Mindlessness and Mindfulness in the Survey Context

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Agenda

INTRODUCTION

- Mindfulness and mindlessness
  - Definitions
  - Research
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MINDFULNESS & MINDLESSNESS IN THE SURVEY CONTEXT
- Satisficing theory
- Ecological momentary assessment
- Cognitive interviewing
- Respondent recruitment
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CONCLUSIONS
Mindlessness

…CONCERNS RIGID INVARIANT BEHAVIOR THAT OCCURS WITH LITTLE OR NO CONSCIOUS AWARENESS (LANGER, 1992)
Mindlessness

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…IS A STATE OF REDUCED ATTENTION TO THE PRESENT-MOMENT THAT IS TYPIFIED BY FOLLOWING COGNITIVELY SCRIPTED BEHAVIOR THAT OCCURS WITHOUT CONSCIOUS AWARENESS (LANGER, 1975).
Mindlessness

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…IS NOT NECESSARILY UNIFORM ACROSS THE PERFORMANCE OF ANY GIVEN TASK, OVERLEARNING MAY CHANGE BEHAVIOR FROM CONSCIOUSLY AWARE TO MINDLESS (LANGER & IMBER, 1979)
Research on mindlessness

- Priming mindlessness to improve visual acuity (Langer et al, 2010)

- Priming mindlessness to increase accuracy of perception of novel stimuli (Langer et al, 1980)

- Piquing interest to gain compliance in the face of a mindless refusal (Santos, Leve, and Pratkanis, 1994)
Research on Mindlessness

MINDLESSNESS MAY:

- Be extremely common in social interaction (Langer et al, 1978)
- Lead to automaticity in behavior (Langer & Imber, 1979)
- Occur due to overlearning a task (Langer & Imber, 1979)
- Be associated with happy states (Bless, et al, 1996)
- Be disrupted by novelty (Langer et al, 2010)
- Underlie social responses to computers (Nass & Moon, 2000)
Mindfulness

THREE KEY COMPONENTS:

MINDFULNESS IS A STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS, NOT A TRAIT OF INDIVIDUALS (Lau et al., 2006)
Mindfulness

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**MINDFULNESS IS A STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS, NOT A TRAIT OF INDIVIDUALS** *(LAU ET AL., 2006)*

**THIS STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS FOCUSES ATTENTION ON THE PRESENT-MOMENT, THE “HERE AND NOW”** *(HERNDON, 2008)*
Mindfulness

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**MINDFULNESS IS A STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS, NOT A TRAIT OF INDIVIDUALS (Lau et al., 2006)**

**THIS STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS FOCUSES ATTENTION ON THE PRESENT-MOMENT, THE “HERE AND NOW” (Herndon, 2008)**

**THIS PRESENT-MOMENT ATTENTION IS MARKED BY CONSCIOUSNESS OF BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PHENOMENON, OR “BOTH THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT OF INFORMATION” (Langer, 1992)**
Research on mindfulness

**MINDFULNESS:**
- Can be trained (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)
- May improve selective and executive attention (Chiesa et al, 2011)
- May improve memory capacity (Chiesa et al, 2011; Jha et al, 2010)
- May improve focus (Moore and Malinowski, 2009).
Linking to the survey context

SATISFICING THEORY

- Mindfulness might have implications for optimizing in the cognitive response process
Linking to the survey context

**Satisficing Theory**

- Mindfulness might have implications for optimizing in the cognitive response process

- Mindlessness may be associated with some forms of satisficing
Linking mindfulness and optimizing?

**MINDFULNESS**
- Focus on the “here and now”
- Can be effortless
Linking mindfulness and optimizing?

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- Focus on the “here and now”
- Can be effortless

**OPTIMIZING**
- Effortful cognitive process
Linking mindlessness and satisficing?

MINDLESSNESS
- Reduced attention
- “Auto-pilot”
Linking mindlessness and satisficing?

**Mindlessness**
- Reduced attention
- “Auto-pilot”

**Satisficing**
- Shortcutting the response process
Linking to the survey context

ECOLOGICAL MOMENTARY ASSESSMENT
- Mindfulness may improve data quality
- Mindlessness may degrade data quality and increase response time

COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING
- Mindfulness may help respondents to provide better data
- Mindlessness may reduce data quality

RESPONDENT RECRUITMENT
- Increasing participation
Mindlessness

DO YOU MIND IF I USE THE COPIER...

Langer et al, 1978
Mindlessness

...TO MAKE COPIES?
Mindlessness

...TO MAKE COPIES?

...BECAUSE I’M IN A RUSH?
Mindlessness

...BECAUSE AN ELEPHANT IS AFTER ME?
Conclusions

MINDFULNESS MAY BE BENEFICIAL:

- Reducing satisficing
- Improving EMA
- Improving cognitive interviewing
Conclusions

MINDFULNESS MAY BE BENEFICIAL:
- Improving memory and other cognitive features
- Reducing satisficing
- Improving EMA
- Improving cognitive interviewing

MINDLESSNESS MAY BE HARMFUL:
- Auto-responding
- Over-learning & fatigue
- Satisficing
Conclusions

Mindfulness does not equal optimizing:
- Mindfulness is a cognitive state that may be effortless
- Optimizing is cognitively effortful and demanding
Conclusions

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- Mindfulness is a cognitive state that may be effortless
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**SATISFICING DOES NOT EQUAL MINDLESSNESS:**
- Mindlessness is an unintentional cognitive state
- Satisficing may be intentional and motivated behavior
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OTHER BENEFITS FOR SURVEYS
- EMA
- Cognitive interviewing
- Respondent recruitment
THANK YOU!

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