concepts that participants created as “caring people”, they felt that meant they could not develop self-compassion and still be considered caring. Participants experienced moments of re-perceiving when they realized that self-compassion was necessary and should not be considered as negative. The participants experienced differentiating their past idea of compassion and creating boundaries with others and no longer giving of themselves entirely without taking time for self-care. Participants reported realizing that at any given moment one differentiated part of the self (for instance, anxiety or another unpleasant feeling) might need to be met with compassion. The development of compassion provided insight into the added layer of perception that acts as a lens that determines that experiences will be accompanied by valence judgements. Participant language shifted from reifying emotions into realizing that emotions were temporary. Participants also reported feeling compassion for the body, no longer pain or discomfort in order to meet some goal. Instead, they developed compassion for their bodies’

messages. Participants reported feeling compassion for their own thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, but they also reported a type of compassion that is cultivated for others. Participants’ discourse described extending compassion to others, especially those who are particularly frustrating. Participants reported maintaining an independent emotional state; not following through with the conditioned reaction of matching another person’s attitude. The clearest example of a turn that depicts the subcategory of developing compassion is provided once again from Maggie, a 44-year-old administrative staff member. Maggie was responding to the interviewer’s question that asked her to discuss any changes in compassion she had noticed toward herself or others:

Maggie: when I’m in practice I’m much more aware of what I need to do for ME yes uhhm (2) I think my and this I don’t mean for this to sound egocentric at ALL (3) but I think that I spend so much time worrying about others that I lose myself in that sometimes (...) so it DOES help me in that way, but I usually don’t struggle being compassionate to others (...) But mindfulness helps me do is hold myself there too and realize that in the absence of awareness I will lose myself trying to make sure that everyone else is cared for and I will become angry that I’m not getting my own needs met at some point because I’m so busy trying to do or appreciate what other people might (...)

Maggie revealed her conditioned worry in regard to sounding “egocentric” in the beginning of the

turn. She then went on to describe how she typically was putting others' needs before her own, and that this habit served to reaffirm that she was a compassionate person. Maggie went on to describe that she had begun to show compassion to herself as well as others. The practice of mindfulness helped her gain distance from what she called her "natural instincts" in order to assess if she was truly being compassionate to herself in the moment. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, developing compassion, were all characterized by participant discourse that depicted how the development of compassion was first noticed in the formal meditation and then permeated everyday life, shifting the way that an individual related to self and others.

The third subcategory, developing curiosity, was comprised of 14 DTs that described inquiry into sensations, behaviors, cognitions, and affect. The participants described a shift in the way that they related to previously conditioned habits. Participants reported recognizing that curiosity has developed during the formal practice, and that development informs everyday functioning. Although participants specifically reported developing curiosity for emotions and for bodily sensations in the informal practice, their discourse revealed that they experienced a cognitive shift during meditation, thus, becoming curious about sense perceptions. Participants reported bringing this curious attitude into their everyday lives, aiding in the ongoing development of present moment awareness by using curiosity to assess what might be occurring, and the perceptions that were being elicited. Participants' discourse provided insight into the process of developing curiosity, utilizing

self-inquiry to question past conditioning, and asking themselves how they wanted to respond in this moment. This shift into present moment awareness with the quality of curiosity helped participants to be truly present and attentive to their own needs. Participants reported re-perceiving when they used curiosity to distance themselves from overwhelming emotions as opposed to experiencing undifferentiated, overwhelming sensation. When curiosity developed, participants reported inquiring why, how, and what was happening as a means to better understand the moment. Participants reported shifting from the typical dichotomous way of perceiving events and realizing that many emotions can exist at once. Not only did participants report that curiosity affected emotion, but participants also became curious in regard to what was happening in the body. Participants reported differentiating global pain sensations and becoming curious about which specific parts of the body might be feeling pain. As opposed to ignoring the pain or becoming consumed by it, participants reported becoming curious about which sensations were actually occurring and then addressed them appropriately. Curiosity into physical sensations allowed for the participants to create some distance and to observe the body. Participants described that curiosity developed a new relationship to outdated pain reactivity. In this way, statements coded as developing curiosity often co-occurred with those coded as developing acceptance toward pain, described above. The clearest example of a turn that depicts the subcategory of developing curiosity comes from Bella, a 53-year-old project manager. Bella was responding to the interviewer's request to discuss her informal practice since completing the

MBSR course. Prior to this turn, Bella had described the overwhelming need to “just get away.” Bella listed many changes including this excerpt regarding curiosity:

Bella: it's more like <vc> okay what's going on? okay I'm tired <vc> or I'm... or, its usually with my daughter <vc> why am I? why do I want to blow up at her? <vc> it's that catastrophic thinking, y'know if she doesn't do her homework she's not gonna have a good life umm or:: <vc> you didn't get enough sleep last night you're tired-- pull it back this has nothing to do with her. If you were rested you would be fine with this.

In this turn, we see Bella's curiosity developing when she asked herself “what is going on?” She then differentiated the overwhelming feeling of wanting to “get away” into the specific sensation of tiredness. This helped her to distance herself from her conditioned habit to ruminate about her daughter, and she was aware of what was happening for her in the moment. Bella described her emotional state when she catastrophized about her daughter's future by focusing on specific bodily sensations. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, development of curiosity, were characterized by descriptions of increased self-inquiry, specifically during formal meditation practices. When discussed in everyday life, curiosity tended to be about emotions and bodily sensations.

The fourth subcategory of attitude, developing non-judgement, was comprised of 23 DTs. Such turns described a perceptual experience with various quali-

ties of judgements during formal and informal practices. Participants realized that recognizing judgements allowed for a deeper understanding of habitual ways of interacting. Participants could question these judgements and then respond more skillfully in the moment. Statements in this subcategory described judgements toward the formal practice. This finding has been interpreted to mean that judgements, while typical for human behavior, are cognitive processes that may go unnoticed until some kind of intervention or meditation brings these processes into awareness. This increased awareness shifted judgements from a disembodied habitual process to something that could be directly observed. Specific judgements for the practice were reported; mind wandering and striving to “do it right”, which had also been reported in the subcategories above. This is interpreted to mean that the various subcategories, while mutually exclusive, did occur together as a cyclical process, not linear. Participants realized that they directed scorn toward their wandering mind and judged themselves as inadequate meditators. These judgements shifted as the MBSR practice developed, and participants realized that perfection was not expected in meditation. Instead, participants recognized that judgement was happening and used that as a reminder to return focus to the anchor. Participants reported that instruction by the MBSR teacher prepared them for mind wandering, and this helped to ease judgements in this area. Interestingly, participants reported a distinction that judgements could have a valance quality as they applied to the formal practice. Participants noticed varying levels of pleasant or unpleasant moments and not feeling as though they had to strive for grandeur in

order to experience a pleasant moment. Participants' discourse revealed a shift from being over-identified with the judged self (reified through years of conditioning) to more neutral observation and even acceptance of their perceived imperfections. Participants separated themselves from past experiences in order to construct a self that is de-reified and changing moment by moment. They did this by removing judgements and focusing on direct perceptions. Judgements were observed in the forms of negative self-talk that often encouraged perfectionism. Participants reported a decreased reactivity when they were not able to meet intended goals or appear perfect. The clearest example of a turn that depicted the subcategory, developing non-judgement, came from Corinne, a 21-year-old, 4th-year student. Corinne was responding to the interviewer's question that was asking her to discuss any last significant elements that she learned from taking the MBSR course. Corinne described a shift from feeling hatred for the process of washing dishes to now enjoying the task:

Corinne: it- just looking at it in a new LIGHT I think and (1) like (1) taking it as it IS instead of adding judgment to a situation like (.) <vc> I -- I DON'T like dishes that's a HASSLE <vc> and then being like (2) wh --what am I actually doing (.) in that moment (.) that (.) like there's no HASSLE in it it's just (.) what IS and what's happening (1) and just (.) like removing (.) all of the outside noise that's going on in y -- your mind!

Corrine reported that she had shifted her way of dealing with unpleasantness. Corrine described the addition of judgement to the direct perception of washing

dishes. She described her shift in perception in regard to the chore now that she has eliminated judgement. In sum, data comprising the subcategory, developing non-judgement, were all characterized by recognition of the added layer of the judgmental quality of perceptions.

As expected, the 91 DTs examined did, indeed, instantiate Shapiro et al.'s (2006) three axioms of intention, attention, and attitude. This discursive analysis of the data subset yielded those three categories that were then divided into subcategories enabling a more detailed articulation of the concept of re-perceiving.

## Discussion

The analyses presented provide insights into a crucial phenomenon of mindfulness practice and MBSR through the understanding of participants' reports of re-perceiving. Until now, most research has focused on the various health benefits of MBSR. Little research has been done to uncover the subjective experiences of the self. This project sought to address the research question, "Which shifts in language indicate that participants experience re-perceiving?" Findings are important for those living in a culture that constructs the self as a reified entity.

The literature review highlighted that Western practitioners typically reify the self. But through meditation, this view may cultivate re-perceiving and develop particular discourse that describes the shift in self-perspective. This study was designed to identify participants' reports of this process in detail. Special emphasis

was given to Shapiro et al.'s (2006) work due to its detailed theoretical description of re-perceiving. Shapiro et al. describe three axioms involved in the transitional cultivation of re-perceiving: intention, attention, and attitude. The participants in this study, who were presumably not aware of Shapiro's work, described moments that map onto the three axioms quite well. This study went on to display how these three axioms were reported by participants. My analysis distinguishes detailed subcategories that comprised each category. This allowed for a more in-depth articulation of the concept of re-perceiving, indicating that the process may be more complex than originally implied. Each subcategory delineated specific implications on how the self is experienced as a non-reified, fluctuating sense of identity. The subjective experience of re-perceiving exists at various levels. This finding contrasted the original belief that an individual had experienced re-perceiving or did not. The development of the subcategories made this abundantly clear in a way that was not obvious from their original description of axioms. Although Shapiro et al. state that these mechanisms would appear in various forms, at different rates, my subcategories gave insight that some participants would report experiences in all of the categories, while some would experience just one or two.

Re-perceiving is a process that occurs on more than just a cognitive level. Participant statements clearly describe behavioral and affective impacts. While these domains are not mutually exclusive to each category, there are some general parallels. Participants reported becoming aware and making moment-by-mo-

ment shifts in cognition in the subcategories of attention. In contrast, affect was often mentioned in the four subcategories of attitude. Meanwhile, behavioral shifts were noted in the subcategories of intention, when participants noticed conditioned reactivity and then chose to respond as opposed to react. The analyses presented here dovetail with the literature reviewed and fit with discursive approaches to self (Brown & Cordon, 2009; Stanley, 2012). By examining the participants' descriptions of re-perceiving, I found evidence supporting others' views that mindfulness entails a shift from the story that a person tells about their experience (Brown & Cordon, 2009) to direct, observable behavior and emotional/cognitive processes as they relate to varying experiences of self-construction (Stanley, 2012). Participants' first-person accounts specified relational shifts, from "disconnected practitioner" into that of a "practitioner observer". Through meditative practice, the practitioner begins to directly observe what is occurring as they become aware of sensations; this expanded view reconstructs their perspective. Perspective is determined by the judgments that the practitioner makes about stimuli. Our Western cultural structure provides a shared language and a shared construct that focuses on "I am" and personality traits. The idea of self is developed through the social construction of observable behavior, and roles used to define affect and cognitions (Stanley, 2012). The MBSR course consists of mindfulness practice and instructor-led inquiry. Through such discussions, the practitioner is able to shift the use of language and experience a different sub-cultural construction within the classroom that evolves into a less-reified self.

Participant language, rather than investigator assumptions, drove the Grounded Theory categorizations. Shared cultural meanings between the participants and researcher enabled analytic interpretation of participants' discourse. Noticing parts of the outdated self-concept that were no longer relevant to the present moment of self were "let go"; hence the fluidity that is associated with re-perceiving. This implication is a crucial addition to the larger body of MBSR literature. Understanding the shared cultural meaning behind participants' language brings new significance to instructor-led inquiry. Based on this work, MBSR instructors might learn how to decipher the meanings behind the specific language choices in participants' speech when they describe their meditative processes.

Continuing with the role that language and cultural construction has on the self, McCown and Ahn (2015) describe how Judeo-Christian mainstream views may encourage reified development of the self. These non-secular teachings inform most Westerners that in death certain aspects of the self will be evaluated (Brown & Cordon, 2009). Thus, characteristics of self are judged using valence or a positive/negative dichotomy. In our consumer-oriented culture, we are able to pick and choose anything that we like. We can even pick and choose aspects of personality that we deem to be favorable to increase our status or define us as individuals (McCown & Ahn, 2015). For example, over-commitment and perfectionism in our culture are behaviors and qualities for which modern day Americans seem to be striving. Through the shift in re-perceiving, participants gained insight into their striving to

"be" a certain way.

Shapiro et al (2006) describe that one process of re-perceiving is choice-full awareness of directly observing life events through the five senses as opposed to being overly involved in judgments or stories. Participants described transitions from filtering the moment through the conditioned, fixed self to being fully aware in the present moment. They realized their self-concept had been conditioned by experiences from the past. This kind of conditioning is necessary to "know" who you are. For a Western practitioner, this implication is an essential shift in the experience of re-perceiving, to be able to observe the self as it moves from role to role and in and out of life stages. The practitioner's relationship to the world is not centrally focused on their subjective experience. Participants respond skillfully to experiences while meditating and then applying that experience to the informal practice of everyday being; thus, decreasing reactivity (Olendzki, 2010). This process helped create distance from the stimulus in order to become more fully immersed in the present moment without the conditioned need to narrate with memories from the past (Brown & Cordon, 2009). Re-perceiving assists one in becoming aware of this reifying process, moment-to-moment. The process of re-perceiving enables a unique response to each new experience.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As with any research project, this study had some limitations. One of which can be found within the selection of participants. All participants were highly educated members of a small liberal arts college cam-

pus. The group was ethnically, racially, and culturally homogeneous. By definition, participants who willingly signed up for the MBSR course, showing motivation to engage in mindfulness, are a self-selected group. Those who then gave permission to be contacted for research, indicate a further self-selection process, influencing the sample. These limitations may be addressed by future research that includes a more diverse sample size. Additionally, the interviews were conducted at various subsequent time frames after the course had completed, which meant that some participants may have taken the MBSR course up to three or four years prior to being interviewed. In this way, participants' length of experience and commitment to the practice varied greatly. There is no way to know if or how any of these participant factors impacted the findings. As is the nature of qualitative research, findings cannot be generalized; rather, they serve to clarify a concept. Analytic interpretations of the data set mapped onto and refined a theoretical construct. Future implications of this research may be adapted to further expand upon the concept of re-perceiving; developing a more refined idea of when or how one realizes that they have shifted from the pre-conceived notion of the fixed self to that of a fluid self.

## Conclusion

Given the earlier discussion about the Western, reified self, it is important to relate this refined concept of re-perceiving to the field of psychology as a whole. By understanding the processes detailed in the analyses, psychological researchers may better understand the role that culture and language play in therapeutic in-

teractions. The MBSR course cultivates re-perceiving and thus a new way of experiencing self, which may explain why it is such a useful adjunct to other forms of treatment. Mindfulness meditation helps practitioners realize that their view of self is reified, a view that poses particular difficulties when navigating a world that is constantly changing. Clinging to the fixed, culturally constructed view of self adds an unnecessary layer of suffering to psychological distress. When what is "known" about the self can be let go, the individual can focus more deliberately on healing. Re-perceiving is the process by which the self becomes de-reified; questioning conditioned self construction. Awareness of what is needed in the present moment takes precedent, having significant implications on health and well-being reported by MBSR practitioners. I interpret re-perceiving to be one reason why MBSR elicits such restorative effects.

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## About the Author

As a graduate student, I was able to continue my interest in MBSR during my two-year Graduate Research Assistantship, working with Dr. Mamberg in the Clinical Psychology department. As an undergraduate student, I assisted with Dr. Mamberg's larger study in my role as a transcriptionist. Being able to experience the MBSR class as well as continuing my meditation practice gave me particular insight into the experiences of our participants. I have since graduated from the Master of Clinical Psychology program, and for my work on this project, I was awarded the Distinguished Graduate Research Award. I have recently started my work as a clinician at a local community mental health clinic.