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Jochen REB

Singapore Management University, jochenreb@smu.edu.sg

Tammy ALLEN

University of South Florida

Timothy J. VOGUS

Vanderbilt University

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**Mindfulness Arrives at Work:
Deepening Our Understanding of Mindfulness in Organizations**

Jochen Reb

Singapore Management University

Tammy Allen

University of South Florida

Timothy J. Vogus

Vanderbilt University

Corresponding Author Information:

Jochen Reb

Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Human Resources

Lee Kong Chian School of Business

Singapore Management University

jreb@smu.edu.sg

Abstract

Mindfulness has become an increasingly popular practice and in parallel scholarly research has grown considerably. However, the study of mindfulness at work remains limited and motivates this special issue on “Mindfulness at Work: Pushing Theoretical and Empirical Boundaries.” In this introduction to the special issue we offer a brief initial grounding in the literature on mindfulness at work and in organizations. We then turn attention to how the six articles in this special issue advance this nascent field. We use both as a point of departure for considering the benefits and limits of mindfulness in organizations as well as the contextual (e.g., leadership) moderators and boundary conditions on mindfulness. We also detail the emerging evidence on both the general cognitive and workplace-specific mechanisms through which mindfulness operates. We offer directions for future research that highlight both the interplay of individual mindfulness and interpersonal relations and organizing, as well as means of increasing mindfulness beyond traditional meditative practice. Finally, we conclude with a brief outlook to a promising future ahead for this growing field that we believe has the potential to substantially reduce suffering and increase flourishing at workplaces throughout the world.

Introduction

Interest in mindfulness within work settings has increased dramatically over recent years and many organizations around the globe have started to offer some form of mindfulness based/infused training to their employees and leaders. Mindfulness seems to address important issues organizations and employees are struggling with in a time of attention overload, multi-tasking, and stressors from increasingly complex work arrangements and 24/7 connectivity. Recent surveys indicate that 64% of American adults report work as a significant source of stress, making it the most commonly mentioned personal stressor (American Psychological Association, 2019). In addition, technology has fundamentally changed the way individuals work and communicate with one another (Sarker, Xiao, Saker, & Ahuja, 2012). Increased connectivity to work through mobile technologies (e.g., email, texts) and rising expectations for after hours responsibility make it more difficult for workers to detach from work. Moreover, organizations are facing uncertainty as the pace of innovation and technology rapidly accelerates, calling into question how to best compete in the economy of the future (World Development Report, 2019). Such pressures fuel the demand for training in mindfulness that refocus on the present moment and reduces stress.

The sudden explosion of interest, however, also raises the question of whether mindfulness training in organizations is just hype or is an evidence-based approach to improving employee and organization wellbeing and functioning that is here to stay. On the one hand, a voluminous body of clinical, medical, and psychological research has generally shown very encouraging findings regarding mindfulness' benefits (e.g., Creswell, 2017; Khoury et al., 2013; Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). On the other hand, it is not clear whether these findings translate to workplace settings. Research on mindfulness at work itself has been growing rapidly. To illustrate, a PsycINFO search in February 2020 using the terms organizational mindfulness, workplace mindfulness, or employee mindfulness produced a

total of 135 hits. The first article was published in 1999 (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999) and 54 articles were published between 2006 and 2015. Since 2016 a total of 81 additional articles have been published demonstrating the accelerated rate of scholarship on mindfulness in organizations at both the individual and collective (team and organizational) levels. Despite this impressive growth, the field is arguably still in its infancy, with many important theoretical, methodological, and practical questions yet to be addressed. The purpose of this special issue is to provide a concentrated push to help advance the scholarly frontier of our understanding of mindfulness in the workplace and set the stage for future research.

Advancing the Field of Mindfulness at Work: The Special Issue Articles

The articles in this special issue collectively provide an extensive investigation of mindfulness at work. They examine mindfulness in a variety of workplace domains, including creativity, well-being, prosocial behavior, workplace discrimination, and conflict. They also model mindfulness in different ways: as independent, moderator, and/or dependent variable. Further, the studies employ a broad range of research designs, including field and lab experiments, surveys, and experience sampling studies. Finally, the studies are situated in different contexts and cultures, such as South Asia, China, Europe, and U.S., and draw on a variety of samples.

Importantly, the articles not only report on outcomes, but increase our understanding of the mediating processes involved in mindfulness at work, such as paranoid cognition, empathy, and cognitive reappraisal, as well as the moderating factors and boundary conditions, such as leader humility. Overall, we believe that the articles in this special issue, each on its own, but even more so in combination, substantially advance the field of mindfulness at work. Table 1 presents a summary of the articles found in the special issue. In the following paragraphs we provide a brief overview of each.

Three papers model mindfulness as independent variable and report important

benefits of mindfulness on conflict management, prosocial behavior, and creativity. Kay and Skarlicki (this issue) reassess the relationship between mindfulness and conflict. Specifically, they posit that mindfulness may enable a more constructive form of conflict management. Using a survey study and a field experiment, they find that mindfulness increases collaborative approaches to conflict and reduces conflict avoidance. They further find cognitive reappraisal mediates the relationship with collaboration, but not conflict avoidance. Their study moves beyond existing work that shows mindfulness being associated with lower levels of conflict (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018) to illuminate the type of conflict mindfulness fosters (more collaborative, less avoidant) and a mechanism through which it operates (cognitive reappraisal).

In another paper on mindfulness in the interpersonal domain, Hafenbrack et al. (this issue) study not conflict but prosocial behaviors. Using both lab and field experiments they found that more mindful individuals engaged in more prosocial behaviors, such as self and other-rated helping behaviors and financially generous behaviors. Moreover, their third study provides support for empathy, and moderate support for perspective taking, as mediators. Their study extends existing research on mindfulness and prosocial behavior (e.g., Donald et al., 2019) by showing not only that this relation holds in workplace contexts but also by shedding light on the mediating mechanisms.

In the third paper examining mindfulness as independent variable, Cheung, Huang, Chang, and Wei (this issue) show that mindful employees are more creative at work. Whereas a considerable amount of research has examined the mindfulness-creativity link, most of this research has been conducted in the lab and failed to examine creativity from an organizational perspective (Kudesia, 2015). To address this gap, the authors develop a model in which mindfulness increases employee creativity through creative process engagement, moderated at the second stage by employee perceived leader humility as a boundary

condition. Across two field studies, they find that employee mindfulness is positively related to supervisor-rated creativity, mediated by creative process engagement. However, this indirect relation becomes non-significant when employees perceive their supervisors as low in humility. Thus, the authors not only introduce a novel mediating mechanism (creative process engagement), but also highlight the important moderating role of leadership.

Moving from mindfulness as independent to moderating variable, Thoroughgood, Sawyer, and Webster (this issue) examine how mindfulness can help transgender employees subject to discrimination. The article begins by pointing out an important imbalance in the literature: While much is known about the harmful effects of discrimination, much less is known about what helps stigmatized individuals cope with prejudicial work events.

Integrating work on workplace discrimination, mindfulness, and paranoid cognition, the authors test the within-person moderated mediation model that mindfulness helps employees interrupt the process by which discrimination perceptions lead to paranoid cognition, which in turn leads to emotional exhaustion. An experience sampling study of 105 transgender employees provided support for this model by showing that trait mindfulness weakened the indirect within-person effect of perceived discrimination on emotional exhaustion via paranoid cognition. The findings are important in that they suggest mindfulness can help address the significant challenge of discrimination that transgender people face at work.

In another experience sampling study modelling mindfulness as moderator, Chong, Kim, Lee, Johnson, and Lin (this issue) examine the interplay between workday respite activities and mindfulness on influencing employee outcomes via affect. The authors point out that whereas workday respite activities, such as taking a short break, are generally thought of as beneficial (e.g., Kühnel, Zacher, De Bloom, & Bledow, 2017), we may not always be able to get the most benefit from respites, due to our inability to relax and enjoy the respite activities. They argue that mindfulness plays an important moderating role in that

it facilitates psychological detachment from work during workday respite activities, which in turn allows employees to experience emotional and other benefits. Results from three experience sampling studies with full-time employees support the model by showing that mindfulness strengthens the positive indirect relation of workday respite activities with intrinsic motivation and work engagement via psychological detachment and positive affective state, as well as the negative indirect relation of workday respite activities with work stress and emotional exhaustion via psychological detachment and negative affective state. Through their research, Chong et al. highlight the power of combining an activity (taking a break) with an attentional stance (mindfully, so as to be able to detach psychologically) to enhance well-being and functioning.

Finally, challenging the notion that mindfulness can only be developed through intentional practice, Reina and Kudesia (this issue) look at mindfulness as a dependent variable and examine how it arises in everyday situations. Their article reminds us that mindfulness is not only influenced by personal (mindfulness meditation) practice but also through personal beliefs and situational conditions (e.g., Reb, Narayanan, & Ho, 2015). Drawing on research on metacognitive practice and self-regulation, they suggest that mindfulness is shaped by the interplay between self-regulation capacity, metacognitive beliefs, mental fatigue, and situational appraisals. Their three experience sampling studies raise the intriguing possibility that mindfulness depends less on people's overall capacity for self-regulation than it does on their metacognitive beliefs, and that situations can influence mindfulness both by pulling attention toward and away from tasks.

Discussion

The Benefits (and Drawbacks) of Mindfulness in Organizations

Whether the beneficial role of mindfulness found in clinical settings extends into workplaces – with their unique set of characteristics and challenges – is a key question about

which practitioners and scholars care deeply. To this question, the articles in this special issue answer with a resounding “yes.” The articles are both consistent with and extend existing research on mindfulness in organizations (for overviews, see Good et al., 2016; Reb & Atkins, 2015; Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016). Seen together, the articles suggest a broad beneficial role of mindfulness for both well-being (e.g., emotional exhaustion, affective states, psychological detachment, stress, recovery) and functioning (e.g., intrinsic motivation, work engagement, creativity, conflict management, prosocial behaviors). The findings are robust across situations as diverse as being ostracized or taking a short break from work; for samples drawn from transgender employees, from organizations in health care, insurance, and consulting, and across studies conducted in the US, Europe, China, and India.

However, in our view, caution is still warranted before concluding that mindfulness in organizations is always beneficial. It is important to keep in mind that numerous questions remain unanswered with respect to the role and consequences of mindfulness at work. It is also possible that, due to publication bias, reports of mindfulness’ benefits are over-represented in the published literature, whereas null findings of no benefits, as well as drawbacks, may be under-represented.

To more fully understand the role of mindfulness at work, we believe that an important task ahead is for the field to move beyond essentially replicating clinical mindfulness research in the workplace (e.g., by studying whether mindfulness reduces employee stress) towards developing and examining workplace-specific research questions that integrate theorizing on mindfulness and on organizations. This is already being done at the collective level in research on mindful organizing focusing on highly reliable performance in high-hazard industries (e.g., Kudesia, Lang, & Reb, 2020; Rerup, 2009; Vogus & Iacobucci, 2016) and in research on mindfulness in leadership (e.g., Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018; Reb, Chaturvedi, Narayanan, & Kudesia, 2019). In this regard, some of the

articles in this special issue can also serve as exemplars. For example, Cheung et al. (this issue) focus specifically on employee creativity, integrating theorizing on mindfulness, creative process engagement, and leadership to develop their moderated mediation model linking mindfulness to creativity.

In developing its own theorizing and findings, we urge the field to remain open to potential null effects and boundary conditions, as well as costs and drawbacks of mindfulness within the complexities of organizations. Incorporating more critical perspectives on mindfulness are particularly needed. As mindfulness has become more popular and institutionalized in a wide variety of organizations, concerns have been raised with regard to “pop capitalist spirituality” (Purser, 2018) and mindfulness as an elite movement (Kucinkas, 2018). As Purser notes, mindfulness is currently being promoted and marketed as a way to address corporate issues such as lack of employee engagement rather than as a way to address systematic organizational causes of disengagement. Such approaches place the burden on the employee rather than on the organization. Critical management scholars also argue that corporate approaches to mindfulness strip it of its Buddhist or contemplative roots and of the soteriological goal of eliminating the root causes of suffering (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

The Importance of Understanding Mediating Processes

We believe that investigating mediating processes within organizations will be key towards developing a more comprehensive, theoretical understanding of mindfulness in organizations. Related to the argument above, in our view, the field in particular needs to do more to examine workplace-specific mediating processes. Some of the papers in this special issue provide important contributions and examples in this respect. For example, Cheung et al. (this issue) examine creative process engagement as a novel mediator and Thoroughgood et al. (this issue) investigate the mediating role of paranoid cognitions about work and co-workers. Other recent research found support for mediating roles of organizational justice

perceptions (Reb et al., 2019) and rumination at work (Crain, Schonert-Reichl, & Roeser, 2016).

This is not to say that more “generic” mediating processes are unimportant at work – quite the contrary. For example, Cheung et al. (this issue) provide evidence for psychological detachment and positive and negative affective states as mediating processes, and Kay and Skarlicki (this issue) explore the mediating role of cognitive reappraisal on conflict management approach (i.e., collaboration or conflict avoidance). Hafenbrack et al. (this issue) highlight the mediating roles of empathy and perspective taking. Consistent with other research (e.g., Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013, Vago & Silbersweig, 2012), these findings highlight the importance of self-regulation and emotional processes as mediating mechanisms, both in general and in the workplace. We believe that more fully exploring both generic and workplace-specific mediating processes will go a long way in advancing both our theoretical understanding of mindfulness at work as well as our confidence in its practical value.

Mindfulness at Work as Embedded in Interpersonal Relations

The corporate focus on mindfulness as a tool that can be used to “improve” employees has also diminished the original focus on mindfulness as a relational process. As noted by Eby, Robertson, and Fecteau (in press), mindfulness has historically been associated with the elevation of feelings of compassion toward others, the enhancement of interpersonal relationships, and the reduction of feelings of loneliness. To that extent an important insight that emerges quite clearly from the articles in this special issue, as well as other work (Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016), is that mindfulness in the workplace is embedded in interpersonal interactions and relations. Kay and Skarlicki (this issue) specifically focus on conflict management, and Hafenbrack et al. (this issue) on prosocial behaviors, both interpersonal phenomena. Hafenbrack et al. find support for empathy as a mediator, Kay and

Skarlicki (this issue) find support for cognitive reappraisal influencing a collaborative approach to conflict management, and Thoroughgood et al. (this issue) for paranoid cognitions about co-workers, all interpersonal emotions and cognitions. And Cheung et al. (this issue) show that leader humility provides a boundary condition to the benefit of employee mindfulness for creativity, such that the benefit disappears when employees' leaders are not sufficiently humble. Through these results, the articles highlight that in organizations, mindfulness' effects are rarely purely individual. Rather mindfulness is embedded in cultures, structures, processes, and tasks, and operates in interaction with others, such as leaders, team members, and subordinates. We need further research that elaborates the socially embedded nature of mindfulness and its corresponding antecedents and consequences.

These studies collectively advance what we see as an important area of research: The study of interpersonal aspects of mindfulness at work. More research is needed on mindfulness in teams (e.g., Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018) and other collectives (e.g., Vogus & Iacobucci, 2016), in leadership (e.g., Reb, Narayanan, & Chaturvedi, 2014) and other interpersonal work relationships such as mentorships (Eby et al., in press), and in dual-career couples and work-family dynamics (e.g., Allen & Kiburz, 2012; Chen, Allen, & Hou, 2020). Complementing research on mindfulness and interpersonal processes should be work examining the role of organizational processes and structures (e.g., Vogus, & Welbourne, 2003), culture (e.g., Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015), and institutions (e.g., Kudesia et al., 2020) for mindfulness at work.

A largely open question is how the studies of individual mindfulness that comprise this special issue may scale up to higher levels (e.g., teams, organizations) of mindfulness. Is mindfulness at higher levels merely an aggregate of individuals' mindfulness or does individual mindfulness become collective through other mechanisms? Some of this tension

involves whether mindfulness is viewed fundamentally as an individual or as a collective experience. Mindfulness for collective endeavors transcends individual focus on personal experiences such as stress reduction and moves toward viewing mindfulness as constitutive of organizing that seeks to enhance organizational adaptability, reliability, resilience, and wisdom (e.g., Badham & King, 2019).

The leading perspective on collective mindfulness is mindful organizing. Mindful organizing is conceptualized as five interrelated behavioral and discursive processes through which collectives anticipate and dynamically respond to errors and unexpected events (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). Collectives do so by (1) fully discussing the ways in which things can go wrong and jointly analyzing early indications of trouble (preoccupation with failure); (2) questioning the adequacy of existing approaches, policies, and procedures and considering more reliable alternatives (reluctance to simplify interpretations); (3) developing and refreshing a shared understanding of operations in the moment (sensitivity to operations); (4) committing to thoroughly analyzing, discussing, and learning from close calls, errors, and setbacks (commitment to resilience); and (5) deferring to local expertise rather than formal authority when resolving emergent problems (deference to expertise) (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991; Schulman, 1993; Roberts, Stout, & Halpern, 1994; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015).

Although none of the studies in the special issue explicitly address the relationship between individual and collective mindfulness, they reveal a number of social mechanisms through which individual mindfulness (or multiple individuals each working mindfully) may foster more mindful organizing. For instance, Cheung et al. (this issue) find mindfulness increases creative process engagement and creativity, which suggests that more ideas and possibilities are being kept in play (reluctance to simplify interpretations), more alternative futures are being considered and seen as sources of learning (preoccupation with failure, commitment to resilience), and more diverse expertise is likely to be enlisted when creatively

engaged (deference to expertise). As such, creative engagement and creativity could bridge individual mindfulness and mindful organizing.

Similarly, both Hafenbrack and colleagues (this issue) and Kay and Skarlicki find two behaviors (helping and collaborating, respectively) that might translate individual mindfulness into mindful organizing by, for example, enabling adaptive responses (deference to expertise) and creating better shared understanding of the work others do and how it fits together (e.g., sensitivity to operations). Several studies also establish cognitive underpinnings that might help illuminate how individual mindfulness informs mindful organizing. Specifically, empathy (Hafenbrack et al.), metacognitive beliefs (Reina & Kudesia, this issue), and cognitive reappraisal (Kay & Skarlicki) are mechanisms by which situations are reconsidered or approached anew and potentially discussed in a manner consistent with mindful organizing. Hafenbrack et al. also provides initial evidence for how individual mindfulness through prosocial action may help sustain mindful organizing as posited by Vogus, Rothman, Sutcliffe, and Weick (2014). Future research can explore the relationship between other-oriented behaviors like collaboration (Kay & Skarlicki, this issue) and helping (Hafenbrack et al., this issue) as bridging mechanisms between individual and team mindfulness. But other factors like social network density, relationship quality (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), and relational coordination (Gittell, 2002) may also aid individual mindfulness becoming team mindfulness.

With mindful organizing, one persistent concern is that a preoccupation with failure becomes pathological and induces analysis paralysis or maladaptive paranoid cognition (e.g., Vogus et al., 2014). Thoroughgood et al. (this issue) find that individual mindfulness interrupts the descent into paranoid cognition in especially aversive circumstances (i.e., experiencing prejudicial work events). It would be worth examining how mindful individuals help constructively balance a preoccupation with failure and prevent any of its potentially

debilitating excesses. Another concern regarding sustaining mindful organizing over time is that it regularly pushes individuals beyond their limits (Schulman, 1993). However, Chong and colleagues (this issue) point to how more mindfully approaching workday respites allows for detaching from overwhelming demands and restoring positive affect, which may be especially valuable in high hazard environments (e.g., air traffic control, nuclear power generation).

Some of the challenge to linking individual and collective mindfulness may be a result of a lack of measures that show how individual mindfulness is externalized and scales up to collective mindfulness in situ at work. Prior work, however, points to ways in which more behavioral and discursive markers of real-time mindful organizing may be captured. Behaviorally, Christianson's (2019) research on updating in medical teams in a simulated unexpected event draws upon careful and close coding of video data that could provide tangible behavioral and discursive markers of mindful organizing in real-time that would allow it to be linked to individuals' state or trait mindfulness. Cooren's (2004) work on collective minding applies conversation analysis to surface and unpack instances of collective minding that could be traced to the utterances of more (or less) mindful individuals (see also Carlo et al., 2012). Similarly, we expect that more mindful individuals and teams comprised of more mindful individuals would produce more mindful discourse that, in the spirit of a reluctance to simplify interpretations, could be identified using the same approach as applied to "horizon expanding" resourceful sensemaking (Wright, Manning, Farmer, & Gilbreath, 2000). Future research should apply these qualitative methods to how individual mindfulness relates to more (or less) mindful behavior and/or discourse. After coding, quantitative linkages could be established from the same data.

Increasing Mindfulness in Organizations

In light of the evidence in support of mindfulness' benefits at work, the question

arises what organizations can do to increase the level of mindfulness in their organizations. In this regard, Eby, Allen, Conley, Williamson, Henderson and Mancini (2019) conducted a comprehensive review of 67 published studies that examined mindfulness-based training executed with employees. Their results yielded several findings of note. First, although most studies were based on an adaption of Kabat-Zinn's (1990) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) approach, there was a great degree of heterogeneity in program content and duration. Second, health and wellbeing outcomes have been the primary target of change with far fewer studies examining traditional organizational outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction. Third, although two thirds of the studies reviewed included a control group, active control groups were rarely used, leaving the question open of whether mindfulness practice is more effective than other types of interventions.

Some of the research in this special issue directly addresses Eby et al.'s (2019) findings. Specifically, both Hafenbrack et al (this issue) and Kay and Skarlicki (this issue) provide evidence for positive effects of mindfulness training on workplace variables – helping behaviors towards colleagues and a positive approach to workplace conflict management (i.e., greater collaboration and lower conflict avoidance). However, more work needs to follow Kay and Skarlicki using active controls in field experimental setting, heeding Eby et al.'s call that more research is needed that uses active control conditions.

We also see the need for more work on mindfulness training that is tailored to workplace settings. Mindfulness-based interventions such as MBSR and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Segal & Teasdale, 2018) were originally developed for specific purposes (helping patients with chronic pain; preventing depression relapse). On conceptual grounds, it is questionable that these interventions, even if somewhat adapted, are the most suitable interventions for workplace purposes such as improving leadership, decision making, or team work. More research is needed that examines mindfulness-based training specifically

developed with workplace context and purposes in mind. In this regard, the articles in this special issues suggest the importance of considering interpersonal interactions and relations, self-regulatory and emotional processes, and organizational characteristics and context (such as conflict and discrimination).

Interestingly, many existing mindfulness-based interventions are deficit-reduction oriented – albeit not entirely so – such as trying to reduce stress (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990) or preventing depression relapse (Segal & Teasdale, 2018). This is perhaps not surprising in light of their origins in medicine and clinical psychology and the preoccupation of these fields with physical and mental illness. In contrast, the emerging fields of positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000) and positive organizational scholarship (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011) emphasize flourishing, growth, positive wellbeing, and functioning. Arguably, such a positive orientation is inherently more compatible with – or at least more attractive to – organizations. This suggests the potential appeal and value of training that combines mindfulness with a flourishing and growth orientation, such as Mindfulness-Based Strategic Awareness Training (MBSAT; Young, 2016).

Another important aspect for workplace mindfulness training relates to its applicability in daily work life. Within the training literature, the challenge of transfer of training, or whether learnings from one context – in particular the training context – can be transferred to another context – in particular the work context – is well recognized (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010). It is, for example, not immediately obvious that sitting cross-legged in a mindfulness meditation for 45 minutes daily in the morning or evening (as is expected in MBSR) will help employees and leaders during their daily work.

This again raises the issue of tailoring mindfulness training to workplace contexts, with transfer of training issues clearly in mind. It also brings into focus the distinction between formal (such as sitting meditation) and informal (such as listening mindfully to a

colleague) mindfulness practices. While many mindfulness trainings include both, little is known about their unique and relative effects, suggesting a valuable direction for future research. Also, some existing research suggests that even short, “on-the-spot” mindfulness interventions can be effective (Hafenbrack, 2017). For example, Reb and Narayanan (2014) found that a short 3-minute mindful breathing practice can improve negotiation performance and Kay and Skarlicki (this issue) use a similar approach in a complementary domain (conflict management). Thus, if the intention is to increase mindfulness on the spot for a specific activity, brief mindfulness practices are a promising direction to further explore.

Related to the importance of emotion and emotion regulation processes for the benefits of mindfulness, as discussed above, future research would also do well to explore more emotion-related mindfulness practices in organizations. In this regard, Hafenbrack et al.’s Study 3 (this issue) provides a good example by including a loving kindness meditation condition in addition to a focused breathing condition. Loving kindness and (self) compassion based practices have recently received more attention in psychological research (e.g., Arch, Landy, & Brown, 2016; Fredrickson et al., 2017; Jazaieri et al., 2016) and we believe it would be worth examining their use and effects in organizations.

Reina and Kudesia (this issue) point out the value of going beyond individual mindfulness practice in finding ways in which organizations can increase mindfulness. One possibility would be to use (trait) mindfulness for the screening and selection of job applicants. However, while this approach seems obvious, it is not necessarily a practical or promising one, as currently available self-reported mindfulness scales are relatively easy to fake and little research has been conducted on objective measures of mindfulness (with the whole idea of doing so raising interesting questions in itself) (Lim, Teng, Patanaik, Tandi, & Massar, 2018; Wong, Massar, Chee, & Lim, 2018).

Perhaps a more promising approach, at least for the time being, is to draw on the

insights from Reina and Kudesia (this issue), which suggests the important role of both workplace situations and individual beliefs as antecedents of mindfulness. Thus, organizations and leaders can try to increase mindfulness by reducing hindrances and constraints (cf. Reb et al., 2015) and by encouraging positive social interactions. In addition, individuals can recognize the role their meta-cognitive beliefs about self-regulation plays for their mindfulness and try to change these beliefs.

Moreover, prior research (e.g., Vogus & Iacobucci, 2016) and articles from the special issue (e.g., Chong et al., this issue) suggest everyday organizational practices may elicit and/or enhance the effects of mindfulness. For instance, Vogus and Iacobucci (2016) found that bundles of reliability-enhancing work practices that enhance interpersonal skills (e.g., selection and training practices) and give employees the space to make use of them (e.g., practices that empower voice) elicit higher quality interactions and higher levels of mindful organizing. Chong and colleagues (this issue) find the value of mindfulness in moderating the effectiveness of respites, but perhaps redesigning respites to be explicitly (or even guided) detachment-oriented may also elicit mindfulness. Alternatively, redesigning work to provide respites in the form of “mindless tasks” that can free up cognitive capacity may induce creativity (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006). Future work should continue to explore how everyday practices can create the organizational conditions or personal circumstances for greater levels of collective and individual mindfulness (or mindlessness) to emerge.

Conclusions

The fundamental role of attention, and its regulation, for human behavior (e.g., James, 1890; Wundt, 1874) and organizing (e.g., Simon, 1947; March & Simon, 1958) has long been recognized. What individuals and organizations “pay attention” to shapes the information they process, the opportunities and dangers they see, the options they consider, the judgments and decisions they make, the people they interact with, and ultimately the world they live in.

Yet despite – or perhaps because of – this seemingly pervasive nature of attention, we often do not pay enough attention to attention, instead taking it for granted and treating it like other automatic processes such as breathing, hearing, and seeing. We believe that research on mindfulness, drawing on the wisdom and insights of contemplative traditions as well as the rigor of scientific methods has the potential to put the spotlight back on attending as a process foundational to living and organizing. In so doing, it has the potential to substantially advance organizational scholarship. Perhaps even more importantly, by uncovering how attention and mindfulness “work” and can be systematically taught, developed, and increased at work, we are convinced that this research area has the potential to substantially reduce suffering and increase flourishing at workplaces throughout the world.

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Table 1. Content and Characteristics of the Special Topic Forum Articles

Authors	Primary Purpose	MFN as...	Methods	Trait/State	Sample	Location
Kay & Skarlicki	To determine if mindfulness increases constructive conflict management and does so through cognitive reappraisal.	Independent variable	Survey study, longitudinal field experiment	Trait and state	Study 1: Employees through MTurk Study 2: Health care organization	U.S., Canada
Hafenbrack, Cameron, Spreitzer, Noval, Zhang, & Shaffakat	To understand whether and how state mindfulness can increase prosocial behaviors	Independent variable	Longitudinal field experiment, 1-day field experiment, online experiment (2), lab experiment	State	Study 1a: Insurance company employees Study 1b: IT consulting firm employees Study 2a: Business school alumni Study 2b: Business school and economics students Study 3: Employees through MTurk	U.S., India, South Asia, Central Europe
Cheung, Huang, Chang, Wei	To determine if mindfulness benefits employee creativity through creative process engagement	Independent variable	Multiple wave field studies	Trait	Study 1: Automobile company employees Study 2: Manufacturing company employees	China
Thoroughgood, Sawyer, & Webster	To examine the moderating role of trait mindfulness on the within-person links between perceptions of discrimination at work and emotional exhaustion	First stage moderator	Experience sampling	Trait	Transgender employees	U.S.

Chong, Kim, Lee, Johnson, & Lin	To understand how employees can better benefit from workday respite activities with mindfulness as a moderator that shapes interpretation of affective events	First stage moderator	Experience sampling	Trait and state	Study 1 & 2: employees enrolled in online executive MBA course Study 3: full-time employees through MTurk	U.S.
Reina & Kudesia	To develop a theoretical model that extends insights about mindfulness as a meta-cognitive process	Dependent variable	Experience sampling	State	Study 1: undergraduate business school students Study 2: hospital nurses Study 3: community members in a mid-Atlantic city	U.S.