"If you treasure it, measure it: assessing mindfulness, compassion and equanimity"

Day:	Time:	Track:
Friday 13th July 2018	10:45 – 12:00	Philosophical and Dharma Underpinnings

Background and objectives: Assessment of mindfulness, compassion, and equanimity is essential for empirical research on the nature of these variables, their relationships to other aspects of psychological functioning, the effects of mindfulness training, and the mechanisms of change in mindfulness-based interventions. This symposium will include four presentations. Ruth Baer will provide an update on the assessment of mindfulness, including what we are learning from the use of mindfulness questionnaires, current issues in self-report assessment of mindfulness, and proposed ways of expanding beyond self-report methods. Clara Strauss and Jenny Gu (University of Sussex) will discuss the assessment of compassion, including a recently proposed five-element definition, difficulties with existing measures, and the development of new measures designed to assess compassion for self and others. Philippe Goldin (University of California Davis) will present the Multidimensional Compassion Scale (MCS), a general measure of compassion with four components: cognitive, affective, intentional, and motivational. Amit Bernstein, Adi Shoham, and Yuval Hadash will discuss recent work on the assessment of equanimity with emphasis on a new conceptual model and the use experience sampling methods.

Method: These presentations will include a variety of empirical methods used in the development and evaluation of psychological assessment instruments in student, community, and clinical populations.

Results: All four of the talks will present findings supporting the reliability, validity, and utility of the instruments discussed and highlighting questions for future research.

Discussion and conclusions: Research on the assessment of all three of these constructs shows encouraging findings. The instruments appear to have strong psychometric properties and excellent potential for increasing our understanding of mindfulness, compassion, and equanimity.

Symposium overview

Presenter 1	**Ruth Baer** - Assessment of mindfulness: Current status and future directions
Presenter 2	**Clara Strauss** - Assessment of compassion for self and others: Conceptualization and development of new measures
Presenter 3	**Philippe Goldin** - A Multidimensional Approach to Compassion Measurement - Scale Development and Application
Presenter 4	**Amit Bernstein** - Assessment of equanimity: Conceptual model and an experience sampling study
Chair:	*Ruth Baer*

Assessment of mindfulness: Current status and future directions

Ruth Baer

University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, United States

Background & objectives: The assessment of mindfulness is essential for studying its relationships with psychological functioning and the effects of mindfulness training. Most current strategies for assessing mindfulness rely on self-report methods. This talk provides an overview of what we have learned through the development and use of mindfulness questionnaires, current issues in self-report assessment of mindfulness, and proposed ways of expanding beyond self-report methods.

Methods: This talk will review selected aspects of the recent literature on three topics. First, studies of the relationships between the "what" of mindfulness (awareness of present-moment experience) and the "how" of mindfulness (qualities of awareness such as nonjudgment and nonreactivity) have provided new understandings about the nature of mindfulness and its relationships with psychological health. Second, studies examining whether self-reported mindfulness improves in interventions that don't teach mindfulness skills provide new information about mindfulness questionnaires. Third, attempts to move beyond self-report, including a behavioral task based on breath-counting, have been developed and show promising initial data.

Results: First, several studies suggest that both the "what" and the "how" are essential to the relationship between mindfulness and psychological health. Mindfulness is more than just paying attention. Without the nonjudgmental and nonreactive qualities, present-moment awareness may be unhelpful or even harmful. Second, the literature shows that mindfulness improves more in mindfulness-based programs than in programs that don't include mindfulness training, although this is truer for some mindfulness questionnaires than for others. Finally, new behavioral tasks for assessing mindfulness are promising but require additional research.

Discussion/conclusions: Research on the assessment of mindfulness shows that the psychometric properties of mindfulness questionnaires are strong in most ways, despite some difficulties and imperfections. Mindfulness questionnaires have made important contributions to our understanding of mindfulness skills and how they contribute to psychological health. Attempts to develop methods for measuring mindfulness that do not rely on self-report are in the early stages but show promise.

Assessment of compassion for self and others: Conceptualization and development of new measures

Clara Strauss, Jenny Gu

University of Sussex, Hove, United Kingdom

Background and objectives: A recent review of theoretical conceptualisations of compassion for the self and others identified five elements: 1) recognising suffering, 2) understanding the universality of suffering in human experience, 3) feeling for the person suffering and emotionally connecting with their distress, 4) tolerating uncomfortable feelings aroused so that we remain open to and accepting of them in their suffering, and 5) acting or being motivated to act to alleviate suffering (Strauss, Lever Taylor, Gu, Kuyken, Baer, Jones, & Cavanagh, 2016). Existing self-report measures of compassion do not comprehensively capture the construct, and many have poor or inadequately tested psychometric properties and lack parallel forms (i.e. measure either self- or other-compassion rather than both). The programme of research described in this talk aimed to develop and validate new self-report measures of compassion for the self and others.

Methods: Development and validation of new self-report measures of compassion for the self and others involved item generation with experts, item review and factor analysis in two independent samples of healthcare staff and in a sample of students to cross-validate the factor structure.

Results: Findings supported the five factor structure suggested by Strauss et al. Convergent and divergent validity of both the self- and other-compassion measures was strong. The correlation between self- and other-compassion was high.

Discussion & conclusions: These new measures of compassion appear to have several advantages. They are based on a comprehensive review of theoretical conceptualizations of compassion, have strong psychometric properties, and allow assessment of compassion for both self and others using parallel instruments. Findings using these measures offer insights into the nature of compassion for the self and others and how they may interact.

A Multidimensional Approach to Compassion Measurement - Scale Development and Application

Philippe Goldin[1], Hooria Jazaieri[2]

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Compassion is considered to be a multidimensional state with four key components: 1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive/empathetic); 2) sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective); 3) a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional), and 4) a responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational) (Jinpa, 2010; Jinpa & Weiss, 2013). The objective of the present research was to construct and validate the Multidimensional Compassion Scale (MCS), a general measure of compassion with four components: cognitive, affective, intentional, and motivational.

We have conducted both exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the MCS. The CFA produced a final model demonstrating good fit across all indices (Chi squared = 335.78, p < .001; RMSEA = .046; GFI = .962; CFI = .972). In our research with over 10,000 adults from 144 different countries, we have found evidence for the validity and reliability of the MCS. The MCS has demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ≥ .88) in all samples.

In terms of convergent validity, results demonstrated that the MCS is related to positive outcomes such as empathy (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009), common humanity (McFarland, Brown, & Webb, 2013), happiness (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), and positive affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). When examining discriminate validity of the MCS, we have found inverse relationships with fear of compassion (Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, & Rivis, 2010), loneliness (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978), and negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). We have also examined the MCS's relationship to the Big Five (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) personality factors (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism). We will also present data from the weekly assessment of MCS in a community sample (n = 60).

Assessment of equanimity: Conceptual model and an experience sampling study

Amit Bernstein, Adi Shoham, Yuval Hadash

University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

Background and objectives: Although Buddhist thought and contemporary psychological science have theorized that equanimity may be a critical outcome and salutary mechanism of action of mindfulness, empirical evidence is limited. This talk will discuss a new model conceptualizing equanimity as the decoupling of desire (wanting and not wanting) from the hedonic tone of current or anticipated experience (pleasant and unpleasant). We will moreover focus on the rationale for and utility of intensive experience sampling for assessing mindfulness processes, such as equanimity, over the course of mindfulness training.

Method: Participants were 82 meditation-naive adults (52% female; mean age = 25.05 years) from the general community who participated in a 1-month, six-session mindfulness training intervention. Prior to and then over the course of the intervention, in the contexts of daily living and meditative states, we collected 52 digital experience samples (2-3/day) using items developed to assess key manifestations of equanimity. Mixed-linear models (MLM) permitted analysis of data much like 82 single-subject multiple-baseline experimental design datasets.

Results: The practice and cultivation of mindfulness states were associated with elevations in manifestations of equanimity (i.e., elevated willingness and decreased hedonic-based avoidance) which were robust to spontaneous subjective stress as well as experimentally evoked idiographic negative self-referential thoughts.

Discussion and conclusions: Findings indicate that mindfulness training can cultivate equanimity by decoupling desire (wanting and not wanting) from the hedonic tone of experience (pleasant and unpleasant). Findings also provide preliminary support for the validity and utility of intensive experience sampling assessment of the expression and cultivation of equanimity over the course of a mindfulness intervention.