"Before Mindfulness":
Decolonising Meditative Practices in Mexico

by

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Dedication

Mi trabajo está dedicado a mi querida familia:

Xime, mi Bristolian preferida, te admiro por toda tu entrega, rectitud, y generosidad. Gracias por cuidar de nuestra familia en mi ausencia, y por tu apoyo incondicional durante los últimos años. Tus palabras de aliento y consejos me ayudaron para seguir adelante y tu cariño ha sido mi luz que me acompaña cada día.

Mamá y Papá, gracias por darnos lo mejor siempre, por ser nuestra guía y ofrecernos su apoyo incondicional y amor. Yeyita, gracias por todo tu cariño y apoyo, eres nuestro modelo de fortaleza.

Los amo.

Abstract

This thesis challenges the assumption of a sole 'mindfulness' conceptualisation as articulated from the Anglo-American perspective; demonstrating that the approaches to mindfulness meditation, as well as the tensions and dilemmas that arise in the dissemination of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context, are better understood from a decolonial perspective. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 42 meditation practitioners, teachers, and researchers as well as analysis of documents and archives, I uncover that the emergence of 'mindfulness' has been interwoven with the development of psy-disciplines and the spread of different Buddhist traditions in Mexico, overlapping with the growth of Anglo-American contemporary mindfulness. Interviewee's emic conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' illustrates the specific Mexican linguistic aspects associated with their meanings, revealing these are historically, socially, and culturally situated. Likewise, I describe the generational pattern observed, and the complex ties within which interviewees and the organisations they belong to are embedded. This transnational 'mindfulness' network mirrors the Mexican intercultural context, embodying a high emotionality and micropolitics among its different members.

My fieldwork comprises multi-sited ethnography in six Mexican states where I conducted observations in various meditation retreats, 'mindfulness' conferences as well as courses delivered online. Through collating qualitative multi-modal data and presenting case studies to exemplify the tensions found during my fieldwork, I show how insightful understandings of a complex social phenomenon in the Mexican intercultural context can be gained employing a bricolage approach. The case studies illuminate significant differences in how 'mindfulness' is disseminated across rural versus urban settings, including tensions and dilemmas between the public and private sectors. I also document a hybridisation process where 'mindfulness' is blended with and facilitates the re-emergence of knowledge and practices linked to Indigenous peoples. The thesis poses important questions regarding the unintended neo-colonial and internal colonialism discourse practices accompanying the importation and translation of 'mindfulness' in Mexico.

Keywords: Decolonial perspective; bricolage; *atención plena* (mindfulness); Mexico; intersectionality

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whose work has also inspired me while conducting a social study on 'mindfulness'. I cannot mention all the workshops, seminars and 'unconferences' relevant to me. However, I want to express my gratitude for the well-reception of the two-day conference "Mind the Gaps: Interdisciplinary Mindfulness Research" that Verena and I organised with the Cardiff University GW4 Doctoral Student Training Scheme grant in 2019. The presentations of Kitty Wheater, Julieta Galante, Sarah Shaw, George Jennings, Joanna Cook, Ayesha Nathoo, Gemma Griffith, Sara Delamont, and the panel discussions led by Des Fitzgerald and Steven Stanley significantly contributed to developing an interdisciplinary approach to studying 'mindfulness', thinking of the challenges and opportunities of this academic field. The recent conversations with William Fley, director of the UK-based Mindfulness Network for People of Colour (MNPC), have encouraged me to consider the practical relevance of my study further afield of the Mexican scene.

With all my heart, I thank my twin sister Ximena. It has been wonderful to share our 'mindful journey' for over a decade! We have shared precious experiences, and I wish to continue nourishing our paths, creating more and new memories to cherish for the years to come.

Notes on Terminology

A few Buddhist words are used throughout the thesis. I introduce these words in the Pali language which is the canonical language in which Buddha's teachings were preserved. While some of the Buddhist words are usually spelt with diacritical marks (e.g. Pāli, Theravāda, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Vipassanā), I have omitted those marks for easing the reading, except when referencing Buddhist texts or the name of Buddhist scholars.

Also, many words in Spanish are employed given their relevance when studying 'mindfulness' as a research topic in the Mexican context and the usage of Spanish as the dominant language in the country. Thus, I have used the spelling and accent marks of these words according to the Spanish that is used in Mexico, presenting such words in italics to differentiate them in the text. An explanation of the Spanish terms or the translation of them into English is included when necessary.

Capitalisation of the word 'Indigenous' was considered following the rule of utilizing capital letters for nationality, ethnic groups, and religions. So the English term "Indigenous peoples" will refer to the Spanish concepts of *Pueblos Indígenas* or *Pueblos Originarios* which in turn encompass the 68 Indigenous peoples inhabiting the Mexican territory (International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs [IWGIA] 2020). Finally, I acknowledge that the use of the terms like "Global South" and "Global North" as totalising categories is problematic. Thus I have used quotes to prevent homogenising people's experiences and denoting the geopolitical naming of the world's regions (Mignolo 2014; Velez and Tuana 2020).

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List of Abbreviations

APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness
BAMBA	British Association of Mindfulness-Based Applications
BPS	British Psychological Society
BSA	British Sociological Association
CAM	Complementary and Alternative Medicine
CEMVE	*Centro para la Enseñanza de la Meditación Vipassana en Español* [Centre for Teaching Vipassana Meditation in Spanish
CFM	Center for Mindfulness (Massachusetts University)
CMRP	Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (Bangor University)
COLMEX	*El Colegio de México* [The College of Mexico]
CONACYT	*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología* [National Council of Science and Technology]
DEM	*Diccionario del Español de México* [Mexican Spanish Dictionary]
EAMBA	European Association of Mindfulness Based Approaches
ENAH	*Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia* [National School of Anthropology and History]
FWBO	Friends of the Western Buddhist Order
HAES	Health at Every Size
IBERO	*Universidad Iberoamericana* [Ibero-American University]
IEBH	*Instituto de Estudios Buddhistas Hispano* S.C. [Hispanic Institute of Buddhist Studies]
IMPAC	*Instituto Mexicano de Psicoanálisis, A.C.* [Mexican Psychoanalysis Institute, A.C.]
IMS	Insight Meditation Society
INEGI	*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* [National Institute of Statistics and Geography]
INPEC	*Instituto Nacional para el Estudio de la Conciencia* [National Institute for the Study of Consciousness]
MARC	Mindfulness Education at Mindful Awareness Research Center (University of California)
MBCT	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
MBI:TAC	Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria
MBPM	Mindfulness-Based Pain Management
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
MGMH	Movement for Global Mental Health
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NOM 035	*Norma Oficial Mexicana* [Official Mexican Standard]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RAE	*Real Academia Española* [The Royal Spanish Academy]
REBAP	*Reducción de Estrés Basado en Atención Plena* [Spanish version of MBSR]
SMP	*Sociedad Mexicana de Psicología* [Mexican Society of Psychology]
SNA	Social Network Analysis

SNTE	*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* [Union of Education Workers]
SRE	*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* [Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs]
SRMC	Spirit Rock Meditation Center
TBSA	Theravada Buddhist Society of America
TESIUNAM	*Tesis del Sistema Bibliotecario de la UNAM* [UNAM Library Theses System]
UMass	University of Massachusetts
UN	United Nations
UNAM	*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* [National Autonomous University of Mexico]
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Is there mindfulness in Mexico?" or *"I didn´t know there was mindfulness in Mexico!"* are examples of the things people have said to me in some of the 'mindfulness' conferences I had attended in the UK and other countries in Europe while studying for my PhD. It is not that everyone should know what is happening in Mexico, but their astonishment at the fact that something is going on made me think of the assumptions based on both the nature of the 'mindfulness field' (i.e. 'mindfulness' as a research topic) and my country, Mexico, for its distinctive geographical location in the "Global South" and its linguistic richness in the use of Spanish and long-standing Indigenous languages. Indeed, people might have been curious about how it could be that 'mindfulness', a Buddhist-derived meditation practice, might have been disseminated in a predominantly Catholic context. Or more likely, how the 'contemporary mindfulness' could be taught in a non-European country. This was unsurprising given that the major conferences and academic dialogues around 'mindfulness' research and practice occur in the countries of the "Global North". Besides, finding myself as the only Latin young woman, in many of these academic events and retreats also drew my attention to the lack of representation of Latin American researchers, practitioners and teachers in the international 'mindfulness field'. Or at least, this is how I felt at the events where I happened to be.[1] I will, however, explore similar views in my participants later.

This chapter aims to introduce the subject matter I have researched for my PhD thesis. I first narrate my professional biography as a psychologist and my encounter with *atención plena* ('mindfulness') followed by the description of my motivation for conducting the present research. Coming from the position of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002, p. 91); that is, as a Mexican female with mixed heritage studying at a University in Wales where English (not Welsh)[2] is the dominant language employed, I then articulate the rationale for studying 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context, presenting the purpose and the aims of my thesis. The

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[1] The first edition of Mindfulness on The Margins Unconference-Retreat at Emerson College (Sussex, England) in 2016; the first-of-its-kind Contemplative Phenomenology Workshop organised by the Mind & Life Europe in Nemours, France in 2017; the Mindfulness Symposium at the University of Copenhagen in 2017; the International Conference on Mindfulness, Amsterdam in 2018; and the Contemplative Pedagogy Symposium at Emerson College in 2018.

[2] *Cymraeg*, or 'Welsh language' in English, is a "member of the Brythonic group of the Celtic languages, spoken in Wales" (Encyclopædia Britannica 2021a, para 1). Welsh used to be the language employed in most of the country until English became the dominant one. Different regions within Wales have different histories concerning the adoption of the English language (National Museum Wales 2002, para 6). However, this has important antecedents back in the 16th century, when Wales became an English colony (for a brief historical review of the Welsh language, see Jacob 2017).

chapter concludes by explaining the thesis focus, finalising with the outline of the thesis content.

Before I delve into my professional biography, it is important to mention the following. The nature of my academic background as an experimental psychologist, clearly situated in objectivism and measurement of phenomena, yet deciding to move to the social sciences when starting my PhD, inspired me to engage with a biographical narrative as it gave me the possibility to embrace what Husserl (1970) calls the researcher's "*lifeworld";* that is, "the cultural assumptions built into people's underlying ways of experiencing reality" (cited in Bentz and Shapiro 1998, p. 97). Bentz and Shapiro (1998) conceptualise this "*mindful inquiry"* (p. 5)*,* involving the awareness and reflection on the researcher's own identity and her socio-cultural background, as well as the ways in which herself and her world are linked to the research endeavour affecting one another. I used this mindful inquiry approach to reflect on and embrace my three-fold positionality as 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher, and researcher in Mexico; from which my doctoral research emerged, as I shall clarify.

Furthermore, the subsequent reflection "on the psychological, intellectual, and social meanings of [my] research interests and [my] personal ways of engaging with ideas, data, methodologies, and decisions" (Bentz and Shapiro 1998, p. 10) proved to be crucial in two related directions. Firstly, for tracing my professional development (and the assumptions resulting from this training) in psychology as a scientific discipline situated in a broader historical, economic, political, and socio-cultural context in Mexico; and secondly, for gaining understanding about the specificity of 'mindfulness' delivery in my home country.

Finally, employing this biographical narrative is justified by the fact that I shared my professional development with my twin sister, Ximena. She also studied psychology, and although we took the degree's core modules separately during the first two years, we found *atención plena* together in 2009. This is a remarkable event considering that, out of 30 students or so, who encountered this meditation practice in the same psychology module at the School of Psychology at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM) [National Autonomous University of Mexico], only my sister and I have continued to engage actively with practising and researching *atención plena* since then (or at least for a couple of years until the topic caught psychologists' attentions).

1.1. Meditating in the psychology classroom: Encountering *atención plena*

My twin sister and I first practised *atención plena* (this is the Spanish term to which we were first introduced to 'secular mindfulness' meditation) in 2009.[3] We were taking the module 'Social Psychology of Groups' led by Gabina Villagrán-Vázquez, an educational and experimental psychologist and researcher at UNAM.[4] We used to practise from three to five minutes before starting to review the content of the module's session, and by the end of the semester, we ended up doing 20 to 25 minutes of meditation per session (which usually lasted between two to three hours). The use of this timeframe of 20 to 25 minutes of practice was informed by psychological literature (e.g. Creswell et al. 2014). As I remember, while sitting on individual seats one next to the other in the classroom, either with the eyes opened or closed, we were instructed to direct our attention to the sensations of breathing. The purpose was starting to train our attention to be stable and focused. That is, using the practice to develop a more effective way of learning during our psychology classes, and as a strategy to self-regulate our affective states (e.g. feeling stressed due to meeting deadlines and during the exam periods, and feeling overwhelmed due to course workload). This seemed to be a therapeutic approach to develop academic skills to cope with the difficulties in the classroom, which no doubt benefited us at that time.

Nevertheless, Villagrán-Vázquez also promoted *atención plena* as a type of training for psychology students. She used this practice to teach the module content which retrospectively, was an innovative pedagogical method (for a documented case of teaching 'mindfulness' to sociology students, see Song and Muschert 2014). For instance, this method involved, on the one hand, engaging with the theoretical concepts of social psychology (e.g. group dynamics, prejudice, stereotypes) in practice, using role-playing or group-based projects. On the other hand, it also required an introspective attitude to become aware of our mental processes such as beliefs and stereotypes, the sensations and emotions arising as well as our 'automatic' behavioural reactions happening during our interactions in the class. This was also accompanied by an active role in investigating how these set of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours were socially influenced in such context or realising how these have

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[3] I will discuss in more detail the Spanish and English terms for defining 'mindfulness' later in this chapter. However, for now, it is important to note the 'secular' nature in which *atención plena* was presented in this educational setting; broadly, regarding the scientific psychological studies and efficacy of 'mindfulness' clinical interventions that permeated the discourse used.

[4] UNAM is a public research university in Mexico City. In contrast with the UK public schools (the most expensive and exclusive), private or independent schools, and state schools (British Council 2021), Mexican education system is characterised by the distinction of public and private schools and universities. The public education institutions are funded by the state, while the private ones are financed by tuition fees.

been learned through socio-cultural norms and socialisation processes. This encouraged what Stanley et al. (2018a) call a "post-therapeutic" practice or "social mindfulness" (p. 61) for its use in the psychological investigation of everyday life, disrupting the conventional pedagogy for learning psychology, and fostering the conscious transformation of our culturally conditioned behaviours and ways of thinking in social-relational terms.

Our lecturer explicitly instructed us about the value of *atención plena* for psychology students in training as a coherent professional development for our future psychological practice, which I found sensible since it was the only thought-provoking approach among the psychological perspectives taught at that time. Even though it was an unconventional pedagogy approach at a higher education institution back then, neither my twin sister nor I would imagine the 'mindful journey' we would be taking.

1.2. 'Becoming aware' as a *point of no return*

All the students at our psychology module were invited to join the *Programa de Ecología Humana* [Human Ecology Programme], a research group at UNAM School of Psychology led by Villagrán-Vázquez and Lorenia Parada Ampudia (also a psychologist), but only Ximena and I took part. Practices such as body and emotional consciousness were also taught besides *atención plena,* in an "integral, transformative and sustainable educational program" that incorporated "the emergent fields [at that time] of studies of somatic education and body-mind psychology" (Parada Ampudia 2018) run throughout the semester. These practical sessions were always combined with a weekly research seminar where scientific literature on *atención plena* was revised. We participated continuously in these voluntarily extracurricular activities until we graduated in 2014, eventually being trained as instructors to teach this comprehensive programme.

Practising *atención plena* in the classroom was an experience that changed my life immensely in two ways: 1) how I was approaching my daily life experiences and social situations by *becoming aware* of the appearance of my thoughts, beliefs and emotions and their relationship with my behaviour, gaining self-knowledge and empowerment over changing habits I disliked, and questioning the intentions underpinning my actions; and importantly 2) my career as a psychologist. I describe this as a *point of no return* because the 'degree of awareness' experienced is something, I argue, from which one cannot hide once it is explored (although one might be prone to forget). Indeed, factors associated with both "first-person" and "third-person" perspectives (Varela and Shear 1999) convinced me of the relevance of studying

systematically this practice in Mexican educational settings.[5] The factors concerning these two perspectives included: my first-person perspective as an *atención plena* practitioner along with the revision of scientific papers regarding the effectiveness of clinical applications of 'mindfulness' (Baer 2003); the empirical evidence concerning 'mindfulness' positive effects on brain structure (e.g. the increase in grey matter concentration in brain regions; see Hölzel et al. 2011a); the neural mechanisms explaining the benefits of 'mindfulness' meditation (Hölzel et al. 2011b); and neuroscientific empirical data associated with cognitive and behavioural changes (e.g. Smalley and Winston 2010; Davidson and Begley 2012).

United by our commitment as *atención plena* practitioners and common interest as psychology students in the seemingly thriving 'mindfulness field', Ximena and I developed our undergraduate dissertation which we co-authored together about "Mindfulness, Academic Stress and its Relationship with Academic Performance" (Ibinarriaga-Soltero and Ibinarriaga-Soltero 2014) of Mexican sixth-form students. Our dedication with psychological research including our thesis and earlier papers presented at national conferences constituted what Varela and Shear (1999) called the third-person perspective.[6]

Yet, as part of our engagement with the first-person perspective as meditation practitioners and our professional development as psychologists inside and outside UNAM, involved different courses; even some events related to 'mindfulness' and other meditation practices from the Buddhist perspective – something people might refer to as "contemplative training" nowadays. Along with my twin sister, in 2012, I took my first four-day retreat involving Buddhist meditation with the Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace in Mexico. The retreat delivered in English involved an intense agenda of sitting Buddhist meditation practice on a cushion throughout the day (specifically on The Four Immeasurables, i.e. loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity, as the theme of the retreat, see Wallace 2010), combined with sessions of teachings informed by Tibetan Buddhism. Although I noticed some resistance to engage with some of the rituals performed during the retreat, such as the prostrations to the Buddhist teacher and the sculpture of the Buddha, I was enthralled by the articulation of Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a set of "religious beliefs" and the comparison of Buddhist meditation to the scientific method and mind training "not bound to

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[5] The first-person perspective refers to the "lived experience associated with cognitive and mental events" (Varela and Shear 1999, p. 1), which constitute a subjective account of the personal practice of 'mindfulness'. In contrast, the third-person perspective corresponds to the "descriptive experiences associated with the study of other natural phenomena" (p. 1), referred to by the authors as the objective description, which I relate to researching 'mindfulness' from an experimental psychology point of view.
[6] For instance, see Ibinarriaga-Soltero et al. (2010), Ibinarriaga-Soltero et al. (2011a), Ibinarriaga-Soltero et al (2011b), and Villagrán Vázquez et al. (2011).

any one religious or philosophical creed" (Wallace 1999, p.177). Alan Wallace's well-known analogy of Galileo's telescope for observing the heavens with Buddha's "refined techniques for stabilising and refining the attention" (1999, p. 176) is a good example illustrating such portrayal.

Indeed, as I recollect some of the major milestones concerning my professional biography, I notice how it moved between the domains of the 'secular', objective and scientific aspects of psychological training and research, and the more subjective, 'secularised' Tibetan Buddhism and training in Buddhist-derived meditation practices, which was a tension initially present among my classmates at UNAM. This seemed to reflect a larger milieu and status of psychology as a scientific discipline at UNAM's Psychology School (see Epilogue) but dramatically changed later as the international interest in 'mindfulness' by both the scientific community and the media increased (Wilson 2014).

1.3. Between scepticism and the rise of interest around 'mindfulness'

The 'mindful journey' Ximena and I started primarily at the UNAM Human Ecology Programme represented a challenge. Some classmates who had practised *atención plena* in the same psychology module in 2009 were astonished we were still involved by the time of our graduation in 2014 because, according to them, they seemed "esoteric activities"; probably, since they did not recognise 'mindfulness' as a "well-established scientific field" within psychology. The tension between the 'secular' and the 'spiritual' mentioned above appeared somewhat dissonant to us, since we learnt to conceive Buddhist meditation practice according to its scientific discourse (also conceptualised as part of Buddhist modernism, see Chapter 3). Paradoxically, we were reluctant to include an entire chapter on Buddhist philosophy in our psychology dissertation as a potential supervisor for our work was suggesting. Furthermore, the panel of examiners for our oral examination was difficult to arrange because academic staff in the school knew little of the topic.

Related to this was the extent to which meditation practice as we participated in retreats and courses informed by Buddhist philosophy, was questioning my Catholic religious beliefs common in the Mexican sociocultural context. Although my training as an experimental psychologist confronted me early on, being born into a Catholic background and practising meditation was destabilising for the people around me, including colleagues at UNAM and my family (except of course, for my sister). Many of them used to continuously ask whether we were 'becoming Buddhists' and the potential risk associated with 'converting' to a different

'religion'. I did not see this as an obstacle to my practice, though. These resistances and challenges were peculiar aspects to me which I did not deal with.

As soon as we found out about what seemed to be one of the first "Professional Training on *Atención Plena* (Mindfulness)" launched in Spanish in Mexico City in 2014, we enrolled ourselves.[7] Besides , Ximena and I began an online Diploma on Buddhism organised by the *Instituto de Estudios Buddhistas Hispano* S.C. (IEBH) [Hispanic Institute of Buddhist Studies] and endorsed by the International Institute of Buddhist Studies; after which, with the support of a close friend who was also a meditation practitioner, led us to join a 40-day pilgrimage to India and Nepal (December 2014 and January 2015).[8]

It was interesting to observe that around 2014-2015, many people's perceptions seemed to change at UNAM coinciding with the increase in the popularity of this topic. For example, we received invitations via social media by fellow graduate psychologists offering 'mindfulness' workshops; as well as being involved in other mind-body practices such as yoga. Strangely, these fellows were among the ones being sceptical of 'mindfulness' as a current topic in psychology. Other people were recognising the importance of "being in the present moment" and the benefits of the practice, approaching us to politely ask to be introduced to this practice. Even 'mindfulness' commenced to be a theme of discussion at different Mexican TV channels (e.g. FOROtv Paralelo 23 2014; Proyecto 40 2015). What was happening?

Our bachelor's dissertation was among the seven theses conducted on *atención plena* in 2014 at UNAM. According to the UNAM's online catalogue, 2014 was the year with a considerable increase in the number of theses about this topic.[9] This was followed by a steadier rise in

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[7] This training diploma to be accredited as 'mindfulness' instructor was largely informed by one of the main streams of medicalised 'mindfulness' interventions created by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the US. I will expand on this in Chapter 3.

[8] The discussion of my experience in this trip to Asia goes beyond this introductory chapter. What is noteworthy to reflect on is the fact that being raised in a Catholic background and having no previous experience or knowledge about Buddhist meditation, my sister and I had the unexpected opportunity at the young age of 24, to have this 'spiritual' and culturally relevant trip, which if it were not for our friend's financial support to make instalment payments, we nor our family would have been able to afford it.

[9] I used the terms 'mindfulness' and *atención plena* to search at the UNAM database (see TESIUNAM 2012). From the 33 theses found, the oldest record registered was from 2013 involving a 'mindfulness' literature review dissertation only, whereas the number raised to seven in 2014 comprising studies validating 'mindfulness' scales in Spanish language as well as the application of 'mindfulness' interventions and measurement of psychological variables (e.g. stress, anxiety, and wellbeing). Interestingly, this peak repeated during 2019 as nine research projects were developed: with only three during 2020. The remaining 13 were spread in the rest of the years (five in 2018 and four in 2017 with only two in 2016 and two in 2015). Few theses were found from other higher education institutions (Pozo de Villa 2016; Tovar-García 2018). Finally, as for the search of scientific articles published in Spanish, I only found a 2012 article reviewing the state of the art of *Terapias Cognitivo-Conductuales*

publications in Spanish (see, for example, Kavindu 2014; López-Maya et al. 2015; Tovar-García and Téllez López 2017; García-Campayo et al. 2018). As I found during my fieldwork in Mexico, the period between 2014 and 2015 coincided with the spread of 'mindfulness' courses and training programmes in the country; the organisation of academic conferences, as well as formation of Mexican associations and institutions focusing specifically on *atención plena* ('mindfulness') research and practice (Appendix A). This was concomitant with the January 23 announcement of "The Mindful Revolution" by *Time* magazine (Pickert 2014), and later on 31st December the publication "How 2014 Became the Year of Mindfulness" also by the US *New Republic* magazine. For the case of Mexico, this moment appeared to be marked by the public popularity of 'mindfulness' and its continuing integration to the mainstream in Mexican settings. My twin sister and I did not imagine we would be following a professional development centred on 'mindfulness'. The rise of 'mindfulness' meant for us getting graduate jobs as research assistants at one of the organisations which was consolidating at the time. This unexpected opportunity matched our distinctive training in conducting psychological research concerning *atención plena*, and our previous experience in teaching the Human Ecology comprehensive programme which included various mind-body practices (plus, we were meditation practitioners). All this together constituted a profile rarely found. Yet the expansion of 'mindfulness' into different sectors of Mexican society and people's interest including both communities of Mexican psychologists and Buddhist meditation practitioners was not free of further obstacles.

1.4. Motivation to conduct my research project: Ambivalence towards 'mindfulness'

Having been granted a scholarship from the Mexican National Council of Science and Technology I first came to the UK to study my MSc in Social Science Research Methods (SSRM) at Cardiff University in 2015. Though I continued the psychology pathway, I was also trained in qualitative research methodologies. Most significatively was meeting Dr Steven Stanley and learning about his line of research, with sensitivity to the historical and socio-cultural understanding of 'mindfulness' which allowed me to reflect on the ambivalent feelings I experienced towards 'mindfulness'. For instance, I was aware of unbalanced relationships due to power dynamics in the 'mindfulness' milieu in Mexico, which appeared contradictory to the state of equanimity that 'mindfulness' practice is supposed to promote. Also, a seemingly spontaneous appearance of groups and associations focused on teaching this practice, and its marketisation caught my attention, making me feel uneasy about these sudden shifts.

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de Tercera Generación (TTG) [Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioural Therapies] by Moreno-Coutiño (2012).

On the one hand, I found a great commitment to my personal meditation practice, and I knew from my teaching and research experience the potential that programmes informed by 'mindfulness' could have; particularly in educational settings with further and higher education students and teachers where I used to collaborate. On the other hand, due to these mixed feelings, I started to feel somewhat distanced from those aspects that were accompanying the growth of 'mindfulness' delivery. Nevertheless, training as a social scientist during my master's degree and my personal motivation for understanding the ambivalent position I was encountering towards both my personal meditation practice and the challenges and tensions observed in the 'mindfulness' delivery (not only as a global phenomenon but regarding its specificity in the Mexican context), drew me to study this topic with the critical lenses of a social scientist.

Furthermore, my position of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002, p. 91); that is, my experience as a Mexican young female, with a mixed heritage studying abroad at a University in Wales educated and conducting research in English (not my mother tongue and not the original language of Wales)[10], has also provided me a privileged opportunity for reflexivity when conducting my study. This has entailed considering my insider-outsider (Dwyer and Buckle 2009) positions: 'insider' as a member in the Mexican 'mindfulness' community, and 'outsider' in going back to research my home country (see Chapter 4 and Epilogue). In what follows, I describe how I commenced to problematise the conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' – or rather *atención plena*, stating the aims and purpose of my PhD thesis.

1.5. Conflicting conceptualisations of 'mindfulness': Thesis purpose and research aims

In the same way that people I encountered were surprised about the state of 'mindfulness' in Mexico, I was shocked by the realisation of how uncomfortable I felt when reading all the scientific literature on contemporary 'mindfulness' mostly coming from Anglo-American and European countries. As I will argue in Chapter 3, a history of the emergence and dissemination of 'mindfulness' in Mexico is hardly possible to articulate with the literature available so far. Besides, as noted in my biographical account, I came to know the Spanish term *atención plena* in the first place, familiarising myself with the English term 'mindfulness' later. During my fieldwork, I found that *atención plena*, literally translated as "full attention", was not the only

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[10] The Welsh Government launched the strategy "Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers" in 2017 to achieve a million Welsh speakers and double the daily use of Welsh by 2050. The strategy draws on three themes: 1) increasing the number of Welsh speakers, 2) increasing the use of Welsh, and creating favourable conditions (i.e. both infrastructure and context). This strategy establishes the importance of Welsh-medium and bilingual teaching in further and higher education (Davies 2017).

Spanish term that practitioners, teachers, and researchers employed to define 'mindfulness'; for example, *atención consciente* ("conscientious attention") and *plena consciencia* ("full consciousness") were also utilised.

When designing my study, the investigation of the *emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context, as opposed to the etic or universal definitions (Triandis 2007, p. 66), became crucial for two reasons. The use of Spanish concepts as the translations of the English term 'mindfulness' (as it appeared in the scientific literature available). But more importantly, for taking the implications of language seriously while studying 'mindfulness' from a cultural psychology perspective (Triandis 2007; Swartz and Rohleder 2008) in a particular socio-cultural context. Thus providing attention to the situated meanings attached to 'mindfulness' (Kirmayer 2015; Stanley and Kortelainen 2020). Also, the literature reviewed (Chapter 3) revealed the lack of empirical studies on 'mindfulness' in Mexico, suggesting the significance of conducting a case study regarding the dissemination and teaching of meditative practices in the country.[11]

The title of my thesis "Before mindfulness" reflects the insight gained from the statement one of my research participants made: "It was atención plena first, wasn't it?". This statement was significant since it revealed how the historical development of 'mindfulness' was seen from within the Mexican context. In fact, the key overall finding of my thesis is that the conceptualisations of meditative practices including 'mindfulness' by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers have had a distinctive history, which contest the taken-for-granted definitions of 'mindfulness' widely spread in the Anglophone scientific literature. According to the documentary analysis and some interviewees' accounts, the English word 'mindfulness' itself or the acronym 'MBSR' (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) did not feature as the conceptualisations known and employed in the Mexican context at least during the first decade of the 2000s. Closely link to this, I also found a second interesting finding: that there were more approaches and courses in Mexico than just the most popular Anglo-American MBSR programme (see Chapter 3). Thus the need for a decolonial theoretical framework to conduct the research (Chapter 2) is made explicit in the subtitle of my thesis "Decolonising meditative practices in Mexico".

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[11] I decided to use the concept "meditative practices" throughout the thesis so that I can refer not only to the English term 'mindfulness' but also to other existing practices found in the Mexican context and which were defined using terms in Spanish (i.e. *atención plena*, *atención consciente*, *plena consciencia*, and *prácticas contemplativas* [contemplative practices]). These were the terms relevant for the research participants of my study as well as the documents analysed during my fieldwork.

Beyond exploring some of my personal questionings, the present thesis has three academic purposes. Firstly, it seeks to explore the topic of 'mindfulness' in Mexico by accomplishing three aims: 1) to investigate the historical development of 'mindfulness' and other meditative practices and the *emic* conceptualisations used by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers; 2) to describe the current social organisation of the Mexican 'mindfulness' community (i.e. who are the leaders and advocates of meditative practices in Mexico and how have they shape this milieu), and 3) to describe the current tensions and dilemmas in the dissemination and teaching of these practices across different settings arising from the socio-cultural particularities of the Mexican context. In doing so, my study attempts to fulfil the second academic purpose; that of becoming an emancipatory project in giving voice to the experience of practitioners, teachers and researchers underrepresented in 'mindfulness' academic literature so far. The third academic purpose of my thesis is contributing to the development of a decolonial theoretical framework for future research on the topic (see Chapter 2).

In the last part of this introduction, I outline the relevance of taking Mexico as a case study to investigate 'mindfulness', describing the thesis focus and its structure.

1.6. Rationale and focus of the thesis

Mexico is a country that covers an area of 758 449 sq miles, equivalent to the size of 22 European countries, with an estimated population of almost 128 million people in 2019 (World Bank 2021). With 25 million self-identified as Indigenous people, Mexico is the Latin American country with the largest and most diverse Indigenous peoples (representing about 21.5% of Mexico's population in 2015, see National Institute of Statistics and Geography [INEGI] 2015a). Mexican territory is constituted by 31 states and Mexico City (the capital of the country, see Appendix B), which entails a wide variety of geographical regions, customs, climates, typical food, and ancestral cuisine (UNESCO [no date]). Most of the Indigenous peoples are concentrated in the southern and south-central regions of Mexico (Minority Rights Group International 2008).

Mexico has a complex socio-cultural context, due to the Spanish colonisation process and imported Catholic religion, and the yet prevailing traditions and practices from Mesoamerican cultures (pre-Hispanic civilisations), including various Indigenous groups and the usage of

Indigenous languages, in coexistence with the use of Spanish language.[12] Mexico, with its unique colonial history, socio-cultural complexity, religious diversity and intercultural context[13], represents a rich and unique case study to investigate the dissemination and teaching of 'mindfulness'. Even though the Mexican territory is extensive, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of some of the specificity of 'mindfulness' in contemporary Mexico; being an exploratory study in nature (Creswell and Creswell 2018), and the first research project of its type in the country. Even, the first in the context of Latin America and among other countries where Spanish language is also spoken (e.g. Spain).

The type of research conducted is situated within the cultural psychology field since the study foregrounds the "the importance of context for meaning" (Swartz and Rohleder 2008, p. 542), specifically, with the emergence and evolution of 'mindfulness' as partly a 'psychological' concept, trait, state, and practice in Mexico, and "the ways in which meaning is constructed and shifts and changes depending on both local contexts and more distant ones such as those of history and broader issues of globalisation" (p. 542). To do so, the present research draws on a decolonial theoretical perspective, to approach the case of Mexico considering its geographical location and cultural complexity, aiming to contribute to the development of indigenisation of psychology (Pickren 2009; Pavón-Cuéllar 2020a; 2020b), as I shall explain in Chapter 2.

The present thesis concentrates on investigating the *emic* meanings of the practice of 'mindfulness' by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers, in contrast to the *etic* conceptualisations (Triandis 2007) of 'mindfulness' already established. It takes seriously the role of language in three related ways: a) as a topic, reflecting socio-cultural aspects of the context where this social phenomenon is studied, denoting the importance of translation processes from English to Spanish and vice versa; b) language as discourse; in studying the teaching of 'mindfulness' across different settings in Mexico and the way this practice is constructed, paying attention to the types of discourses used, the way they are employed,

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[12] There are 68 Indigenous languages in Mexico from which Nahuatl is the most widely spoken (Čirjak 2020). Although there is not a single official language, the Mexican Government employs Spanish as the main means for official documents (for a historical explanation on this, see Hamel 2008). The Indigenous languages play an important role in contemporary Mexico since they represent heritage from Mesoamerican cultures and constitute ways of being and living around which epistemologies and ways of seeing the world are built. Still, many of these languages are endangered (United Nations [UN] 2019).

[13] Mexican intercultural context involves Mesoamerican cultures heritage (i.e. various Indigenous peoples), Mexicans of European heritage, and 'mixture' of Indigenous and European peoples commonly referred as '*Mestizos'* (understood as racial and cultural mixture). It also includes what nowadays are recognised as the *tercera raíz* ["third root"] (i.e. Afro-descendant origins) and the *cuarta raíz* ["fourth root"] (i.e. Asian origins), see Chao Romero (2011, p. 8) and López Nájera (2018).

when and by whom; as well as the ideological dilemmas they expose. In this sense, language as discourse, is seen "as constitutive of the world, the organisation of society, and individual subjectivity. Meaning is thus produced and created within language and discourse" (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 334). Finally, this project conceives c) "language as embodied" (Pritzker 2014, pp. 145-160) due to its connection to affective reactions and expression.

The examination of 'mindfulness' in Mexico is driven by my in-between insider-outsider positions, and thus I engage with my subjectivity in the production of knowledge (Loughran and Mannay 2018) as the researcher conducting the study. Besides, looking at 'mindfulness' from an interdisciplinary perspective, I draw on multiple theoretical, methodological, and analytical strategies using specifically a bricolage approach to qualitative methodology. Rogers (2012) asserts that the bricolage is a "methodological practice explicitly based on notions of eclecticism, emergent design, flexibility and plurality … [it] signifies approaches that examine phenomena from multiple, and sometimes competing, theoretical and methodological perspectives" (p. 1). This research did not intend to search for the statistical representation of a sample of 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers and researchers in the Mexican context. Instead, it brings a situated gaze to illuminate complex and contradictory situations generating in-depth understanding, versus generalisation as quantitative methodologies often pursue. Now, I present the way the present thesis is structured.

1.7. Structure of thesis

This section provides an overview of the thesis, which is divided into two parts. The first part is constituted by the theoretical framework and literature review chapters, followed by the methodology chapter and an epilogue. The second part involves four analytic chapters where the thesis findings from the analysis of empirical data collected are presented. The final chapter concerns the conclusions of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, a decolonial theoretical framework underpinning this study is articulated. Through the discussion of postcolonial theory and decolonial thinking as emerging from the Latin American region, the reason for selecting the latter is justified. The chapter presents the concept of coloniality of power and how decolonial praxis is conceived. Simultaneously, the use of feminist sensitivity and intersectional analyses in the project are explained.

Chapter 3 concerns the review of literature about 'mindfulness', specifically engaging with a critical appraisal of the Anglo-American view of this subject matter. The chapter maps out

some of the main debates about the "ownership" of 'mindfulness' and the definition and origin of this Buddhist-inspired meditation practice from, both Buddhist and social scientific studies and contemporary psychological and medical scientific literature. An overview of the different modern 'secularised' Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) is presented with a brief discussion of their historical development. Next, Buddhist modernism and the historical development of Buddhism in Mexico are reviewed, signalling the gap in the literature concerning the study of Buddhist meditation groups in the country. Finally, the chapter concentrates on discussing the socio-cultural turn for researching 'mindfulness'. Specifically, the state of the art of 'mindfulness' in Mexico is presented arguing for the importance of studying the role of language and socio-cultural aspects in a case study such as Mexico.

Chapter 4 involves the description of the methodological journey taken for designing the present research project. It explains the pilot study conducted outlining the three academic purposes of the thesis and the research questions proposed for conducting the fieldwork, all informed by the pilot study. After describing the methods employed for data generation, the rationale for embracing a bricolage methodological approach is explained. I briefly discuss the analytic perspectives used and the data analysis process following the bricolage strategy. The chapter finalises with a section on "mindful ethics" where the methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas faced are reflected upon. I present my reflective account in form of an Epilogue to Chapter 4 as a way to transition to the empirical chapters.

Chapter 5 challenges the assumption of a sole 'mindfulness' conceptualisation as articulated from the Anglo-American perspective. Following the analysis of interpretative repertoires, this chapter provides evidence concerning the *emic* conceptualisations on meditative practices employed in practice by Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers, highlighting that such conceptualisations are historically, socially, and culturally situated and dependent on the Spanish language. It also demonstrates that the dissemination of 'mindfulness' in Mexico has been interwoven with the development of psy-disciplines and the spread of different Buddhist traditions in the country, overlapping with the growth of Anglo-American contemporary 'mindfulness'.

Chapter 6 contests the 'mindfulness movement' thesis by demonstrating the heterogeneity of 'mindfulness' provision in the country. Whilst there is a continuation of the introduction of Anglo-American and European MBIs, the social organisation of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu shows that programmes and courses have also been developed and adapted to address the specificity of the Mexican settings. Through the analysis of participants' biographical and professional trajectories, the Mexican meditative practices lineages and

organisations are mapped, presenting how these are organised across sectors in Mexico and connected in a complex network. Importantly, intersectional analyses concerning my three-fold positionality and the participants' social identities, reveals the embodiment of high emotionality in the network and the tensions that arise with regards to the 'authority' to teach meditative practices.

Finally, Chapters 7 and 8 present a set of case studies brought together through the bricolage approach, which exemplify some of the tensions and dilemmas that arise given the overlapping provision of meditative practices across Mexican sectors and how these practices are taught 'on the ground' and the discourses employed. The set of cases articulated relate to three main overarching themes identified, namely: 1) tension between 'religiosity/spirituality' and 'secularity'; 2) conventional versus 'modern' nutritional/medical perspectives and the re-emergence of local practices; and 3) ideological dilemmas relating to neo-colonial and internal colonialism discourses and the decolonisation of meditative practices in Mexico.

Chapter 9 discusses the findings of the thesis in light of the three main research questions, and sub-questions posed, assessing the implications for the future of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. The chapter also concludes by explaining the contribution of the findings of the thesis in relation to the scientific literature on 'mindfulness' by proposing lines of research and emergent topics for future studies. While underscoring the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research project, discussing 'mindfulness' as a topic of research and as a method (i.e. "mindful inquiry" and "mindful ethics"), it also critically reflects on the methodological challenges and dilemmas of representation faced while developing a decolonial perspective for the study of 'mindfulness' in Mexico.

Chapter 2: Decolonial Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical foundations that set the framework for investigating 'mindfulness' in Mexico. To articulate this framework, I first problematise the Anglo-American bias present in social scientific, cultural and Buddhist studies, elaborating on Wilson's (2014) "mindfulness movement" thesis (p. 9). I thus argue the need for a decolonial lens with which to approach this study, bearing in mind researcher reflexivity in relation to my in-between insider-outsider positions and informed by the empirical data generated.

2.2. Resisting and writing local history: Problematising the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement"

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the obstacles I faced when conducting my research was the overwhelming scientific literature documenting the dissemination and application of 'mindfulness' mostly in English, with a major focus on the development of MBIs in the US and UK contexts.[14] While this led to a fascinating area of opportunity for conducting social scientific research on the matter, this also felt like an oppressive practice, due to "English linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson 1993, p. 46) in the legitimisation of scientific knowledge published in both academic books and scientific journals written in the dominant English language. But more specifically, for the generalisation of the knowledge written from the Anglo-American point of view, taken as a universal/global principle promoting "cultural homogenisation" (Razak 2012, cited in Dear 2019, p. 36), in particular, the exportation of mental health practices globally (e.g. Mills 2014). Thus, I considered this required to be challenged using a decolonial perspective articulated in alignment with the insights gained from the empirical data I collected in Mexico.

To build a decolonial framework, I problematise the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" thesis (Wilson 2014). The subtitle of my thesis, "Decolonising Meditative Practices in Mexico", reflects one of my key research findings: that the English word 'mindfulness' is itself a very specific term that does not contain the array of approaches I found in Mexico. I was surprised

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[14] Although I will explain this further in Chapter 3, the Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) can be broadly defined as 8-week therapeutic protocols originally designed in English, which include 'secularised mindfulness' meditation as the "central pedagogical component" (Crane et al. 2017, p. 991). The main MBIs in the UK and US contexts include Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

by the degree of accuracy with which Stanley (2019a) sums up what I was encountering in my research in Mexico:

> Taken as a whole, the mindfulness 'movement' is an Anglo-American invention with Asian roots and a transnational reach. A turf war has been going on over who 'owns' mindfulness and who has the power and authority to define it and thereby provide expert access to 'the present moment'. In a broad sense, the authority to define mindfulness has shifted away from the Buddhist monastic community and toward lay populations of America and European scientists, clinicians and professionals. The mindfulness of the modern mindfulness movement centrally comprises standardised, clinical evidence-based 'mindfulness-based' applications or interventions of various types, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and mindfulness-based pain management [MBPM] (p. 95).

On the one hand, the "deeper roots" (i.e. complex intercultural encounters with Buddhist cultures in Southeast Asia) of such "'mindfulness-based' therapies" have its origins at least a century ago as documented in historical research, as Stanley (2019a) describes (p. 95). Yet, it is important to note that the extract quoted above, captures a widely distributed discourse of a single 'mindfulness movement': that originated within Anglo-American contexts which have been 'standardised' and scientifically backed up. It seems then that a discourse of *the* 'mindfulness movement', or to be more precise, the 'modern' (or contemporary) "mindfulness movement" (see also Farb 2014; Ng and Purser 2015; Samuel 2015; Purser 2018) has been articulated in social scientific, cultural and Buddhist studies journals and books, omitting alternative accounts on the emergence and development of 'mindfulness' in non-English speaking countries. Besides, these accounts automatically dismissed the approaches which have not necessarily been based on any of the MBIs.[15]

This is also the case in other media such as the Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* (Krauze 2017) and the latest documentary on "The Mindfulness Movement" in 2020 by Robert Beemer featuring the American New Age figure Deepak Chopra and American singer Jewel Kilcher as executive producers. It has been assumed that not only such movement is "international in its scope" (Wilson 2014, p. 6) as it has also travelled back to Asia having significant supports from different countries, but that such conceptualisation from the English language could be easily transported to other geographical and cultural contexts; under the category of being the so-called "mindful revolution" (Pickert 2014). Thus, revising Wilson's (2014) reference to the term "mindfulness movement" as the "widespread and growing collection of people who

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[15] Just recently, I have observed a slight change in the language used to differentiate the MBIs in contrast to other 'approaches'. This language is employed to define those programmes which do not follow the 8-week protocol-structure of the MBIs protocols; for instance, these are phrased as "mindfulness-informed approaches" (see, for example, The Mindfulness Initiative 2020a, p. 10). Still, this entails Anglo-American perspective only.

practice (and, especially, those who actively promote) techniques of awareness derived originally from the Buddhist cultures of Asia, which are typically grouped under the label "mindfulness" in 21st century America" (p. 9) one could easily change "America" for "English-speaking nations" or, so it has been conveyed.

In the empirical data I collected in Mexico, I did not find strong associations with such characterisation of the 'mindfulness movement'. One of the only commentaries closely related to that notion was one participant's remark that when she saw "*Mindful America",* Wilson's book (2014), she hoped for a similar study to be developed about Mexico. Therefore, she agreed to participate in my research. While I did not present my research as following such a thread during the fieldwork, I evaluate the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" thesis in my data analysis.[16] I discovered that most of the Mexicans practitioners, teachers, and researchers I interviewed would not situate themselves within the 'mindfulness movement'; nor did I find references to this in the documents I analysed. However, this did not mean that Anglo-American MBIs were absent in the Mexican 'mindfulness' community.

On the contrary, I found that the triad MBSR, MBCT and MBPM mentioned above, and other standardised protocols were among other meditative practices delivered in the Mexican context. Still, the key overall thesis finding is that the conceptualisations of meditative practices including 'mindfulness' by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers have had a distinctive history, which contests the taken-for-granted definitions of 'mindfulness' widely spread in the Anglophone scientific literature. Considering the above, I present the decolonial theoretical framework that came to ground my work.

2.3. On decolonial thinking

To study the emergence and evolution of meditative practices in Mexico as well as the current delivery of these practices across different settings, I have developed a theoretical framework based on decoloniality (Quijano 1992; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018) as part of a bricolage strategy (Kincheloe et al. 2011) for conducting qualitative research (see Chapter 4). Bricolage research "can be considered a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry" (Rogers 2012, p. 1). Due to the complexity of the social phenomena I study in the present thesis, the bricolage strategy I

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[16] This was a working hypothesis I initially had during my first approach to the field. I have used it since I found evidence of the influence of the Anglo-American MBIs in Mexico, as well as other foreign influences (e.g. from Spain). Nevertheless, my initial interest in researching this topic was not to either defend or reject the thesis of 'mindfulness movement' in Mexico.

adopt extends throughout the project: from the theoretical framework and the methodological approach to the data analysis strategies employed and the writing. The use of such strategy responds to the need to understand the 'mindfulness' phenomenon, itself as an interdisciplinary area of study (Valerio 2016), in the context of Mexico from different angles. This means, bringing interdisciplinary knowledge from, psychosocial and feminist studies, critical and cultural psychology, anthropology, history, Buddhist studies and sociology. The interdisciplinary nature of the present research nurtures the decolonial approach simultaneously because the researcher "access[es] new ways of thinking both inside and outside of [these disciplines]" (Walsh et al. 2002, p. 13), and "with the possibilities of building a radically distinct world" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, p. 11). Or at least, contributing to the creation of new ways of understanding 'mindfulness' and related practices, generating knowledge from the Latin American region as a fundamental task in cultural and indigenous psychology (Pickren 2009; Chakkarath 2012).

For Pickren (2009), the indigenisation of psychology can take many forms, from the "incorporation of Western norms that are then refigured with local content to [the] rejection of Western approaches in favor of methods and subject matter that are native to the culture at hand" (p. 87). About the latter, Pavón-Cuéllar (2020a) argues that *desideologizar* [de-ideologise] and decolonise, are two tasks necessary for the indigenisation and liberation of Latin American Psychology, as well as ourselves. Pavón-Cuéllar (2020a) explains these processes entail on the one hand, reconverting psychology's ideology of thought, through our own ideas articulated based on our own existence, subjectivity, and culture. On the other hand, it involves challenging the colonial and neo-colonial logics through which we have learnt to reject and forget our "existential and cultural particularities" (p. 337), which I foreground in my study of 'mindfulness' in Mexico.

Initially, I was drawn to frame my research using postcolonial theory (e.g. Said 2003) pondering its central claim that "the world we inhabit is impossible to understand except in relationship to the history of imperialism and colonial rule" (Elam 2019, para. 1). In other words, its critique focusing on "the intermingling of the past with the present in ways that illuminate how power relations of the present are embedded in colonial history" (Macleod and Bhatia 2008, p. 577). This is pertinent not only in the study of 'mindfulness' as a Buddhist-inspired meditation practice originally coming from the "East" and then being adapted in the "West" (see Mignolo 2014), but also in consideration of the Mexican context and its colonial history following the 16th-century Spanish invasion as well as the neo-colonial influences still

dominating contemporary Mexico.[17] Concerning the present research, I also consider the importation, adaptation, and delivery of meditative practices such as 'mindfulness', via the spread of Buddhism and psy-disciplines (McAvoy 2014) such as psychology and psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, during my fieldwork, I encountered research work by Latin American thinkers (e.g. the feminist anthropologist Rita Segato and feminist psychology of Sylvia Marcos, also expert in Mesoamerican epistemologies and Indigenous movements) when I attended the international congress "*¡Resiste! Violencias, resistencias y espiritualidades*" ["Resist! Violence, resistance and spiritualities"] in Mexico City (May 2019).[18] The topics of emerging and decolonial spiritualities addressed in the event caught my attention. The talks I attended provided me with important insights about the way I was examining 'mindfulness' as a social phenomenon in Mexico. During my data analysis, I also found that the work produced by the Latin American group Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (see Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018) seemed more appropriate than the postcolonial theory (e.g. Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak), for understanding the findings of my study. This decolonial school of thought felt more familiar due to my subjective experience of being born in Mexico and having lived there and for meaning-making during the data interpretation as I recorded in my research journal.

As Bhambra (2014) asserts, "postcolonial and decolonial arguments have been explicit in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe" (p. 117). In doing so, both postcolonial theory and decolonial thinking have "radical potential in unsettling and reconstituting standard processes of knowledge production" (pp. 117-118). In my research, for instance, this process has entailed what Pavón-Cuéllar's (2020a) refers to as accessing "*otro saber sobre la subjetividad*" [another knowledge about subjectivity]; that is, "our own autochthonous representations of subjectivity" (p. 333) including different ways of being, feeling, thinking, and interacting; which have been with us before learning psychological conceptions from US and European frameworks through the university curriculum.[19]

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[17] For instance, the adoption of neoliberalism as an economic model, Anglo-American and European languages (i.e. English and Spanish), as well as ideological imperialism such as the case of psychological knowledge and practice.
[18] This academic event was not part of my fieldwork sites. The congress programme was very interesting, and I decided it was worth attending considering my professional development as a social science researcher.
[19] Pavón-Cuéllar (2020a) calls for the processes of decolonisation and de-ideologization mentioned earlier, arguing that in general, the US and European psychological concepts imported and consumed in Latin American countries, do not "emanate from our existence or our culture, … [do] not reflect our

Bhambra (2014) also points out that the "traditions of thought associated with postcolonialism and decoloniality are long-standing and diverse" (p. 118). As she explains: while postcolonial theory is mostly informed by the work of scholars originally from the Middle East and South Asia (e.g. Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak) developing their critique mostly about the 19th and 20th centuries; decoloniality work developed by the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality group and emerging from the Latin American region situates the analytic scope to articulate the decolonial critique from the European invasion of the Americas; that is, since the 15th century onwards.[20] Based on this recognition of the geographical origination and its focus on the particular timeframe, I decided to develop my study using the decoloniality framework. The understanding of decoloniality depends on revising Quijano's (1992) coloniality of power.

2.4. Coloniality of power

'Coloniality of power' (Quijano 1992) is a theoretical perspective developed by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano and brought to the academic terrain by Walter D. Mignolo, an Argentinian semiotician. It is the most recent theory among three developed in and from Latin America.[21] As Segato (2015, p. 35) argues, although created based on a 'localised gaze' - that of the Latin American region -, Quijano's coloniality of power has brought a novel turn for understanding colonialism and has been impactful by its permanence in world's thought for passing the frontiers between the geopolitical "North" and "South". Coloniality of power is considered a provocative perspective to re-thinking the way we live in the world and approach research (e.g. Harding 2016).

Coloniality differs from postcolonial perspectives because coloniality does not assume a cessation of colonialism nor attempt to envisage "a world *after* colonialism" (Elam 2019, para. 1). While colonialism refers to the "explicit political order" due to foreign invasion, Quijano

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truth, but rather another truth that often ceases to be true when it is transplanted into Latin American lands" (p. 333).

[20] This does not mean researchers must adhere strictly to one or another or that they are incompatible. It underscores the relevance of the timeframe and events considered from the analytic point of view. For further discussion about the disciplinary and geographical provenance of postcolonialism in contrast with decolonial thinking, see Bhambra (2014).

[21] The other theories are Liberation Theology, Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Marginalisation Theory (Segato 2015, p. 35). As Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) notes, the work on the concept "internal colonialism" by Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova in 1967, and her work on "*El Potencial Epistemológico y Teórico de la Historia Oral de la Lógica Instrumental a la Descolonización de la Historia*" [The Epistemological and Theoretical Potential of Oral History: From Instrumental Logic to the Decolonization of History] (1987) presented in the Andean Oral History Workshop have been fundamental, yet less cited sources, influencing the development of the decolonial school of thought in Latin America. I will discuss González Casanova's (2003) concept of internal colonialism later.

(1992) defines coloniality as the "general mode of domination in today's world" (p. 14). Thus, Quijano's theory radically proposes that the 'modern' world order cannot be understood except in relation to colonisation of the Americas and the Caribbean in the 15th century.[22]

As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) put it, it was during the colonisation of the Americas, that "the very inception of modern/colonial patterns (i.e. coloniality) began to emerge" (p. 2). And so in this sense, there is a transformation of the concept of 'modernity' (see also Bhambra 2014); seen from the decoloniality framework as a rhetoric "built as the imaginary of itself and of a world of which modernisation and development were the engines" (Mignolo 2018, p. 110). As the author continues "decolonially speaking, [modernity] is a fiction, a construction made by actors, institutions and languages that benefit those who built the imaginary and sustain it, through knowledge and war, military and financial means" (p. 110). It is relevant to briefly mention this since Quijano's coloniality of power is understood in relation to the triad modernity/coloniality/decoloniality.

Decoloniality is articulated because of the mutually dependent construct and process of modernity/coloniality. This is because colonisation (including the epistemic level) has been advanced based on Eurocentric ideals of 'development' and 'modernisation'; as happened in many cultures around the world including Mexico. However, coloniality being constitutive of modernity as a decolonial concept calls for the unveiling, reviving, and liberating of what has been "constantly hidden and repressed" on the "dark side" of modernity; "what doesn't fit the imaginary and desires of storytellers that legitimise themselves in the name of science, politics, and economy" (Mignolo 2018, p. 113).[23] A significant example of this is Mills' (2014) research on the "psychiatrisation" of the majority world (or 'Global South') as she put it (p. 7). This psychiatrisation process entails the imposition of mental health categorisations and practices (e.g. diagnosis and pharmacotherapy), through colonial discourse, articulated in policies by the Movement for Global Mental Health (MGMH) and World Health Organization (WHO) and meditated via interventions applied by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as Mills' documents (pp. 9-10). In her work, Mills (2014) exposes the paradoxical call for 'scale up'

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[22] It could be argued that not all postcolonial perspectives assume such "cessation of colonialism" as it might imply the use of the prefix 'post' (Macleod and Bhatia 2008, p. 577). Yet, the postcolonial school of thought employs the temporal demarcation to develop their critique staring from the 18th and 19th centuries set by European 'modernity'. In contrast, the decolonial school of thought suggests that "modernity and coloniality have been initiated simultaneously when the Americas were 'discovered' by Columbus in 1492" (Dussel 1993, cited in Wanderley and Faria 2013, p. 5). Therefore, the decolonising practices envisaged in the second perspective often represented in the triad modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, presupposes the relationality between modernity and coloniality as explained by Quijano (1992).

[23] The "dark side" refers to negation of coloniality by the "Western modernity" (for further details see Mignolo 2011) and the consequences that arise from the maintenance of the rhetoric of 'modernity'.

psychiatric treatments to places of the "Global South", even though such diagnosis classification and treatments have been defined and promulgated elsewhere, "from a minority world-view" (p. 7), i.e. the "Global North", and regardless the consideration of growing evidence regarding their harmful consequences. While the entangled economic (e.g. pharmaceutical industry and markets) and the political process involved in psychiatrisation are critically examined, Mills (2014) also forefronts the disavowal of local, "alternative healing sources" and "indigenous understandings of distress" (p. 123).

The decolonial framework elaborated entails acknowledging Quijano's model of coloniality as a crucial precondition (Segato 2015) for locating contemporary Mexico as a case study in the present research project, and consequently, the investigation and understanding of the historical development as well as the socio-cultural situatedness (Stanley 2016) of 'mindfulness' in Mexican settings.[24] Yet, it has also argued that such decolonial framework cannot fully commit to a decolonising practice if decolonial feminisms (e.g. Phoenix 2006; Marcos 2009; Lugones 2010; Asher 2017; Macleod et al. 2020) are not considered.

2.5. Coloniality of gender and feminist decolonising psychology

In their recent editorial of the special issue "*Feminisms and Decolonising Psychology*", Macleod et al. (2020) discuss the possibilities and challenges of what they name "feminist decolonising psychology**"** (pp. 289-290). This conceptualisation is valuable in underscoring the need for feminisms, decolonial theory, and psychology as a scientific discipline for 'working together'. Simultaneously, the authors point out the complexity of this task because:

> What is at stake is not only deconstructing psychological science but also, firstly, dominant Euro-US-centric versions of feminism that have, advertly or inadvertently, replicated colonialist and racist ideologies and, secondly, decolonial theory that sidelines gender (Macleod et al. 2020, p. 289).

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[24] Recent investigation of other mind-body practices using the practitioner's perspective in the context of Mexico, illustrate the pertinence of using local theories for a "more rounded appreciation of the people, groups, structures and traditions" being studied (Jennings and Cynarski 2019, p. 11). Jennings (2016; 2018) has examined the historical development and social organisation of *Xilam*, a contemporary Mexican Martial Art conceived and publicly represented as a mind-body discipline based on Mesoamerican philosophy and culture. By critically questioning the dominant current studying "martial arts" in global terms which rely largely in theories from the "Global North" (Jennings and Cynarski 2019), Jennings' research highlights that rather than conceptualised as a combat sport, *Xilam* appears to be rooted in a holistic pre-Hispanic philosophy use to "rediscover ancient traditions" (Jennings 2016, p. 67). *Xilam* allows practitioners to re-connect with their ancient identity and culture of interdependence in contrast with individual processes of self-cultivation (Jennings and Cynarski 2019).

This is the situation that I have encountered when developing the present research since the decolonisation endeavour in examining 'mindfulness' in Mexico traverses those three areas. In order to develop my argument in this section, I address these areas in a different order as presented in the quote. I commence with Lugones' (2010) coloniality of gender interwoven with intersectionality perspectives informed by feminisms.

In her paper "Decolonial Feminism" (2010), Lugones builds on Quijano's coloniality of power by complicating his understanding of gender[25], arguing that "unlike colonisation, the coloniality of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power" (p. 746). Besides, she argues, coloniality of gender is what makes us "think of historical [oppressed] beings" but "only one-sidedly" (p. 746). Lugones (2010) refers to the 'one-sidedness' by critically opposing the "categorical logic" of modernity in claiming not only a 'feminist universalism' but also imposing hierarchical dichotomies such as human and non-human, men and women. These distinctions "became a mark of the human and a mark of civilisation" (p. 743), enforcing a gender framework to the colonised.

On the one hand, Lugones' (2010) theoretical contribution in bringing coloniality of gender to the front rightly cautions the decolonial researcher about the risk of obscuring 'women' and their experiences when engaging with the coloniality of power theory. Coloniality of gender is a framework that "enables us to see what is hidden from our understandings of both race and gender and the relation of each to normative heterosexuality" (p. 742). She continues:

> The gender system is not just hierarchical but racially differentiated, and the racial differentiation denies humanity and thus gender to the colonised… gender is a colonial imposition, not just as it imposes itself on life as lived in tune with cosmologies incompatible with the modern logic of dichotomies, but also that inhabitations of worlds understood, constructed, and in accordance with such cosmologies animated the self-among-others in resistance from and at the extreme tension of the colonial difference (p. 748).

According to Lugones (2010), the dichotomy of gender is non-existent, and she uses the term "non-modern to express that these ways are not premodern" (p. 743). A case in point is Mexico's group of Zapotec Indigenous men known as *Muxes,* who "publicly dress in female

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[25]Succinctly, Lugones contends Quijano's hegemonic view of gender and sexuality (i.e. heterosexuality; 2010, p. 2). For an extended version of her critique on the understanding of sex/gender and its relationship with Quijano's coloniality see, Lugones' 2007 publication on heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system.

Zapotec attire and assume traditional female roles" (Mirande 2012, p. 509).[26] The *Muxes*, among the Zapotec people originally from the city of Juchitán, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the southeast state of Oaxaca, Mexico, is considered an example of "nondichotomized gender systems among indigenous peoples" (Stephen 2002, p. 48) from before the Spanish colonisation, which underscores the importance of coloniality of gender.

Lugones (2010) initially engages with intersectionality at a theoretical level which is "important when showing the failures of institutions to include discrimination or oppression against women of color" (p. 575), calling for political action upon identification of the multiple levels of oppression caused due to the interdependence of such non-dominant categories (see also Viveros Vigoya 2016, p. 9). While Lugones (2010) proposes to "understand resistance to the coloniality of gender from the perspective of colonial difference", I differ in her methodological move from "women of color feminisms to a decolonial feminism" (p. 746) as she critiques the inclusion of intersectionality in the development of a decolonial feminist stance (see also Garry 2011; Velez 2019).[27] As I will expand in Chapter 4, as part of the feminist perspective I attempt to develop, I incorporated intersectionality analyses based on Phoenix's (2006) work, which have provided significant conceptual analytic contributions by considering the simultaneous positioning of the social categories. In my study, these have been central for the understanding of 'mindfulness' as a complex and contested social phenomenon, including the characterisation of Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers' overlapping social relations and positions within the 'mindfulness' milieu in Mexico.

Macleod et al. (2020) remark how the different contributions in their special issue highlight the possibility "of undermining the gendered coloniality of power, knowledge and being" as "feminisms and decolonisation speak to each other" (p. 294). Besides, it is also emphasised that "the interweaving of feminisms and decolonising efforts can be achieved through each mutually informing and shaping the other, conducting intersectional analyses, and drawing on transnational feminisms" (p. 287). This is the feminist sensitivity interwoven with the decolonial framework I have employed.

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[26] *Muxes,* also *muxhe* o *mushe*, and pronounced "Moo-shey" (Mirande 2012, p. 509), is a word in Zapotec Indigenous language derived from the Spanish word for woman i.e. *mujer* (see also Flores Martos 2010). It is considered the "third gender" besides *mujer* [woman] and *hombre* [man]. Yet, unlike the Spanish language, Zapotec is gender neutral. Although *Muxes* have been celebrated in their community, Chisholm (2018) critiques research articulating a discourse of "general acceptance of this group in Zapotec culture" (p. 21) and in Mexico, which overshadows discrimination and oppression still inflicted to them.
[27] Lugones (2005) critically contends the conceptualisation of "fusion" instead of "intersection" since the former allows the destruction of the logics of the categories (i.e. race, class, sexuality, and gender) as independent or separable (p. 66). For further details on this ongoing debate, see Velez and Tuana (2020).

2.6. The specificity of Mexican meditative practices: A decolonial framework

While the emergent design of my study was informed by particular methodological perspectives (Chapter 4), the decolonial theoretical framework adopted did not precede my thesis as it was prompted by empirical findings (Collins and Stockton 2018) as I shall explain. In building a decolonial approach to study meditative practices such as 'mindfulness' in Mexico, I realised the fundamental role in my work of the tenet that Mignolo and Walsh articulate in their 2018 book "On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics and Praxis".[28] The authors argued that it is "in the praxis of living and the idea of theory-and-as-praxis and praxis-and-as-theory, and the interdependence and continuous flow of movement of both", that decoloniality "is enacted and, at the same time, rendered possible" (2018, p. 7). The authors view theory and praxis as inevitably interconnected, instead of the long-established separation of theory from praxis; and contend that these constructs "presuppose the basic praxis of living". As they continue, "without our daily praxis of living, it would not be possible to make conceptual and second-order distinctions between theory and praxis" (p. 7).[29] In the context of my research, I have tried to incorporate this tenet at the praxis level in both my methodological and analytical approaches using a bricolage approach (Kincheloe and Berry 2004; Rogers 2012; Berry 2015).

Given my in-between insider-outsider positions, the praxis relates to the extent to which I decolonised myself as the researcher conducting this project in two aspects. Firstly, upon critical reflection about my identity as a Mexican female with mixed heritage studying in the UK while analytically theorising about the phenomenon of meditative practices in Mexico, and secondly, in relation to my training background as a social researcher and as a psychologist with an experience in experimental research methods. Thus, such decolonial praxis has required a continuous process of 'stepping back' from taken-for-granted assumptions during the process of data interpretation due to my identity and cultural background and my educational training mainly in Anglo-American and European psychological and social scientific knowledge and research methods (I explore this in more detail in the Epilogue after

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[28] The book is divided in two parts (i.e. "Decoloniality in/as Praxis I" and "The decolonial Option II"), and so I will cite individually the authors to refer to the chapters they wrote within those two parts; that is Catherine E. Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo, respectively, except for the introduction which they have written together. The authors explain this design in "two voices" intended to "make evident a methodology of cothought and corelation, a methodology-in-as-pedagogy that does not just describe coloniality but more crucially in the very process of analysis, concept making, concept revising, and praxis-based thinking" (2018, p. 244).

[29] I use the concept of 'praxis' in this sense of relation between theory and practice but also to acknowledge the working methodologies being develop "around new forms of [transformative] praxis from Psychology" and from Latin America (e.g. the psychosocial field as well as decolonisation and indigenisation of psychology, see Lozano Amaya 2020, p. 7).

Chapter 4). I also considered reflecting upon my three-fold positionality as a 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher and researcher and the intersection of this with the research participants' social identities and positions as I came to understand in my data analysis (Chapter 6).

The development of my decolonial approach at the theoretical level has been more challenging because I had not engaged in decolonial thinking before my PhD. Besides, to date, I have not found research employing such a framework in the investigation of 'mindfulness', and no qualitative study of this scale has been conducted yet in any other Latin American country. This has, therefore, required a constant movement in alignment with Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) tenet of thinking and reflecting (theory) and doing (praxis) while crafting the decolonial theoretical framework for my study. In this regard, this thesis enacts an initial decolonial approach to investigating the historical development, conceptualisations, and provision of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. As mentioned above, the theoretical decolonial framework has also been informed by the data collected. For example, it can be argued that some of the 'mindfulness' conceptualisations given by the Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers I interviewed, and the different programmes and approaches they have developed or adapted, represent a decolonising practice. These elements made this case study unique and interesting. In the subsequent paragraphs, I briefly outline the key points underpinning the development of the decolonial framework as discussed so far.

The decolonial theoretical framework helps me explain the themes identified in the data analysis (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8). For instance, in the decolonial perspective, the concept of coloniality is at the core, i.e. the colonisation of the Americas and the Caribbean from the 15th century, and so this has been central in my research in questioning 'What is Mexican and what is not?' (see Epilogue). Specifically, regarding the Spanish invasion of Mexico, there is the adoption of the Spanish language and Catholicism over Indigenous languages and cultures. Also, revising the different neo-colonial layers such as the spread of Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008) in Mexico, the Anglo-American and European influence on psychological knowledge (Pavón-Cuéllar 2017; Pavón-Cuéllar 2020a) and the oppression of Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies, have been relevant to critically question the so-called Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" (Wilson 2014).

It has also been essential to examine critically the concept of *Mexicanidad* [Mexicanness] (i.e. the characteristic of being Mexican), and what this means in term of the meditative practices found in Mexico. This was required considering local Indigenous knowledge and practice such

as *Buen Vivir*, loosely translated into English as "Good Living".[30] Paraphrasing Marcos (2009), to understand modern-day Indigenous spirituality it is crucial to consider some of the tenets of Mesoamerican ancestral "embodied thought", as she calls it (Marcos 1998, p. 35). A fundamental principle of "[Indigenous thought and] spirituality understood as cosmic vision of life" (p. 35) is duality the construction of the world by fluid dual oppositions, beyond mutually exclusive categories (not dualism).[31] Also, is recognised that the "hard core" of Mesoamerican cultures (López Austin 2001) concerns the place of humans in the cosmos and the condition of supernatural beings (goddesses and gods), characterised as Marcos (2009) notes, by the interconnection and interdependence with humans and all their activities (p. 41). Unlike other religions such as Christianity where theism is emphasised, Indigenous spirituality can be described as an earth-based cosmology (Celidwen 2020).

> The cosmic vision of life is to be connected with the surroundings, and all the surroundings have life, so they become SACRED: we encounter earth, mountains valleys, caves, plants animals, stones, water, air, moon, sun, starts. Spirituality is born from this perspective and conception in which all beings that exist in Mother Nature have life and are interrelated. Spirituality is linked to a sense of COMMUNITY in which all beings are interrelated and complementary (*Memoria* 128 cited in Marcos 2009, p. 42, emphasis in original).

I have assessed my findings under a critical lens of internal colonialism (González Casanova 2003), since *Mexicanidad* is a contested conceptualisation. This is because both the creation of the Mexican Nation during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921) and the sense and image of 'Mexican identity' built from that Nation-State was developed under a political and ideological agenda of *mestizaje* (racial and cultural intermixing). Nevertheless, such a 'national project' failed to include Indigenous and Black-descendant populations (Clausen 2007; Carroll 2015; Moreno Figueroa 2011) and perspectives. Hence, the process of internal colonialism understood as "the peoples, minorities or nations colonised by the Nation-State suffer[ing] conditions similar to those that characterise them in colonialism and neo-colonialism at the

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[30] It can be said that *Buen Vivir* is a Pan-American theoretical and practical concept (Pryor 2017, p. 50) as it is found across different Indigenous peoples in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, and Mexico. However, there are considerable differences in the terms used among the Indigenous languages spoken within these groups, and specificities regarding the basic elements and practices involving the cosmovision of *Buen Vivir*. In the context of some Mexican Indigenous communities, two core elements of *Buen Vivir* are: the "shifts focus from anthropocentrism to biocentrism [so that] humans exercise no more dominion over other living beings – such as the earth and its diverse elements" and "a coexistence founded in the interconnectedness of all and for all" (p. 50). I expand on this in Chapter 8.
[31] Paraphrasing Marcos (2009, p. 35), in contrast to Christianity where there is the concept of a 'virile god', instead, divinities are gendered feminine *and* masculine, as a mother/father dual protector/creator. As she explains, the fusion of feminine and masculine and is one common principle in Mesoamerican communities today.

international level" (González Casanova 2003, p. 3) and which occurs in the economic, political, social, and cultural fields.[32]

The process of internal colonialism is also visible at the ideological level as it will become evident in Chapter 8. While this questioning - 'What is Mexican and what is not?' - initially stemmed from my reflexivity as a researcher (i.e. my identity as 'Mexican'), by following Walkerdine et al's. (2001) psychosocial perspective, I identified the different neo-colonial patterns as well as discourses of internal colonialism in the analysis of the historical development and specificity of Mexican meditative practices. As I will address in Chapter 4, the decolonial framework developed is interwoven with the methodological and analytic approaches adopted.

Due to the key points discussed above, a decolonial framework requires bringing an intercultural perspective considering the self-identification of some of the research participants as Indigenous people. In this context, interculturality "refers to the relations that exist within society between diverse majority and minority constellations that are defined in terms not only of culture but also of ethnicity, language, religious denomination, and/or nationality" (Dietz 2018, p.1). Thus, interculturality was integrated into the project as it emerged empirically due to its relevance towards the decolonisation of 'mindfulness' as studied in the Mexican context.

In the following chapter, the origins and conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' are discussed in more detail. I contextualise the debates of Buddhist modernism and the Anglo-American MBIs, reviewing the 'mindfulness' studies in the Spanish language and arguing for the need for conducting a qualitative case study in Mexico.

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[32] González Casanova (2003) points out the following seven conditions: "1. They [the people] live in a territory without their own government; 2. They are in a situation of inequality vis-à-vis the elites of the dominant ethnic groups and the classes that comprise them; 3. Its administration and legal-political responsibility concern the dominant ethnic groups, the bourgeoisies and oligarchies of the central government or its allies and subordinates; 4. Its inhabitants do not participate in the highest political and military positions of the central government, except as "assimilated"; 5. The rights of its inhabitants, their economic situation, social policy and culture are regulated and imposed by the central government. 6. In general, the colonised within a Nation-State belong to a "race" different from the one that dominates in the national government and that is considered "inferior", or at most turned into a "liberating" symbol that is part of the state demagoguery. 7. Most of the colonised belong to a different culture and speak a language other than the "national" one" (p. 3).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

The "Mindfulness movement on the rise in Mexico" is the title of the second result obtained after a Google search on 'mindfulness research in Mexico'. Stephen Woodman, a British freelance journalist living in Guadalajara, Mexico wrote this post on December 28th, 2014, alleging not only the increase of 'mindfulness' popularity but the existence of a "mindfulness movement" in the country.[33] This is articulated through the story of a private university lecturer who has been teaching students "to meditate for course credit" in the state of Guadalajara. The testimony of a 21-year-old female university student is also presented, who strikingly reports having had "similar benefits from attending one of the notoriously intense Vipassana retreats just outside Mexico City" (Woodman 2014, para. 21). From this rather succinct student's report, the comparison between the 'mindfulness' experience in educational settings versus attending a Vipassana meditation retreat is notorious in itself, given the tension between the 'secular mindfulness' versus the private 'spiritual' experience one might encounter in a meditation retreat; not considering even that the university where this credited course is offered belongs to Mexican Jesuit University System.[34] The question about "mixing education and spirituality" is explicitly raised, to what the female lecturer argued "well, academic courses will train you to be a good architect, engineer, psychologist, but an academic education is very limited" (para. 13). According to her, you cannot be "a good psychologist, a good engineer if you are not at peace internally. You'll be affected if you have issues, problems with your family, problems with your co-workers", and so meditation is proposed as an aid to be "focused". The university lecturer sees no conflict; on the contrary, she contends that "it is detrimental for schools not to teach meditation" (para. 15). Alongside this, it is claimed that there is a growing body of scientific research demonstrating the benefits of meditation; so "it's not a hippie thing" (para. 17) as people might think.

Outlining this example provides an introduction to some of the key themes that arise when approaching the study of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. While some of these debates (i.e. concerning the nature of 'mindfulness' meditation and the critiques around the introduction of

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[33] Woodman's blog post has been also published in *Guadalajara Reporter* the only English newspaper in the state (Woodman 2021) which includes national and international news for online and print subscriptions. Both the title and the content of the blogpost were originally written in English.

[34] While public education in Mexico is officially secular (based on Article 3 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution), there are private education institutions linked to Catholic religious groups (e.g. Jesuits as in the case above). Hence the complex tensions between the 'private' and the 'public' and the 'secular' versus 'spiritual/religious' ethos associated to 'mindfulness'.

a Buddhist-inspired practice as well as the scientific discourse legitimising the use of the practice in secular settings) have been of interest in international social scientific research, no empirical work has been carried out in Mexico so far to address such crucial topics. The claim "Mindfulness movement on the rise in Mexico" might be out of place not just then in 2014, but even now, five years later. Certainly, the provision of a single course such as the 'mindfulness' course taught at a private university in Guadalajara should not lead to reach such conclusion. Possibly what prompted to create this tabloid article might have been previous US publications during the same year. For instance, *Time* magazine's February 3, 2014 issue featuring "The Mindfulness Revolution: The Science of Finding Focusing in a Stressed-out, Multitasking Culture", or Jeff Wilson's (2014) book "Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture" where he explicitly develops his thesis on the "mindfulness movement" (p. 9). However, systematic, and rigorous research has not been conducted yet to study and assess the 'mindfulness' milieu in Mexico.

This chapter's purpose is to present a review of scientific literature on 'mindfulness' and discuss some of the current debates around it to articulate the rationale for studying this topic in the Mexican context. I start by exploring the dominant narratives around the definition of 'mindfulness' and Buddhist scholars' critiques concerning its origin along with the framework of Buddhist modernism in Mexico. Then, the development of contemporary Anglo-American MBIs in the medical and psychological domains is described; addressing the status MBIs have gained as evidence-based therapeutic treatments being institutionalised and "exported" globally as standardised protocols. Simultaneously, I critically engage with "hidden" histories which have also contributed to the development of different 'mindfulness' perspectives, but which have been overlooked. Particularly, I focus on discussing what does this mean in terms of geographical regions where English is not the official language. I argue the case for the historical revision of the emergence and dissemination of 'mindfulness' in Mexico and the exploration of *emic* conceptualisations among practitioners, teachers, and researchers.

Then, I discuss the emergent social studies and empirical work looking at 'mindfulness' in context which has influenced my research. I describe this as a critical and social turn in the investigation of the situated socio-cultural and historical aspects influencing the dissemination of 'mindfulness' in different settings, which is pertinent given the global scale of 'mindfulness' as a social phenomenon. On the one hand, I concentrate on highlighting the value of research addressing topics such as a) practitioners, teachers, and researchers' professional trajectories and their meditation journeys; b) the tensions that arise due to their positionalities in the scientific field and the spiritual sphere and the fluidity between these; c) the discourses used

and the assemblage of 'mindfulness' perspectives constructed; d) as well as the tension between the 'secularity' and 'spirituality' emerging in the 'mindfulness' discourse.[35]

On the other hand, I problematise the lack of empirical studies on these issues concerning specifically Mexican 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers and researchers who have been influencing the dissemination and delivery of this practice across different sectors, and the understanding of the current milieu.

Finally, I discuss some of the research that has been developed in the context of non-English speaking countries including Spain and Latin America. With a major emphasis on Mexico, I will describe the trends of the scientific literature found, arguing about the importance of conducting qualitative research to explore the tensions and dilemmas that arise during the dissemination and teaching of 'mindfulness' in Mexican settings. I conclude this chapter by arguing about the need to conduct empirical research on 'mindfulness' in Mexico, considering the relevance of contextual aspects such as language and socio-cultural specificities of the country.

In what follows, I problematise the definitions of 'mindfulness' seen from the Anglophone perspective, discussing the dominant histories around this. I also introduce the revision of such definitions from Buddhist practitioners and scholars as well as the psychological literature on therapeutic 'mindfulness' interventions.

3.2. "Owning Mindfulness": Anglo-American conceptualisations of 'mindfulness'

I employ the phrase "owning mindfulness" inspired by Valerio's (2016) investigation of patterns of the use of the English term 'mindfulness' through a bibliometric analysis of scientific literature published in Web of Science database.[36] I extend and foreground that the debates regarding 'mindfulness' nature and its origin, or rather the "mindfulness ownership" as Valerio put it (p. 159), have been largely sustained and claimed primarily through the means of English academic language as I shall demonstrate. These debates represent dominant definitions and critiques on the topic produced in Anglophone cultures, which have, nevertheless, overlooked distinctive perspectives on 'mindfulness' coming from non-English speaking contexts. In some cases, these narratives have neglected 'less central' histories from the Anglo-American

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[35] The spiritual sphere in Mexico implies both Christian religiosity such as Catholicism in relation to Buddhism, and Indigenous cosmovision as mentioned in Chapter 2.

[36] Valerio's (2016) bibliometric main analysis conducted using Thomson Reuters' Web of Science was limited to English-language journal literature deriving from different disciplines (i.e. arts and humanities, science, and social sciences; for more details in the methodology, see pp. 164-168).

context itself (e.g. Metcalf 2002; Fox Lee and Young 2018; Stanley et al. 2018b; Fox Lee 2019). In this regard, Valerio's (2016) allusion regarding 'mindfulness ownership' is useful to introduce one of the most heated debates in the interdisciplinary field of 'mindfulness' studies looking at: What 'mindfulness' is? and why is this important? (e.g. Bhikkhu Bodhi 2011; Gethin 2011; Sharf 2015). I also add the following to the research agenda: Where do these 'mindfulness' conceptualisations come from? And what can or cannot this tell us of the context where 'mindfulness' is taught?

It is common to find 'mindfulness' definitions classified in broader categorisations such as "Buddhist" mindfulness versus "Western" mindfulness (e.g. Krägeloh 2013; Sun 2014; Khoury et al. 2017). This reflects the conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' in relation to the historical Buddhist context where it derived (e.g. Bhikkhu Bodhi 2011) and where the ethical framework underpinning the practice is also emphasised (e.g. Stanley 2013), in contrast with the psychological and medical operationalisations. Since the latter are articulated in the context of contemporary therapeutic interventions largely associated with secularised forms of mindfulness (Baer 2003). Yet, as Fox Lee (2019) argues, it is rarer to find the acknowledgement of Ellen Langer's concepts of "mindfulness and mindlessness" as "indigenous" to disciplinary social psychology (p. 218). A recent exception is the review paper by Khoury et al. (2017) where the Langerian sociocognitive mindfulness theory is also analysed through embodiment framework along with the two other predominant categories (i.e. the "Buddhist" and the "Western" mindfulness), to investigate an underlying process based on the mind-body connection and the body's role which could integrate the three broad categorisations together (pp. 1161-1162).

Nevertheless, some might be critical of using the Buddhist philosophical lenses of embodiment in relation to Langer's mindfulness as Khoury et al. (2017) have proposed. This is precisely the case because Langer's mindfulness conceptualisation is nonmeditative (Fox Lee 2019, p. 220; see also Baer 2003, p. 126). In contrast, the various definitions in the "Buddhist" and contemporary "Western" mindfulness interventions are largely characterised by their meditative nature.[37]

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[37] Fox Lee (2019, p. 217) highlights that beyond being "superficially synonymous" and having been developed in parallel during the second half of the 1970s, Langerian mindfulness differs importantly from other forms of Buddhist-derived and contemporary ("Western") mindfulness practices in its origination, definition, and goals. Langer (1992) theorised mindfulness when studying the effects of its inverse inattentive behaviour, "mindlessness" (p. 219). She defined mindfulness as "a state of conscious awareness in which the individual is implicitly aware of the context and content of information … a state of openness to novelty in which the individual actively constructs categories and distinctions" (1992, p. 289). Through designing numerous psychological experiments, Langer evidenced that her approach, and thus the effects gained during her mindful training condition, were not dependant on a formal meditative practice (Fox Lee 2019, p. 222).

Fox Lee's critical historiography rightly questions the social politics of mindfulness research, exposing how "internal histories" of 'mindfulness' have favoured Jon Kabat-Zinn's 8-week MBSR programme as a "landmark beginning of the field proper" (p. 217).[38] Likewise, Fox Lee (2019) remarks that even within Buddhist traditions, there have never been single interpretations of 'mindfulness' (e.g. see Dunne 2015; Purser et al. 2016), yet these interpretations have been used to generate a matrix of mindfulness-related practices from a neurocognitive perspective (e.g. see Lutz et al. 2015).

But then, if one single word in English could relate to distinct conceptualisations and thus articulate different yet related histories, a logical question to ask would be how is 'mindfulness' translated in contexts where English is not people's mother tongue? Therefore, it is important to give attention to the pluralistic definitions of 'mindfulness' (even as a nonmeditative construct such as in Langer's theory). The above demonstrates that an unequivocal 'mindfulness' conceptualisation nor a single 'universal' history of its development can be assumed, supporting the rationale for exploring the use of *emic* 'mindfulness' conceptualisations in other contexts like the Mexican one.

Moreover, revealing the social politics involved in the construction and dissemination of historical accounts regarding the development of 'mindfulness' just, as in Fox Lee's research, becomes relevant for two related reasons. Firstly, from the point of view of my study which is informed by a feminist perspective (Chapter 2), it is fundamental to bring unheard voices to the discussion, providing an account from "within" the context where these histories are narrated. Simultaneously, these new narratives might disrupt the more established histories that cannot fully account for the description of a social phenomenon occurring beyond the geographical locations and socio-cultural contexts where the dominant histories have been articulated. Consequently, the investigation of *emic* conceptualisations on 'mindfulness' goes hand-in-hand with the understanding of language and discourse as historically, and socio-culturally situated (Braun and Clarke 2013). As such, the study of the discursive practices and meanings can provide insightful understandings as voiced by those in the location where the research is conducted, avoiding imposing 'colonial discourses' (e.g. Míguez Passada 2019).

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[38] Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as "the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" (1994b, p. 4).

3.3. Buddhist *sati* and "Western" mindfulness

It is not new that scholars and practitioners encounter the difficulty of defining what 'mindfulness' is. Indeed, Chiesa (2012) mentions that "modern attempts to operationalise mindfulness have consistently failed to provide an unequivocal definition of mindfulness" (p. 255). This position relates mostly to western psychological literature where 'mindfulness' has been defined either as a psychological trait that individuals have. That is, as people's mindfulness baseline or average (Siegling and Petrides 2014), or a state of awareness which can be altered or developed through the practice of meditation (Kiken et al. 2015). Following Chiesa's statement, the notion of 'mindfulness' as a construct that can be objectively studied and measured is implicit, which nevertheless neglects the "complex, intercultural exchanges" from which it has emerged, notably, as Stanley et al. (2018b) state, from "British colonial expansion in Southeast Asia" (p. 4).[39]

The complexity of the various conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' arises with this overarching debate about its origin. In other words, the contextualistion of 'mindfulness' within "traditional Buddhism" and the emergence of a more "modern" version of 'standardised and secularised mindfulness' practice in the West. As Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011) remarks "mindfulness has travelled a long way from its homeland in northeast India … finding new accommodations in urban meditation centres and even in busy hospitals, pain clinics, and treatment centres" (p. 35), suggesting that the same practice has been moving across time and place. Here, the modern version of 'mindfulness' refers to its adaptation from the Buddhist context for its use in modern western clinical settings to treat medical and psychological conditions like pain, stress, and anxiety (Gethin 2011). So 'mindfulness' was derived as the "usual narrative" tells (Hickey 2019, p. 3) from the aforementioned MBSR programme (Kabat-Zinn 1990), and its following therapeutic variants which I will revise later in this chapter.

In the scientific literature where the Buddhist roots of 'mindfulness' are acknowledged (see, for example, Dryden and Still 2006; Kang and Whittingham 2010), the authors usually define 'mindfulness' as the translation of *sati,* the word in the Indian Pali language which originally means memory (Rhys Davids 1890 as cited in Stanley et al. 2018b, p.11; Bhikkhu Bodhi 2011) or recollection, due to its "function of awareness of the present moment" (Anālayo 2003, p.

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[39] Briefly, Buddhism was transformed by Asian reformists who sought to revitalise Buddhism in response to British colonisation in Asia. Yet, as McMahan (2008) documents, the representation of Buddhism and thus the Buddhists traditions that were brought to Western countries has been also the "result of a process of modernization, westernization, reinterpretation, image-making revitalization, and reform" (pp. 3-9) produced in the West (see also Lopez 2002).

47).[40] Within these publications, the definition of 'mindfulness' is discussed and contextualised in relation to classical texts from early Buddhism (e.g. the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,* Bhikkhu Bodhi 2011, p. 21), where the language Pali was used to preserve Buddha's discourses (Peacock 2014).

Although the debate on the definition of 'mindfulness' is not straightforward, for the present research, it is important to emphasize the relevance and implications of translation processes as these have been embedded in colonial exchanges and which have not been fully recognised nor addressed in the mainstream literature. For instance, Stanley et al. (2018b) have revived the role of the Welsh Buddhologist Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922) and his wife Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids (1857-1942), also a Pali scholar, in the translation for the first time of the Pali word *sati* to a European language (p. 11). Rhys Davids, along with other 19th century Victorian Pali scholars, translated *sati* into the English word 'mindfulness'. Since the 19th century until now, 'mindfulness' has been the most authoritative term to render *sati* in a dominant language, and from which further contemporary debates have originated. Without mentioning that it has even become the title of a well-known peer-reviewed scientific journal (Stanley et al. 2018b, p. 12) in the field.

However, one might ask: how do we approach the study of 'mindfulness' as a Buddhist-derived meditation practice in the Mexican socio-cultural and linguistic particular context? Certainly, British colonial expansion in Southeast Asia and the subsequent cultural exchanges such as the establishment of the Pali Text Society in 1881, and the translation of Buddhist texts into English, have had and indirect impact on the dissemination of Buddhism in Mexico. Though Rhys Davids' role in translating *sati* to the English term 'mindfulness' is not widely known in the Mexican group I studied and the documents I reviewed, the usage of the English word is ubiquitous nowadays. As I discuss in turn, important influences in the propagation of Buddhist meditation in Mexico in association with Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008) are to be found more directly in Buddhism imported from the US. This coincides with some of the historical events that have shaped the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" itself, including: US Buddhist converts as documented by Wilson (2014, pp. 13-42), Kucinskas (2019, pp. 19-31) and Gleig (2019, pp. 17-49), the influx of Asian modernisers themselves (Stanley et al. 2018b,

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[40] For further explanation on the use of the English words like "memory" and "recollection" as translations of *sati* within the Buddhist classical texts and their connotations for the contemporary conceptualisations as discussed by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2011, pp.22-27) see Gómez Rodríguez (2004), Dryden and Still (2006) and Peacock (2014).

p. 13), as well as less often documented and more recent British Buddhist converts (i.e. Sangharakshita, see McMahan 2008, pp. 136-139; Gómez Rodríguez 2019).[41]

3.4. Buddhist modernism in Mexico

The study of Buddhism as a social phenomenon in Mexico has gained little attention from social scientists and religious scholars; possibly due to its status as a "minority identity" in the Mexican religious landscape (May May 2019, p. 238). As Rocha (2016) rightly asserts, "Latin America is seldom associated with Buddhism" (p. 300). Hence the paucity of research on this topic is reflected in the whole region. Besides, religious scholars have concentrated on studying the changes in Catholic practices and the rise of religious diversity (De la Torre et al. 2017) with an interest in Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity (e.g. Navarro and Leatham 2004; Hill 2019). As for the 2010 Population and Housing Census in Mexico by the INEGI, Buddhism was categorised as "Oriental religion" which, along with "Other religions" (e.g. Judaism, Islam, etc.), accounts only for 0.23% of the Mexican population versus 83% who reported to be Catholic (from a total population over 112 million back then). Indeed, Protestant and Evangelical groups as well as other strands of Christianity represent 9% followed by 7% of the population without affiliation or unspecified (INEGI 2010; De la Torre and Gutiérrez 2014).

According to the most recent statistics available from 2010, Brazil is at the top of the Latin American countries with the largest Buddhist population; that is, 250,000 adherents (Pew Research Center 2012; see also Rocha 2016, p. 303).[42] This population was just under 10,000 in Mexico. No precise statistics exist in this regard since affiliation to Buddhism has been inadequately categorised as "Oriental religions" mixing it with Hinduism, Taoism, among others, at the 2010 National Census (INEGI 2015b, p. 7).[43] This has prevented accurate description of Mexican affiliation to Buddhism since it was not possible to know if the Mexican Buddhist population back in 2010 were related to Asian migrants, Asian Mexicans, or both;

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[41] In this chapter, I use Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008) as the theoretical framework that has been used and which partly explains Buddhism in Mexico. However, in congruence with the decolonial lenses of my research and following Gleig's (2019) revision of modernity and shifts to postmodernity (pp. 1-12) and the subsequent categories employed, i.e. postmodern Buddhism, postcolonial Buddhism and postsecular Buddhism (pp. 282-298) to account for transformations observed in the 21st century US Buddhist meditation-based convert lineages, I will engage critically with this debate in my conclusions chapter.

[42] It is important to mention that Brazil is a Latin American country with a higher population followed by Mexico.

[43] The census is carried every 10 years with the latest taking place in 2020 during the writing period of my thesis. These fresh data cannot be included in the present thesis because the results are planned to be published later in 2021 (INEGI 2020).

and if there were any differences considering the different schools of Buddhism. Recently, the "Oriental religions" group has been omitted in the 2016 Mexican National Survey on Religious Beliefs and Practices conducted by the Religious Research Network of Mexico (RIFREM, see Hernández Hernández et al. 2016). This is of great concern since the Asian population is considered the *cuarta raíz* ["fourth root"] of Latin America (Chao Romero 2011, p. 8).[44]

Quoting the director of *Casa Tíbet* [Tibet House] in Mexico City, Marco Antonio Karam, the US popular Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* remarks that as for 2020, "there are over 100,000 practicing Buddhists in Mexico—and probably tens of thousands more who are interested in the dharma" (Bard de Palazuelos 2020, para. 3). Given that the only exact numbers of Buddhists in Mexico; that is 5,346 followers from the National Census of the 2000s is available (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2007, p. 99), *Tricycle's* post based on Karam's views suggests the considerable increase on Mexicans' interest in *practising* Buddhism. As I came to understand with my interviewees, the self-identification as "being Buddhist" versus "practising Buddhism" or "being a Buddhist practitioner" is an important matter, at least in the current Mexican 'mindfulness' meditation milieu (Chapters 4 and 6).

Some studies have focused on investigating the religious conversion of Mexicans to specific Buddhist groups. For instance, the Japanese groups Jodo Shinshu and Soka Gakkai (Morales Aldana 2006); Zen Buddhism as taught by the Japanese monk Ejo Takata after his stay in Mexico (Fujiwara 1998; Morales Aldana; 2006); as well as Tibetan Buddhism as practiced in *Casa Tíbet* (Torres Mercado 2002). Also, studying Vipassana meditators (Hernández Madrid 2012) and notably the Soka Gakkai's group (Ōkubo 1991; Inoue 2003; May May 2015a) and its institutionalisation in Mérida, the northwest city of the state of Yucatán (May May 2016) have been among researchers' interests. Only a few historical revisions of Buddhism in Mexico are available so far (Morales Ramírez 2014; May May 2015b). Nonetheless, these constitute rather general historical outlines, which do not cover the development of Buddhism during the last five years, plus the fact that not all these Buddhist groups practice meditation. Although these studies have contributed to broadening the understanding of the spread of Buddhism in the country, the methodological rigour and evidence presented to articulate their claims varies; therefore, I have considered them cautiously.

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[44] Asian migrations in the second half of the nineteenth century (Baumann 2001, p. 11) were an important antecedent through which Buddhist practices and concepts arrived from Asia. Due to US restrictions to Asian migration (Morales Aldana 2006, p. 35-39), Japanese workers came to Mexico in 1897 followed by Chinese migrants who arrived also under working conditions, settling across the Mexican states (except Tlaxcala) by the first decade of the twentieth century. It is reported that these communities did not practice publicly their religion at the time (Morales Aldana 2006), and yet very little was known regarding their affiliation as 'Buddhists' as noted with the National Census carried since 1895 (see May May 2019, pp. 241-242).

Finally, the blogosphere is another significant resource I have also used for searching about the contemporary history of Mexican Buddhism, not only due to the relevance for Buddhist organisations in having a public image through websites but also for the need of Buddhist groups to create transnational links and exchange content to audiences who are located in other geographical locations and which require access in their own language; a feature of Buddhism's global reach (see Baumann 2001).[45] While finding this gap in the social scientific literature and the methodological considerations of the studies found represent a challenge for the present literature review, it also provides an opportunity to offer a fresh perspective on this topic. Specifically for contextualising the emergence of 'mindfulness' as a Buddhist-inspired practice in relation to socio-cultural and historically significant influences in the Mexican milieu.

To begin with, I draw special attention to Gómez Rodríguez's (2019) posthumous publication "*Las Religiones de Asia a partir de la Modernidad: El Ejemplo de la Meditación Budista*" [The Religions of Asia from Modernity: The example of Buddhist Meditation] because until now, it comprises the single recent investigation about 'mindfulness' in Mexico, written in the Spanish language and envisaged by a Buddhist scholar and clinical psychology practitioner.[46] As it is clear from the book's title, Gómez Rodríguez approaches his analysis using Buddhist modernism as a framework (Sharf 1995; McMahan 2008). He asserts that "Buddhism does not exist outside the vicissitudes of history" (2019 p. 69); and thus, its study in the Mexican context should be addressed accordingly.

Gómez Rodríguez's (2019) work demonstrates the potential of studying 'mindfulness' as a social phenomenon in Mexico, pointing out the importance of addressing cultural, historical, and philological issues when studying Buddhism and its modern manifestations, such as its adoption in clinical settings and adaptation as a therapeutic practice. Also, his analysis is timely in fleshing out to a Spanish-speaking audience some of the trends of Buddhist meditation specifically 'mindfulness' and its adoption in the West "as a phenomena representative of Buddhism's encounter with modernity and with the contemporary popularity of science-based psychotherapy" (Gómez Rodríguez 2019, p. 13). He also problematises the

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[45] For instance, Buddhistdoor Global is a multimedia platform originally developed in the English language founded in Hong Kong in 1995. They have also launched a website in Spanish that contains both translated articles and original content written by practitioners from the Hispanic world (Buddhistdoor en español [no date]).

[46] Professor Emeritus of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, Luis O. Gómez (1943-2017) was a prominent Puerto Rican Buddhist Scholar, translator, and psychologist who founded the PhD in Buddhist Studies programme at the same University (Biddlecombe Agsar 2017). He also held a position as Professor-Researcher at *El Colegio de México* [The College of Mexico], a prestigious social sciences and humanities research and teaching institute in Mexico City and where the *Centro de Estudios de Asia y África* (CEAA) [Center for Asian and African Studies] has been active since 1964.

dominant use of English in the translations of Buddhist terms and critically disavowing the views of some of his students arguing about the supposed "poorness of Spanish language to express such terms" (p. 22). All of these are matters that I have considered in the development of my research questions for the present study, as I shall clarify in the conclusion of this chapter. Paradoxically, the documentary analysis as presented in Gómez Rodríguez's (2019) book is limited since it is based on Anglophone documents and sources only; while empirical data regarding for instance, how 'mindfulness' is defined by Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers or how is taught in Mexican settings, were not collected.[47] Besides, the analysis was focused on the therapeutic uptake of 'mindfulness' in the medical and psychological scientific literature and in comparison with classic Buddhist texts and translations from the Pali Canon.[48] Only one brief reference was made to a Mexican study in the field of pedagogy. Yet, Gómez Rodríguez's work is fundamental to introduce some of the relevant trends of Buddhist modernism in Mexico, mainly coming from the US and some from Europe.

3.5. Milestones in the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation in Mexico

Rocha's (2016) review of Buddhism in Latin America and Morales Ramírez's (2014) historical review of the Mexican context highlight certain similarities with the trends that have been observed in the expansion of Buddhism in the US and Europe (particularly Buddhist modernism, see Sharf 1995; Lopez 2002; McMahan 2008). This has followed roughly three developmental stages previously delineated by Baumann (2001), namely: 1) the arrival of Asian migrants in Mexico and "Orientalism" in Mexican literature, 2) the booming of *La Onda* (the counterculture movement) and New Age spirituality, and 3) the globalisation and internationalisation of Buddhism.[49] Likewise, some of the Anglo-American and European antecedents in relation to those developmental stages of Buddhism have influenced the emergence of 'mindfulness' in Mexico partly in parallel to the historical accounts described concerning the "mindfulness movement" in the US (Wilson 2014, pp. 13-42; Hickey 2019, pp. 1-9; Kucinskas 2019, pp. 19-31; Gleig 2019, pp. 17-49). Since the revision of these histories is not the purpose of this literature review and given the space limitations, I only revise briefly the milestones that have been of foremost influence for the dissemination of Buddhism and

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[47] It is important to note this was an ongoing work that Gómez Rodríguez was developing, and which was published by his colleagues Roberto E. García y Alan Ruiz as a posthumous publication two years after he died.

[48] The Pali Canon is the first recorded source of Theravada Buddhism written in the Pali language.

[49] Although Morales Ramírez (2014) discusses the historical importance of the conference "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" where Erich Fromm invited the Buddhist scholar D.T. Suzuki, held in Mexico in 1957 (pp. 283-284), the implications of the rise of psy-disciplines in relation to 'mindfulness' meditation are not fully addressed in this review.

Buddhist meditation in Mexico from 1949 to 2014. This period overlaps with the second and third developmental stages of Buddhism mentioned above; which are used to provide only a broader framework of the Mexican socio-cultural and historical context.[50]

The period from 1949 to 2014 in Mexico has been characterised by the emphasis given to Buddhist meditation practice and Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religious doctrine (namely Buddhist modernism). It has been practised also by Mexican lay people and by Buddhist "meditation-based converts" (see Gleig 2019, pp. 37-43); which in Mexico resulted from a combination of events. These events include both external or 'imported' influences and internal adaptations of Buddhism, including Mexicans who had travelled abroad bringing Buddhism and meditation practices themselves. Schools from the general Buddhist traditions, that is, the Theravada, Mahayana (including Zen), and Vajrayana (Tibetan), are currently found in Mexico (for details about the organisation of the Buddhist schools in Mexico, see Appendix C).

As presented in Figure 1, the spread of Buddhism in Mexico has had a significant pattern of development. Zen Buddhism arrived first to Mexico with the presence of D.T. Suzuki, a Japanese Buddhist scholar. Suzuki was invited by the German psychoanalyst and social psychologist Erich Fromm to participate in a seminar organised by the Psychoanalysis Department of UNAM Medical Faculty in the late 1950s; and later with the arrival of the Japanese Buddhist monk Ejo Takata during the 1960s.

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[50] I have addressed the importance of Asian migrants in Mexico and the census data available regarding the record of Buddhist populations in the country by 2000 and 2010; which was one of the first influences for Buddhist groups to be established in Mexico (e.g. the Japanese Soka Gakkai organisation officially first set up in the 1960s; see Okubo 1991; Inoue 2003; May May 2015a). For references regarding "Hispanic Orientalism" and its impact during the first half of the 20th century in Mexico, see Torres-Rodríguez (2015) and García (2020), and Latin America, see Camayd-Freixas (2013).

Figure 1 Timeline of Milestones Related to the Spread of Buddhism, Hinduism (TM), and Buddhist Meditation in Mexico, 1949-2014

1957
Conference "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" Erich Fromm and D.T. Suzuki in Cuernavaca

1969
Ejo Takata establishes "Zen A.C.", the first *zendo*

1970
Alejandro Jodorowsky produced the film "*El Topo*"

1986
Maezumi Roshi and Tesshin Sanderson establish *Centro Zen de México*

1992
Creation of Mexican Centre of Theravada Buddhism A.C.

2000
Geshe Lobsang Dawa, the first Mexican to obtain full ordination in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition from the Dalai Lama in India; and graduated as the first Spanish-speaking Geshe

2011
Dalai Lama's third visit to Mexico

1968
Ejo Takata participates in Ecumenical religious ceremony "*Oración por la Paz*"

1970
Maharishi Foundation starts teaching Transcendental Meditation (TM) in Mexico

1984
Khun Chakkaratani (Vicky Gurza) opens *Casa Meditación Vipassana* after direct training in Thailand

1991
Journal of Buddhism in Spanish "*Revista de Estudios Budistas*", edited until 1998 by Latin American Association of Buddhist Studies

2009
First Mexicans ordained in the Order of Interbeing

2013
Dalai Lama's fourth visit to Mexico

1949
Erich Fromm arrives in Mexico

1945 | 1950 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015

1965
The first Soka Gakkai, Japanese Buddhist organisation is set up

1987
Grinberg-Zylberbaum publishes his book about meditation "*Meditación Autoalusiva*"

1989
Foundation of *Casa Tíbet* Mexico during Dalai Lama's first visit to Mexico

1994
Mexico City Buddhist Centre (FWBO) opens

2004
Dalai Lama's second visit to Mexico

2013
New branch of Triratna Buddhist Centre (formerly FWBO Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) is opened in Cuernavaca

1967
Zen Buddhist monk Ejo Takata arrives in Mexico

1999
Foundation of *Dhamma Vihara,* first Theravada Monastery in Veracruz

2008
Thich Nhat Hanh's Buddhist Sangha (Interbeing) is established in Mexico City

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The conference "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" where Suzuki encountered Erich Fromm in Mexico was largely influential not only at an international level (Fields 1992; Helderman 2019) also among Mexican psychoanalysts and psychiatrists as I document in my thesis. It was a ground-breaking moment, as renowned Mexican psychiatrist Alejandro Córdova Córdova recalled: "Buddhism made its public presentation, openly in Mexico through psychoanalysis" (Córdova Córdova 2007). Meanwhile, Ejo Takata (Figure 2) would have been popular for teaching meditation at higher university campuses such as *Ciudad Universitaria,* UNAM during the late 1960s (Centro Budista de la Ciudad de México 2010a). He was also influential in establishing the first Zen meditation hall or *zendo* in Mexico City, initiating many students in this practice and for teaching the *Mixes* (the Indigenous people mentioned in Chapter 2) the cultivation and use of Soy in 1969, as documented by Fujiwara (1998) and Rodiles Hernández (2001).[51]

Figure 2 Ejo Takata (1928-1997)
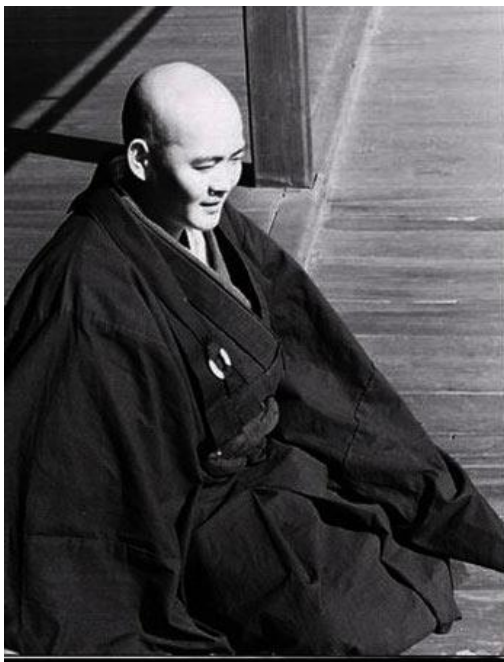
Source: (Mosteiro Zen Morro da Vargem [no date])

Ejo Takata was also associated with Chilean-born filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky (Benson 2014; Martin 2018), a personality of the counterculture movement at that time. In his autobiographical book "*La Danza de la Realidad"* [The Dance of Reality], Jodorowsky (2001)

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[51] Ejo Takata had a great influence in addition to promoting Zen meditation in Mexico: he taught the cultivation of soybeans for consumption in Indigenous communities (Fujiwara 1998, p. xxii), and disseminated and taught acupuncture (Morales Ramírez 2014) based on the Japanese acupuncture medical model. This was an important antecedent for the foundation of the *Instituto Mexicano de Acupuntura Ryodoraku A.C.* [Mexican Institute of Acupuncture Ryodoraku] in 1974 by one of his main meditation students Franciso Cinencio. The Institute still exists at the time of writing.

narrates his encounter with Ejo Takata allegedly through a meeting he had with Erich Fromm in Cuernavaca; where Takata's location was revealed to him, and after Jodorowsky assisted the group of Mexican psychoanalysts in helping to study the body language of the mentally ill patients at an asylum in Mexico City (Jodorowsky 2001, pp. 270-277).[52] Besides practising meditation with Takata for five years (see e.g. Jodorowsky 2014), Zen Buddhism was an important influence for the production of Jodorowsky's films; for instance, "*El Topo*" in 1970 described as a "potent mix of Eastern spirituality and European art house surrealism" (Benson 2014, para. 4) and his adaptation of Nietzche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" to the stage in Mexico City, where Takata "sat on stage meditating for the two-hour duration of the performance" (Hall 2016, para. 1). The performance had run for a year and a half denoting its popularity in Mexican culture for which the Japanese monk expressed his gratitude as Jodorowsky in the English version of his book "The Spiritual Journey of Alejandro Jodorowsky", he quoted Takata's words: "By having me participate in your work, you have introduced many thousands of Mexicans to Zen meditation (2008, p.15).[53]

The work of Jodorowsky is still present in Mexican popular culture since he has been known not only due to the controversies regarding some of his films, but for his investigations in the field of "magic and shamanism which, combined with unorthodox psychological knowledge and the study of various spiritual currents, have supported his therapy called psychomagic" (Reyna Chávez 2010, p. 182). In this regard, it is of great relevance the role that María Sabina (1894-1985), Mexican-Mazatec Indigenous *curandera* (healer or medicine woman) had at the time of the counterculture movement in Mexico. María Sabina practised the healing vigil "*velada*" (mushroom ceremony) in Huautla, Oaxaca; a place that attracted both foreign hippies and local *jipitecas* in search of the hallucinogenic experience with the mushrooms. Jodorowsky himself narrated how his spiritual journey was influenced by three wisewomen, two of which

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[52] It is noteworthy that I did not find further evidence regarding the encounter between Jodorowsky and Erich Fromm, nor with the Mexican psychoanalysts' group, apart from Jodorowsky's autobiographical accounts (2001; 2008). Though it is reported that Ejo Takata had an interview with Fromm upon his arrival to Mexico (e.g. see the online account by the Brazilian Zen Monastery *Morro da Vargem*, Mosteiro Zen Morro da Vargem [no date]), it is interesting this was not documented in Fromm's biographical sources; presumably for the controversies of Jodorowsky's work and Takata's relationship with the latter. For instance, a riot broke out during the premiere of Jodorowsky's first film "*Fando y Lis*" in Acapulco, Mexico in 1968 (Martin 2018). Based on Fernando Arrabal's play, the film was banned in Mexico following allegations about the surreal nature of it, upsetting representations of Christianity, nudity, and disturbing scenes. Although seen as part of the counterculture movement in Mexico, Jodorowsky's film was not well-received given the strong Catholic religious background.

[53] Ejo Takata lived in Mexico until his death in 1997. Although Takata's *zendo* was closed in 1985 he continued teaching Zen meditation in different places. Importantly, along with the Mexican Khun Chakkaratani (Vipassana meditation spiritual female guide), Takata represented Mexican Buddhism in the 1992 inaugural meeting of the *Consejo Interreligioso de México* [Interreligious Council of Mexico]. Although the Mexican Francisco Cinencio was appointed by Ejo Takata as his biographer, his book documenting Takata's teachings (Cinencio 2005) is not available.

included María Sabina and Mexican healer, Pachita (Jodorowsky 2008). Jodorowsky argues he developed *psicomagia* [psychomagic], also known as shamanic psychotherapy, based on his relationship with Pachita (2008 p. xi) since he gave his testimony of attending Pachita's surgeries (León Diez 2008).[54]

The events just described happening in Mexico from the 1950s and spanning towards the 1980s have been described as "spiritual bricolage" by Medina (2007, p. 92). However, although the Maharishi Foundation has taught Transcendental Meditation (TM) since the 1970s in Mexico, texts documenting the impact of TM are rather scant. Possibly the only exception I found during my fieldwork documenting the sporadic association with TM was the Mexican neurophysiologist and psychologist Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum.

The Theravada tradition was the second school that led to the spread of Buddhist meditation in Mexico, specifically Vipassana meditation, by the beginning of the 1980s. The creation of the first and sole Vipassana meditation centre in 1984 by Vicky Gurza (aka Khun Chakkaratani, Casa de Meditación Vipassana [no date]) who received direct teaching and preparation from most Venerable Ajhan Tong Sirimangalo in Thailand. Then, in the late 1990s, the Burmese Theravada tradition arrived in the country with the creation of the *Dhamma Vihara,* the first Theravada Monastery (even the first in Spanish-speaking countries) under the spiritual guidance of Burmese Buddhist monk U Silananda, and Venerable U Nandisena as abbot of the monastery.[55] Very often forgotten in the recent accounts of Buddhism in Mexico (e.g. Morales Ramírez 2014; May May 2019), is the creation of the *Centro Mexicano del Budismo Theravada A.C.* [Mexican Centre of Theravada Buddhism A.C.] by Mexican psychiatrist and Erich Fromm's disciple Alejandro Córdova Córdova (see Figure 3) in 1992. This centre was an important antecedent for establishing the Theravada Monastery years later in Veracruz, Mexico. The introduction of the Burmese Theravada tradition to Mexico has, nonetheless, been mediated through the US Taungpulu Kaba Aye Monastery in Boulder Creek, California. It is important to notice how prominent male meditators and psychotherapists have been in this historical review so far.

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[54] While I will expand on Pachita's popular figure in Mexico in Chapter 5, the explanation of Jodorowsky's shamanic psychotherapy goes beyond the aim of the present thesis. For a comprehensive review on the variations and adaptations of New Age spiritualities in Latin America see De la Torre et al. (2016).

[55] US citizen but originally born in Argentina, U Nandisena was ordained in 1991 in Taungpulu Kaba Aye Monastery in Boulder Creek, California under the teachings of Venerable Hlaing Tet Sayadaw and Venerable U Silananda. He also studied the Pali language and has translated Buddhist texts into the Spanish language, teaching courses about Theravada Buddhism and meditation retreats in Mexico, the US, Argentina, Canada, Puerto Rico, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Theravada Buddhist Society of America [TBSA] 2020).

Figure 3 Alejandro Córdova Córdova

Source: (Buddhismo Theravada Hispano 2013)

A similar importation has been the influx of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) founded by Sangharakshita in the UK in 1967 but which was first brought to Mexico City in 1994. This group continues nowadays under the name of Triratna Buddhist Community (name changed in 2010).[56]

The presence of the Dalai Lama in Mexico has marked importantly the stage of "global Buddhism" in the country (Morales Ramírez 2014, p. 280), bringing new public visibility of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize winner and Buddhist spiritual figure in the Mexican media. This includes his encounters with Mexican politicians as well as the dissemination of Tibetan culture. His first visit to Mexico in 1989 commemorated the foundation of *Casa Tíbet* [Tibet House] in Mexico City as "an educational and non-sectarian cultural institution … the first official representation of the Tibetan people for Latin America" and whose mission has been "to make accessible to everyone, without distinction of creeds, races and sexual orientation; the culture, art, philosophy, science and ancient methods of human development preserved on 'The Roof of the World' [Tibet]" (Casa Tíbet México 2020, para. 2). According to *Casa Tíbet's* Mexican director and resident teacher Marco Antonio Karam, Buddhism can be understood as Buddhist Psychology.[57] Karam has been given the honorific title of Lama by

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[56] Urgyen Sangharakshita, born Dennis Lingwood in London in 1925, became one of the most prolific western Buddhists (McMahan 2008). He was ordained in the period following World War II, having an important role in the re-emergence of Buddhism in India, and spending over 20 years in Asia. At the time of writing, Triratna Buddhist Community has 30 centres in the UK and has expanded to 26 countries including Mexico. Sangharakshita died in 2018.

[57] Karam studied philosophy at La Salle University in Mexico, as well as Buddhist Studies and Buddhist and Western Psychology at Naropa University in Boulder Colorado (founded by the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa in 1974). He pursued postgraduate studies in Buddhism and Tibetan civilization at

the Mexican community, given talks at public academic conferences at higher education institutions. This institution has spread Buddhism as philosophy, scientific method and type of psychology (e.g. Karam 2012)[58], relying heavily on international meditation teachers like the US Buddhist Scholar Alan B. Wallace, who have led meditation retreats in Mexico.

An important highlight concerning the Dalai Lama's third visit to Mexico in 2011, was his high-profile talk "*Afilando la Mente y Nutriendo el Corazón: Una Aproximación Holística hacia la Educación*" ["Sharpening the Mind and Nurturing the Heart: A Holistic Approach to Education"] attended by 1,000 members of the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, or SNTE* [Union of Education Workers] in Mexico City (see The Office of Tibet Washington, D.C. 2020). This was a free event organised by the SNTE within the framework *V Congreso Nacional de Educación* [V National Congress of Education] and the *III Encuentro Nacional de Padres de Familia y Maestros* [III National Meeting of Parents and Teachers]. And it was simultaneously telecasted, so that 200,000 teachers from about 500 venues across the country could follow the event (Poy Solano 2011; The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2011).

In this regard, in one of Mexico City's leading daily newspapers, Hernández Navarro (2011) presents Marco Antonio Karam's account about the encounter between the Dalai Lama and Elba Esther Gordillo, a controversial Mexican politician and SNTE's leader:

> The SNTE, through its General Secretary, Professor Juan Díaz de la Torre … recently extended an invitation to His Majesty the Dalai Lama to share with the Mexican teaching community his educational philosophy proposal based on the promotion of a secular ethical formation. This act, which was initially proposed to be broadcasted to around 264 thousand teachers through the closed circuit of the SNTE, will now also be broadcast through Channel 7, in two special programs (...) the invitation of the SNTE takes on enormous importance as the propitious space so that the message of His Holiness to the magisterium can be carried out and thus achieve, even in a modest

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Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu Nepal; and as stated in the publicly available CV, convinced of the importance of complementing his academic studies with a traditional Tibetan spiritual training, he entered the educational programme of the famous Tibetan monastery Ka Nying Shedrup Ling Gompa in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, under the direction of prominent Tibetan lamas such as: Kyabgön Tulku Urgen Rinpoche, Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Trangu Rinpoche, Lopön Tsechu Rinpoche and many others. Karam has also specialised studies on Philosophy, Art and Buddhist iconography at different UK and European Universities being Professor at *El Colegio de México* and UNAM (Casa Tíbet 2020).
[58] For instance, *Casa Tibet*'s educational programme offered entails: 1) a first step of taking the seminar "In Search of Genuine Happiness, An Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism", 2) the second step involving learning to meditate in the seminar "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, An Introduction to Meditation" where meditation is seen as a tool of personal transformation, and 3) a third step of a five-year "Continuing Education Programme". Their practical and academic system also involves the regular visit of leading Buddhist teachers, Lamas and scholars, (e.g. Buddhologists and internationally renowned Tibetologists), as well as other figures of the US 'mindfulness' field such as the researcher and group facilitator Eve Ekman.

way, a reflection on the direction that should accompany educational formation in Mexico and the world (para. 8).

This event provides further evidence of the tension between the public/private educational sectors and the introduction of arguably 'secular mindfulness' interventions, highlighted at the start of this chapter. Although in this case, the introduction of a 'universal' and 'secular' ethical framework within Mexican public education endorse by the Dalai Lama's charismatic and authoritative figure (e.g. Sullivan and Arat 2018) is noteworthy. According to the Mexican media, the polemic around the participation of the Dalai Lama in this conference was his collaboration with Elba Esther Gordillo, a controversial figure in Mexican politics who has been accused of corruption. However, it was interesting to find that, questioning about Mexican secular education aligned with the agenda of "universal ethics" and "educational philosophy" endorsed by the Dalai Lama went rather unnoticed, or at least was not publicly critiqued. I will return to the discussion of these tensions later.

An influence less publicly visible in Mexico yet of great importance given its global reach is Thich Nhat Hanh. He is a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, whose personal biography, charisma, and figure of authority in both religious and secular spheres has configured the ethics of 'mindfulness' (Sullivan and Arat 2018). He established the Order of Interbeing in 1966, "based principally on the Mahāyāna doctrine of the interdependence and interpenetration of all things" (2018, p. 344). He is considered the founder of "engaged Buddhism", and the Mexican community of practice was set up in 2008.[59]

As Sullivan and Arat (2018) evidence, the history of MBSR and the meaning of ethics of 'mindfulness' in secular contexts cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the role that a religious figure like Thich Nhat Hanh had when writing the preface to Kabat-Zinn's book "*Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*" in 1990 (for more details see pp. 349-351). This was Kabat-Zinn's foundational work on MBSR.[60]

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[59] Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term 'engaged Buddhism' in 1967 when publishing one of his first major book titled "*Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*" (Sullivan and Arat 2018, p. 344). It is in relation to the doctrine of interbeing that "moral responsibility is decentred from the solitary individual and spread throughout the entire social system"; thus, 'engaged Buddhism' "emphasizes systemic and not just individual causes of suffering" (McMahan 2008, p. 175).

[60] Sullivan and Arat (2018) discuss Kabat-Zinn's interest in removing the Buddhist (i.e. religious) connotations from his 'secular mindfulness' proposal arguing the 'universal applicability' of mindfulness. In this regard, the authors note the "politics of representation" (p. 350) as some Kabat-Zinn's statements undermined the fundamental role of non-Western figures (i.e. Thich Nhat Hanh) in the discourse articulated around the origins of 'mindfulness' in the West.

I now turn to a brief discussion of the dominant history regarding the Anglo-American contemporary 'mindfulness' interventions.[61] Starting with the creation of the 8-week MBSR programme by Jon Kabat-Zinn during the 1980s in the US, I explain how this prompted the development of similar therapeutic interventions in the medical and psychological fields for alleviating a variety of physical and mental illnesses, and the importance they have gained as 'evidence-based' treatments. This review is relevant in my study since during my fieldwork, I documented significant influences of the Anglo-American MBIs in Mexico.

3.6. Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs): Evidence-based and standardised protocols

Since the early 2000s, the acronym MBIs (Mindfulness-Based Interventions) has been employed within the psychological scientific literature to characterise the therapeutic interventions which are based on or have incorporated 'mindfulness' (Baer 2003, pp. 126-128). Although these interventions vary according to their purpose of application and the specific techniques or mechanism used, all share inspiration from Buddhist traditions (see Table 1). Nevertheless, as I have said before, the main debate around the origin and nature of 'mindfulness' is based on the argument that these medical and psychological interventions based on 'mindfulness', have been 'secularised'.[62] Two key features of the MBIs are: a) that they are closely associated with, and in the case of the MBCT informed by, the initial contemporary model of the 8-week MBSR course (Stiles 2011, p. 2); and b) that they are characterised for being standardised treatments empirically researched. Particularly, the MBSR and the MBCT have gained high scientific status with "the strongest evidence in the field" (Crane et al. 2017, p. 991) gaining then the status as 'evidence-based' therapeutic treatments.

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[61] For consistency and clarity, I will stick to the use of Anglo-American mindfulness interventions or Anglo-American MBIs to name and characterise the therapeutic approaches to mindfulness (e.g. MBSR, MBCT) from now onwards. Other authors have also referred to these as "Western" mindfulness conceptualisations (Khoury et al. 2017, p. 1163) as presented above or more broadly as "secular mindfulness-based interventions" (Purser et al. 2015, p. vi).

[62] There has been strong criticism around this complex debate. As I will discuss later, empirical investigation of this tension (i.e. 'secularity' versus 'religiosity/spirituality') is of great interest to social scientists, including myself.

Table 1 Mindfulness-Based Interventions Incorporating Mindfulness and Other Buddhist Meditative Practices

	Name of intervention	Setting/Duration	Mindfulness-related techniques or mechanism	Applications	Buddhist influences	Key sources
1	MBSR Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction	Group Outpatient clinic 8 weekly sessions	Body scan, sitting meditation, and Hatha Yoga practice	Chronic pain Stress-related disorders Coping with chronic illness	Theravada Vipassana Zen	Kabat-Zinn, (1982; 2011)
2	MBCT Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy	Group or individual Outpatient clinic 8 weekly sessions	MBSR integrated with CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) for depression	Depression	Theravada Vipassana	Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2012)
3	DBT Dialectical Behaviour Therapy	Individual Outpatient clinic 1 year, weekly	Acceptance and mindfulness skills (not formal meditation)	Borderline personality disorder Chronic suicidality Mood disorders	Zen	Linehan (1993)
4	ACT Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	Group Outpatient clinic 10–12 sessions of 1–2 hours duration	Focus on present moment awareness, self-as-context (perspective taking), acceptance, defusion (deliteralizing thought)	Anxiety Mood disorders Schizophrenia Addictions Compulsive behaviours Pain, Stigma	Not explicit	Hayes (2003)
5	Compassion Focussed Therapy	Group or individual Variable duration (12–50 hours)	Compassion-based meditation Lovingkindness (metta) and compassion (karuna)	Shame and self-criticism Schizophrenia Depression	Mahayana	Gilbert (2010), Leaviss and Uttley, (2015)

Note. Adapted from Mindfulness in cultural context by L. J. Kirmayer, 2015, Transcultural Psychiatry, 52(4) pp. 454-455. Copyright 2015 by L. J. Kirmayer. According to Baer's framework to define MBIs (2003) being used, 1 and 2 in the Table are categorised as interventions *based* on 'mindfulness' while 3, 4 and 5 incorporate elements of 'mindfulness' (see also Crane et al. 2017, p. 991). These are also called "first generation of MBIs" which empirical research started in the 1980s, whereas the "second generation MBIs" compromise those therapeutic interventions involving loving-kindness and compassion meditation and which empirical investigation started in 2005 (Van Gordon and Shonin 2020, p. 2).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American yoga/meditation instructor with a PhD in molecular biology from MIT, developed the MBSR model via an "outpatient Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center" (Kabat-Zinn 2003, p. 148), in Worcester, US in 1979.[63] Originally created to alleviate patients' chronic pain and stress, it became the most widespread mindfulness intervention in the US (Stiles 2011) applied as a model in other hospital and clinics, which rapidly became popular in other areas such as education (Bennett and Dorjee 2016), the workplace (Bazarko et al. 2013) and so on. Several studies have since then examined the effectiveness of MBSR. Meanwhile, as Drage (2018a) notes "MBCT rose to prominence following two successful randomised controlled trials in Britain" (p. 111) in the early 2000s, being then recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as a treatment of depressive relapse since 2004 (NICE 2004; 2009).

Another more recent intervention to be considered in the group of Anglo-American MBIs is the Mindfulness-Based Pain Management (MBPM) programme; delivered through the British Social Enterprise Breathworks established by Vidyamala Burch along with Gary Hennessey and Sona Fricker in 2004.[64] The MBPM "comes directly from the personal experience of Breathworks co-founder Vidyamala Burch who has lived with severe spinal pain since 1976 and has practised mindfulness and compassion since 1985" (Breathworks [no date], para. 1). Although the programme is informed by some of the core principles from MBSR and MBCT, it gives an important emphasis to the practice of compassion and kindness, due to their relevance to increase social connections of people living with pain and illness (Mehan and Morris 2018).

Interestingly, the MBPM programme has been endorsed by Kabat-Zinn as cited in the organisation's website, "[it] is the most comprehensive, in-depth, scientifically up-to-date and user friendly approach to learning the how of living with chronic pain or illness and reclaiming one's life that I know of… I admire Vidyamala tremendously". Besides, this type of Anglo-American MBI has also spread to 35 countries (Burch 2017). It first reached a Spanish-speaking country in 2007. Dharmakirti Sebastián Zuazquita trained himself as an accredited Breathworks senior teacher in England, creating *Respira Vida* (literally Breathe Life), Breathworks' branch in Spain. It was in 2012 that the MBPM programme (also known as Breathworks) started to be taught in Spanish, while the Mexican branch *Respira Vida*

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[63] The MBSR got its name in the 1990s.

[64] This organisation is registered as a charitable association under the name "The Breathworks Foundation" since 2009. Additionally, it is a founding member of the British Association for Mindfulness-based Approaches (BAMBA 2020); a network constituted by 'mindfulness' organisations and teachers overseeing the standards of 'mindfulness' training offered in the UK.

Breathworks was formally established between 2014-2015 for training teachers in the country.[65]

The places where these interventions were developed, namely the US and the UK, have been leading the institutionalisation and professionalisation of 'mindfulness' meditation with the creation of research and training centres at renowned UK and US universities during the last two decades. Since the early 2000s, the creation of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP) at Bangor University has been the major institutionalisation in the UK (Drage 2018a, p. 110). This has followed by the delivery of MBCT at the University of Exeter Mood Disorders Centre in 2004 and MBSR in 2011 (University of Exeter [no date]), the creation of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford in 2008, and then; the National Health Service (NHS) Trust Sussex Mindfulness Centre at University of Sussex offering its "first mindfulness teacher training in 2011" (Sussex Mindfulness Centre 2015, p. 2).[66] Moreover, the application of MBIs has been legitimised by scientific discourse, upon the effectiveness of the therapeutic treatments as shown in the systematic reviews and numerous scientific studies conducted since the MBSR was created at the end of the 1990s (there has been an exponential growth of academic publications on 'mindfulness' during the last two decades as illustrated in see Figure 4).

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[65] The Breathworks teacher training programme counts with international accreditation since it is possible to train in either of its now four branches: England, Spain, Mexico and Brazil, the latter which started operating in 2018. This 'secular' organisation is connected to Triratna Buddhist Order (formerly FWBO) mentioned earlier.

[66] Again, it is interesting to note that the UK universities research and training centres are also associated with charitable organisations such as The Mindfulness Network Charity in the case of the CMRP in 2018 (The Mindfulness Network 2020) and the Oxford Mindfulness Foundation (Oxford Mindfulness Centre 2020). Besides, these two centres along with NHS Trust Sussex Mindfulness Centre are BAMBA's members too.

Figure 4 Mindfulness Journal Publications by Year, 1980-2019

"Mindfulness" journal articles published by year: 1980-2019

American Mindfulness Research Association, 2019
Source: goAMRA.org
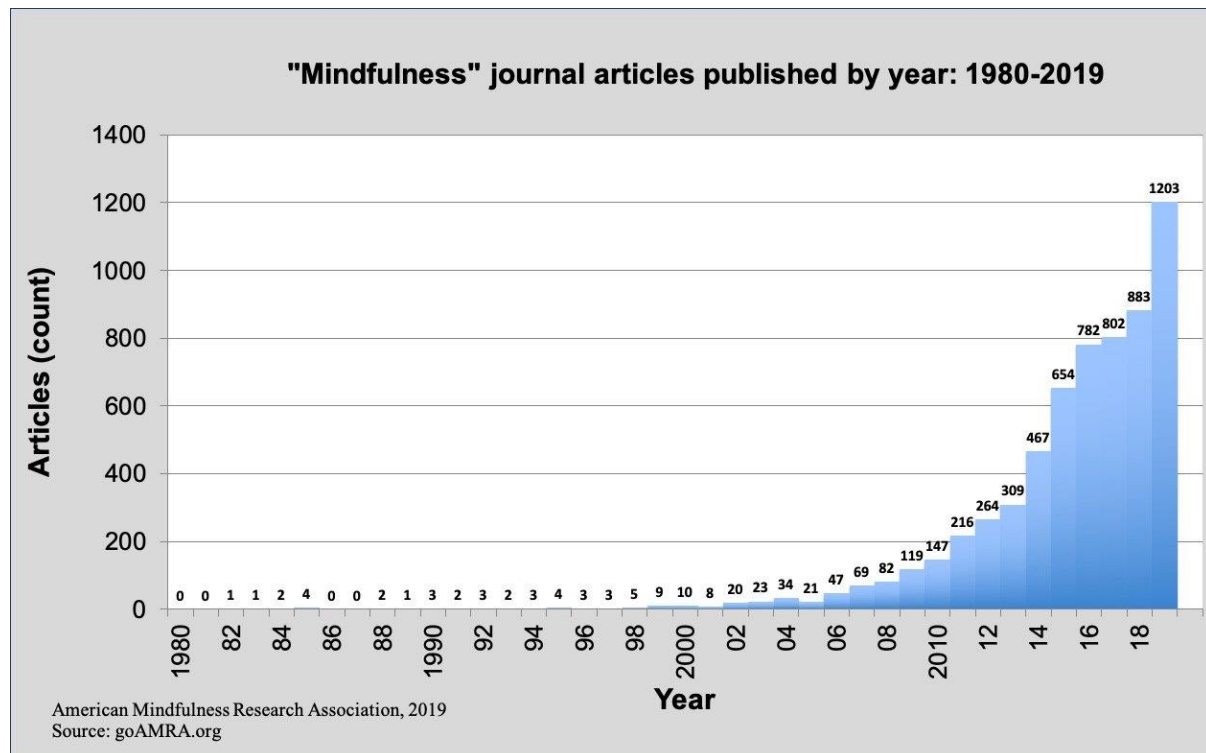
Note. This figure illustrates the exponential increment of the number of studies on mindfulness during the last two decades. The term "mindfulness" was used for the search in academic journal article titles via the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Web of Science. (*Source:* American Mindfulness Research Association (2020)).

Their status as 'evidence-based' therapies has advanced the Anglo-American 'mindfulness' field in different ways. Firstly, it has positioned the MBIs as standardised protocols to treat a wide range of physical and mental illnesses across different sectors; from education to the workplace, influencing policy making and the government (e.g. Cook 2016) to be applied also globally.[67] Thus the MBIs effective outcomes have been generalised beyond the Anglo-American settings where the programmes have been developed in the first place and proof of this is suggested by their international reach. For instance, the MBSR programme has reached over 80 countries around the world (Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society 2015) and the MBPM programme has spread to over 35 countries (Burch 2017).

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[67] See for example the Annual Review 2018 report of The Mindfulness Initiative (2018, p.10) informing about the visit of Chris Ruane MP to Mexico City where he participated at an international conference on wellbeing with the talk "Mindfulness as an Initiative of Law in the English Parliament and its Significance in the World", addressing over 600 GPs (see also Alianza Médica 2018), meeting with leading politicians from the Mexican government too. The Mindfulness Initiative is the world's first mindfulness policy institute, originally formed to provide research evidence to British politicians, it has supported the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness (APPG) since its creation in 2014 (The Mindfulness Initiative 2020b) as advisory group regarding the integration of MBIs in public policy in the UK.

Indeed, Kabat-Zinn's definition of mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" has been the "gold standard" employed in the secular MBIs (Purser et al. 2016, p. vi) and one of the most cited definitions of 'mindfulness' in the scientific literature (Keng et al. 2011).

Secondly, the popularisation of MBIs has increased 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers, and researchers' concern in maintaining the integrity of the programmes, leading to a proposal of a teaching competence framework integrating three interconnected areas or domains: 1) mindfulness-based teachings competencies and their assessment; 2) teacher formation and training processes; and 3) good practice standards for mindfulness-based teachers (Crane et al. 2012, pp.76-77). So far, three different tools have been developed to assess the MBIs integrity and quality (domain 1), although the most frequently employed is the Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria or MBI:TAC (Crane and Hecht 2018, p. 1373, see also Crane et al. 2013; Crane et al. 2016).[68]

As Crane and Hecht (2018, p. 1373) report, the MBI: TAC was created collaboratively by the UK 'mindfulness' centres at Bangor, Exeter and Oxford Universities, where the main focus is the assessment of both MBSR and MBCT teaching competence although an addendum for the Mindfulness in Schools programme (widely known as ".b"), has been developed. For domain 2) concerning the 'mindfulness' teacher training model and the effects observed on participants, little research has been conducted. So far, the studies reviewed by the authors showed that the benefits described by participants (i.e. increase in wellbeing and decrease in perceived stress) were significantly correlated with the teachers' further experience (i.e. involving one year of mindfulness-based teacher training including the teaching competence assessment, see Ruijgrok-Lupton et al. 2017). While comparative research about the effects of teachers' substantial versus lighter training on school children is undergoing (see Kuyken et al. 2017). Finally, domain 3) regarding the Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs, Crane and Hecht 2018) has been raised as an important point towards the regulation of the field and course of action to support integrity and quality of MBIs. Different efforts have been driven in this direction specifically from UK, European and US organisations of teachers and trainers of teachers.[69] These organisations share general GPGs principles (2018) which I summarise in Table 2.

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[68] The other two tools are the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy-Adherence Scale (MBCT-AS) and the Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention-Adherence and Competence Scale (MBRP-AC) for a detailed comparison between these tools, see Crane and Hecht (2018).
[69] These organisations are: BAMBA (2020) as mentioned earlier and which was previously under the name "UK Network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Training Organisations", the network of teachers forming the European Association of Mindfulness Based Approaches since 2010 (EAMBA [no date]);

Table 2 Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs)

Minimum teacher training levels.
Teacher's engagement with personal daily mindfulness practice combined with periodic intensive residential mindfulness practice opportunities.
A commitment to on-going development through further training.
Keeping up with the evidence base.
Supervision.
Linkage with colleagues.
Adherence to an ethical code of conduct.

Crane and Hecht (2018) remark that these GPGs still need to be empirically examined (see p. 1378). Yet, the research agenda on the reliance of the MBI:TAC as a tool to assess MBIs integrity and quality has been led not only in Anglophone contexts but also in other countries via the translation of the MBI:TAC.[70]

In the case of the translation of the Spanish language, it was conducted and revised by MBSR teachers from Spain (3) and Latin America (2) who have been certified at the Massachusetts University "Center for Mindfulness" (CFM) (Noel Anchorena et al. 2017, p.2). It is implicitly conveyed that their credentials for being certified by the CFM (where Kabat-Zinn originally developed the MBSR programme during the 1990s, UMass Memorial Health Care 2020) and therefore, their expertise as MBSR teachers (most of them being also 'mindfulness' teacher trainers themselves) endorse producing the Spanish version of the MBI:TAC. The majority of the MBSR teachers have a background either in psychology or psychiatry (except one is a computer scientist), yet it seems that no expert translator was involved.

From the cultural psychology perspective, the issue here, is that, in trying to consolidate MBIs integrity and quality it seems that a rather "plain translation" of standards and simple replication of guidelines for tracking the "fidelity" of the interventions is being promoted (see, for example, the "Template for Intervention Description and Replication" (TIDieR), Crane and Hecht 2018, p. 1375). 'Mindfulness' practitioners and teachers can undoubtedly contribute significant insights regarding the translation of resources according to their personal experience (i.e. since they might speak Spanish as a mother tongue and might have also lived and taught in the countries where the 'mindfulness' interventions are being introduced), plus they might also have a genuine interest in developing good practice guidance and criteria. However, standards like the MBI:TAC, have not been fully empirically supported even in Anglo-American contexts, as mentioned above. Thus, such 'plain translation' underestimates socio-cultural, linguistic,

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and the "Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society" at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in the US.
[70] Besides Spanish, the MBI: TAC has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, French, German, and Hebrew (Bangor University [no date]).

economic, and political aspects. In the next section, I engage with some of this socio-cultural critique in more detail.

3.7. Critiques towards mainstream 'mindfulness': The socio-cultural turn

The "mindfulness wars" is the phrase that Gleig (2019, pp. 56-57) has used to frame some of the ongoing critical debates around mainstream 'mindfulness'. These critiques have followed 2014, the "Year of Mindfulness" as stated by the US *New Republic* magazine. Then, the year 2015, has been positioned "[as] the year of fruitlessly trying to debunk it" according to Delaney (2015) in *The Guardian,* British daily newspaper. Yet, the "mindfulness wars" as discussed by Gleig (2019), concern primarily the US critical voices on the matter. Still, I present other streams of debate that are likewise relevant.

The critiques towards mainstream 'mindfulness' can be summarised as follow. Firstly, the so-called 'McMindfulness' critique or backlash from Buddhist scholars engaging with canonical views on 'mindfulness' practice. They strongly contend against "uncoupling mindfulness from its ethical and religious Buddhist context" (Purser and Loy 2013, para. 5). Yet, as Gleig (2019) notes, it has also taken "a sharp sociocultural turn by contextualizing the adoption of mindfulness in business in relationship to the culture of corporate wellness" (p. 58; see, for instance, Purser 2019). Secondly, I add the recent call to "mind the hype" by Van Dam et al. (2018). This critique questions the lack of scientific rigour in some of the 'mindfulness' studies such as the overgeneralisation of 'mindfulness' effects and their representation in the media (concerning exaggerated both positive and negative claims), encouraging the investigation of possible adverse effects.

Finally, citing Gleig (2019, pp. 64-65) there have also been the "Buddhist defences of mindfulness" which have offered counterarguments condensed by Gleig (2019) in four main areas: 1) canonical legitimation argument; 2) and historic continuity argument; 3) and experiential/functional argument, and 4) and ontological/religious argument. Gleig highlights the fact that these arguments appeared often interweaved, a feature that can be noted in many other debates around 'mindfulness' since rarely these are one-sided. What these different arguments reveal, but which is not problematised by Gleig (2019), is how the debates are largely informed by the positions of 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers and researchers involved in the debates. For instance, Wiles' (2018) investigation of scientists' justifications for studying and practicing meditation and the theorisation of "embodied practitioner knowledge" (p. 19) as an internal boundary practice for scientists to engage with subjective and objective

epistemologies simultaneously, is an illuminating approach. This has allowed me to understand some of the overlapping arguments I started to notice during my fieldwork and to become interested in exploring more deeply such overlapping positions. This is a new perspective in 'mindfulness' research I considered exploring further (Chapter 6).

Inspired by decoloniality thinking and the psychosocial perspective, I situate my project among the social scientist and humanities scholars interested in studying 'mindfulness' as "constitutive of a wider milieu" (Stanley et al. 2018b, p. 15). This means, the way in which 'mindfulness' is not only understood from the Mexican perspective, but also how the historical, socio-cultural context of Mexico has also shaped the way 'mindfulness' is conceptualised, disseminated and taught and what all this can uncover about the Mexican milieu itself. An example of this concerns the debates abound postsecularity in 'mindfulness' delivery (Arat 2017; 2018; Sullivan and Arat 2018). Postsecularity refers to the blur between the 'secular' and the 'religious' spheres in contemporary society and more specifically, the transformation of the secular itself (Arat 2017, pp. 171-174; see also Sullivan and Arat 2018) for the way in which 'mindfulness' is constructed publicly. Thus, postsecularity points out the "strategic modification that is inherent within the discursive code of secular mindfulness" (Arat 2017, p. 174). As Arat contends, "the surface language of mindfulness operates in complete discursive isolation from the religious and the transcendent" (p. 174) or at least is what 'mindfulness' proponents rhetorically seek to achieve.

However, following Arat's (2017) argument, "[b]eneath the surface of this construction … the very conception of secular 'being' and immanence rests fundamentally on a distinctly *sui generis* ontology" (p. 174, emphasis in original). This ontology concerns the 'access to the transcendent' as a 'new modality of the secular' according to Arat (2017). Not many empirical studies exploring this tension 'on the ground' exist today. Hill (2019) rightly argues that "[q]uestions about the negotiation of concepts of the secular are culturally and historically specific questions, and the contemporary Mexican context is perhaps particularly amenable to experimentation with secular-religious relationships" (p. 669). As I will explain in Chapters 7 and 8, due to the public versus private sectors where 'mindfulness' is disseminated, the theme of postsecularity is of most relevance in the Mexican settings. There are further reasons why is relevant to examine 'mindfulness' in context as I argue below.

3.8. Studying 'mindfulness' in context: The case of Mexico

Despite the exponential growth of scientific literature on 'mindfulness' from 1980 to 2019 as shown earlier in the graph reported by the American Mindfulness Research Association (2020) (see Figure 4 on page 66), the dissemination of 'mindfulness' in Latin American countries and the way it is taught in their respective socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts have been marginalised and overlooked. For instance, in the bibliometric analysis conducted by Melero Ventola and Yela Bernabé (2014), from the 1215 articles found in ISI Web of Science after a search of the term "mindfulness" by language and country during the period 2008-2012, only nine articles were in Spanish. These articles represented only 0.74% versus the 96.80% which were published in English.[71] Regarding the productivity of publication by countries, Spain was the only Spanish-speaking country on the list, with a percentage of 25% of the 1215 articles retrieved.[72] Also, a current systematic review assessing the present state of the literature regarding the effectiveness and cultural adaptations of MBIs for Hispanic populations (Castellanos et al. 2019) shows that from the 22 originally included for revision (from N = 97), two were conducted in Chile and one in Colombia. The studies remaining were carried out in Spain and a few others in the US, but none from Mexico.

Another case in point is the opinion article by García-Campayo et al. (2017). While the authors made a significant attempt to address the absence in the scientific literature of the cultural differences between Latin American countries in comparison with the US and the UK contexts on 'mindfulness' and compassion delivery, the argument developed offers an inaccurate representation in this regard. For instance, European countries such as Spain and Portugal were categorised as Latin American assuming these countries share economic, political, and socio-cultural features. While there is a similarity between some Latin American countries in speaking the Spanish language as in Spain, or Portuguese in the case of Brazil, the countries located in the southern region of America including Mexico, and the islands of the Caribbean share colonial histories by having been invaded by European countries such as Spain and Portugal. Therefore, I argue, generalisations should be made with caution. Even though socio-cultural trends might be alike, the position of the 'colonised' (Fanon 1968 cited in Hook 2004, p. 95) should be considered. Besides, the overview regarding the "cultural factors relating to health system structure" (p. 2) influencing mindfulness and compassion delivery in the US

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[71] The record reported was as followed: 1176 articles in English; 26 in German; nine in Spanish; and only three in French.

[72] Spain appeared in seventh place out of ten, just after US, England, Canada, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands. Although there have been publications conducted in Wales (Crane et al. 2012; Stanley 2012a, 2012b), this bibliometric study did not consider Wales in the analysis.

versus Latin countries presented by García-Campayo et al. (2017) is limited since very little empirical data was provided to support some of their claims.

One interesting characteristic presented in García-Campayo et al's. (2017) article is the methodological section on how health professionals' experiences on the implementation of mindfulness- and compassion-based interventions can inform the teaching and research of these practices in clinical settings. For example, the authors discuss both adherence and compliance aspects to the interventions as health-relevant cultural inclinations which appeared to be lower in the public health services within "Latin" societies (p. 2), in contrast with the US private health system. Other common themes discussed in the Latin American contexts were the importance of the family, the expression of feelings, and the role of the body. These findings point out the importance of studying teachers' first-person experiences and cultural sensitivity in the improvement and adaptation of such interventions to specific socio-cultural contexts.

A weakness of García-Campayo et al's. (2017) article is that the authors, as clinicians working at universities, research centres and hospitals in a mix of different countries (i.e. Spain, Brazil, Italy, and England), did not mention any method or analytic strategy to explain how they came to a shared understanding of their experience concerning cultural differences while teaching these practices. Whereas this is probably the only article in which cultural differences with regards to 'mindfulness' and compassion research and delivery in Latin American clinical settings is highlighted so far, the article also reflects an issue about the intersection between gender, age, and class when it comes to the 'mindfulness' milieu research and practice. It shows male dominance in both research and practice of mindfulness- and compassion-based interventions, since the four authors of the article are male, hold a senior status as researchers/professors and clinicians within the areas of medicine and psychology. Also, most references cited concern research work led and written by men.[73] This uncovers the neglection of women's voices and experiences, overlooking hidden influences.

A relevant study looking at the socially and culturally contextualised interpretation of 'mindfulness' as represented in MBSR in a Caribbean region is the one by Hoffman (2018). This ethnographic research involved 20 community mental health agents and 28 primary school teachers from a large town in Southwest Haiti who undertook a four- to five-day MBSR training programme. Using questionnaires, interviews, and observational field-notes for the

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[73] This gender pattern has followed from the observation made in the review of historical development of Buddhism intertwined with psy-disciplines in Mexico.

collection of Haitians' meanings and interpretations of 'mindfulness' after the MBSR training seminars, this female researcher reports interesting findings which challenge the universal applicability of some of the core ideas embedded in the MBSR programme.[74] This is important in my research, not only for its contribution as a cultural psychology study within the larger field of social sciences expanding the understanding of contextualised meanings of 'mindfulness', but for encouraging the possibility of looking at the "hybridization of ideas and practices" (Hoffman 2018, p. 15) and cultural and situated understandings of 'mindfulness' in non-Anglophone countries. This also supports challenging the notion of "mindfulness movement" (Wilson 2014) presumably applicable across nations and cultures. That is, critically examining the exportation of 'mindfulness' and psy-disciplines' perspectives as 'universal' while ignoring the local and Indigenous knowledge and practices.

In the literature reviewed until now, I did not find social studies addressing either the influence or impact of the historical and socio-cultural aspects in the teaching and dissemination of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. The research conducted in Mexico so far entails three areas. First, the translation and validation of psychological 'mindfulness' scales; for instance the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) for adult populations (López-Maya et al. 2015) and college students (Balderas-Molina et al. 2018), and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-M, see Meda-Lara et al. 2015). Second, the measurement of effects of specific 'mindfulness'- and compassion-based interventions on depressive symptomatology and binge eating behaviour in obesity (Santiago-Maldonado et al. 2017) and *atención plena* and compassion treatment on anxiety, quality of life and asthma with 10 voluntary patients (Sánchez-Paquini and Moreno-Coutiño 2017). Finally, the study via an online survey of the relationship between psychological variables and 'mindfulness' (Tovar-García and Téllez López 2017). These studies together, reflect the preponderance of positivistic and quantitative approaches undertaken for the investigation of 'mindfulness' and other meditative practices such as compassion in the Mexican population until now. Meanwhile, the qualitative research approach is scarce (Ibinarriaga-Soltero 2017) and some of the studies available consist of undergraduate (Cortéz Vázquez 2015) and masters' (Pozo de Villa 2016; Ayala Hernández 2017) dissertations solely. Still, Hoffman's (2018) illuminating study in Haiti provides an important reference for bringing attention to investigate meanings about 'mindfulness' and the influence of language for the understanding of the Mexican case.

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[74] The main findings relate to a different notion of self (exteriorised and relational instead of inner and individualistic self); worldviews (moral and explicitly religious versus secularism); and rejection of "presentism of mindfulness" and especially the idea of "acceptance of things as they are in contrast with collective well-being and social transformation" (Hoffman 2018, p. 6).

3.9. The relevance of language in studying 'mindfulness' in Mexico

The paper written in the Spanish language by López-Maya and Hernández-Pozo (2016) raises important considerations to discuss. The authors expressed their concern about the need for tailoring interventions such as MBSR to specific cultural contexts such as Latin populations:

> The translation of meditative practices from different traditions to contemporary contexts … has been done using colloquial language solely, without considering participants' socio-cultural context which could lead to confusion, ambiguity and lack of cultural relevance within clinical settings and research (p. 49).

Nonetheless, their proposal of creating a unified contingent formal description of MBSR based on Francis Mechner's contingency language work seems limited and somewhat reductionist.[75] Drawing on Mateo's (2010) definition of language as a cultural fact in itself (cited in López-Maya and Hernández-Pozo 2016, p. 51) the authors mentioned that language should be considered in relation to other aspects. For example, the status of the people involved in the communication process, the different social conventions, as well as the role of each of the participants in the communicative process. Besides, the authors suggest language and culture can be easily separated:

> These angles have not yet been explored within the context of adapting the practice of atención plena in Latin America, so it is necessary to start from a unifying basis, through a common symbolic language, from which it is possible to detect elements in interventions, which can be applied independently of cultural factors, as well as particularities that are exclusive to each culture (p. 51).

This appears like a challenging aim to achieve considering, for instance, the conceptualisation in the Spanish language (i.e. *atención plena*) the authors provide for the translation of the English word 'mindfulness' (see p. 51). López-Maya and Hernández-Pozo (2016, p. 52) contend that the scientific literature on 'mindfulness' does not describe a conceptual and operative unified model when trying to formalise academically the teaching process of

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[75] According to Mechner (2011) a "formal symbolic language codifies its discipline's basic units and the relationships among them. In the sciences, formal symbolic languages codify the known events that can be manipulated and controlled—the independent variables, rather than their empirically observed effects. The symbols of the behavioral contingency language codify available behavior, its assumed potential consequences, and parameters of these. This language can accommodate the complexity of the behavioral contingencies that are at the core of such diverse fields as education, sociology, economics, health, business management, law, public affairs, and activity that impacts the environment" (p. 93).

interventions based on *atención plena*. Therefore the pertinence of considering a contingency language.[76]

Nevertheless, as mentioned before, this approach appears limited as the 'practical outcomes' envisaged (i.e. promoting the accuracy of research focused on teaching based on *atención plena*, improving communication among specialists and increasing the quality of studies developed and published), overlooks that the MBSR programme is not the only programme based on meditative practices being taught in Latin American countries or elsewhere around the world. Also, this approach is reductionist because it reduces cultural assimilation processes and adaptations processes to teaching instructions or language contingencies as if they happen unrelated to specific cultural contexts and social interactions. This neglects that meanings and interpretations also mediate the assimilation of these 'mindfulness' practices in the settings where they are taught (e.g. Hoffman 2018). Likewise, it ignores the contradictory discourses articulated or indeed the "sheer multiplicity of the assemblage of mindfulness" (Stanley and Kortelainen 2020, p. 20) when this practice is taught in actual situations.

In addition to arguing the need for investigating the situated meanings of 'mindfulness' in non-Anglo-American cultures and their implications in the application and adaptation of MBIs in such contexts, the importance of taking into account language also emerges from reviewing the scientific literature and analysing discursively the historical development of MBIs. During the 'early stages' of development of the MBSR programme, the use of the Spanish language seemed to have had a significant role.[77] For example, Kabat-Zinn showed interest in bringing this intervention to multi-cultural populations in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1991; an initiative which became the "first clinic of the Center for Mindfulness in Spanish … [also] receiving funding by the New York Nathan Cummings Foundation" (REBAP Internacional [no date]). The two-year project (1992-1994) involved a bilingual 'mindfulness' meditation programme taught to patients who in some cases did not speak English, by instructors who knew Spanish as a second language. Yet, Kabat-Zinn reported (1994a) significant improvements in physical and psychological symptoms and self-esteem in the English- and Spanish-speaking inner-city patients of a health centre (cited in Roth and Creaser 1997; Roth and Calle-Mesa 2006). Beth Roth was developing a similar project in Meriden, Connecticut, who along with Tracy Creaser (1997) evaluated the adaptation of this mindfulness programme for English- and Spanish

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[76] Mechner (2011) also describes the following functions of formal symbolic language: a) visualization; b) abstraction; c) identification of parameters; d) communication; e) conceptualization; and f) teaching (pp. 93-94).
[77] Although here I say 'early stages' to refer to the to the period of 1990s, in Chapter 5 I will argue that the consideration of the Spanish language challenges discursively such temporal assumptions regarding the historical emergence of 'mindfulness' in Mexico.

speaking patients.[78] This study led by women pioneered the systematic investigation of the effects of a bilingual MBSR programme at an inner-city health care centre. However, the study suffers from several limitations.

Firstly, the role of language in teaching the MBSR programme was not explicitly addressed in the research objectives. It is only mentioned that a bilingual nurse practitioner taught all classes, without saying if the nurse was a native speaker of either language or whether there were changes made to the Spanish protocol. Also, there is a lack of consistency since the Spanish version of a guided awareness of breathing meditation was not presented in the study along with the English version, making it unclear if the bilingual aspect represented a challenge or not when teaching this 'mindfulness' programme. Secondly, while the statistical analyses are presented for each group (English and Spanish) and then for the total group, the demographic data is not shown. The lack of these details does not allow us to know patients' ethnic background, if they were bi- or monolingual or the basis on which they were separated in the groups of language instruction. It seems that in the effort of studying the impact of a bilingual 'mindfulness' meditation programme, aspects of 'race' and ethnicity were confounded. The authors mention that most of the Community Health Centre of Meriden users tend to be Latino, but this was not specified for the study's sample, hindering the understanding of how the programme presented in "Spanish in a culturally sensitive manner … was well-received by Latino clients from throughout Central and South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean" (Roth and Creaser 1997, p. 176).

Three other articles discussing a similar approach in assessing a bilingual MBSR intervention with 'minority groups' at health care centres in the US were found (Roth and Stanley 2002; Roth and Robbins 2004; Kabat-Zinn et al. 2016). Reviewing these papers reveals there has been a lack of continuity in the systematic investigation of Spanish language implications in delivering MBSR. These studies were published at different times spread out over two decades (i.e. 1994a, 1997, 2002, 2004, and 2016). This contrasts with the incessant widespread 'mindfulness' literature in the English language which not necessarily have addressed bilingual programmes or populations with different cultural backgrounds and sociodemographic characteristics.[79] Still, the investigations on the bilingual teaching of MBSR have not been cited widely.

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[78] While the research article was published in 1997, the authors report that the 'mindfulness' meditation programme was taught between fall 1993 and spring 1995.
[79] Only few studies analysing demographic data in relation to the practice of 'mindfulness' meditation, yoga and other mind-body practices are found, yet these concern US population data (see Cramer et al. 2016; Kachan et al. 2017; Clarke et al. 2018; DeLuca et al. 2018).

Then again, little attention has been brought to the exploration of what had happened with the development and research of interventions such as the *Reducción de Estrés Basada en Atención Plena* (REBAP), the Spanish version of MBSR (Economou et al. 2015) also taught in Mexico (e.g. Soehlemann-Reimers and García Montañez 2016). Or the *Terapia Cognitiva Basada en Atención Plena* (TCBAP); which is the Spanish version of the MBCT protocol (e.g. Cebolla and Miró 2008). Economou et al. (2015) discuss the importance of idioms in the clinical context for US Latin American populations (e.g. certain Spanish words used to express ideas and feelings and their relevance for people's identity). Specifically, they bring attention to the translation of MBSR to the Spanish version REBAP describing that although the latter maintains the same structure as the former, there are some cultural considerations specific to Spanish-speaking contexts.[80] The investigation of other settings beyond the ones researched in the US with Latin populations and which primarily draw on minority groups encountering migratory situations, is also needed. The studies mentioned above focused on populations that are thought to be minority groups within health care settings in inner cities, and which are "representative of a small number of bilingual mindfulness meditation-based stress reduction programs offered" (Roth and Creaser 1997, p. 176) in the larger context of the US.

This chapter has reviewed the social scientific, Buddhist and psychological scientific literature on 'mindfulness', arguing for the need to conduct systematic, and rigorous research in non-Anglophone countries. This thesis focuses on the study of the Mexican case, emphasising the relevance of investigating the dissemination and teaching 'mindfulness' as a situated social phenomenon, taking the historical, socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, and political aspects of Mexico seriously. In the next chapter, I present the methodological approach followed to conduct this research, including the data analysis process and the ethical considerations faced.

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[80] For instance, the authors cited Baer's (2005) description of changing the word "yoga" for "slow movements" (p. 3), to be more acceptable among the Latin American population. Whilst they also note the challenge of translating the word 'mindfulness' arguing about the barriers this comprises for implementing REBAP with the Latin American population, Economou et al. (2015) do not present evidence backing up this claim. On the one hand, they rightly assert the key role of language and cultural specificities in the implementation of both MBSR and REBAP. Nevertheless and paradoxically, they contend that none of the translations of 'mindfulness' to Spanish (e.g. *atención plena, atención consciente, presencia mental* [mental presence], etc.) "truly captures the full picture of what it means to be mindful" (Economou et al. 2015, p. 3) without collecting empirical data.

Chapter 4: A Bricolage Methodological Approach

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present and justify a bricolage methodological approach underpinning this thesis. I have used a bricolage approach to embrace, on the one hand, the 'messiness' I encountered when analysing the qualitative multi-modal data collected; and on the other hand, as an unconventional methodological strategy within social studies of 'mindfulness' to address the complexity of both the subject matter (i.e. mindfulness) and the context where the study was conducted (i.e. Mexico). In this regard, the 'interdisciplinary feature' of the bricolage has allowed me to bring together the theoretical decolonial framework with the methodological and analytic perspectives necessary to understand my topic. Nonetheless, and perhaps more significantly as Kincheloe (2004) would argue, I have moved to the domain of complexity where "a new level of research self-consciousness and awareness of the numerous contexts in which any researcher is operating" (p. 2) is required. Since, Kincheloe's explains, "the bricolage highlights the relationship between researcher's ways of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history" (p. 2). Given my three-fold positionality as 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher and researcher alongside my 'insider' membership of the Mexican 'mindfulness' community, I have not only foregrounded reflexivity as a central activity to qualitative research but I have taken a step forward in integrating my subjectivity, as the researcher conducting the study, in the data analysis, largely informed by psychosocial and intersectionality perspectives (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Phoenix 2006) as I shall explain.

Chapter 4 also aims to describe how the present research was conducted. Therefore, I discuss the study design and the research methods used, presenting the methodology followed to analyse the data including the ethical procedure in place. Importantly, I address the challenges and ethical dilemmas that I faced while using a bricolage approach. Due to the inextricable relationship between the research process and the researcher's positionality and methodological choices, the reader will find that the researcher's reflexivity appears occasionally intertwined with the description of methodological choices and procedure. In turn, I start by justifying the adoption of bricolage as a methodological approach explaining also how I developed this for my study.

4.2. Initial justification of research methods: The pilot study

Due to my three-fold positionality and the extent that my professional biographical account was guiding my research interest, the relevance of conducting autoethnographic work (Stanley 1993) was initially considered. However, because my research interest was beyond my overlapping positions as 'mindfulness' practitioner and teacher, also including the study of meditation and professional journeys of other Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers in the 'mindfulness' community in Mexico, it was necessary to ponder the use of other types of research methods. This was relevant so that I could turn towards the study of 'mindfulness' situated in Mexico being shaped by peoples' biographies and professional journeys; as well as mediated and transformed by the socio-cultural and historical context of the country.

Although it is very common for researchers of 'mindfulness' to indeed *practice* 'mindfulness', this is rarely topicalised within mainstream 'mindfulness' research. An exception found is Bentz and Shapiro's (1998) work; from which I have adapted their 'mindful inquiry' approach as discussed in the introduction (Chapter 1). Within mainstream 'mindfulness' studies, important attention has been given to the employment of methodologies borrowed from neuroscience, experimental psychology and behavioural medicine; where researchers measure the impact of interventions based on 'mindfulness' in terms of brain structure and function, cognitive processes, and behaviour (e.g. Carmody and Baer 2008; Lutz et al. 2008; Davidson and McEwen 2012). In these studies, "'mindfulness' is often conceptualised as an internal state or trait within 'the mind', with behavioural and neural correlates" (Stanley and Longden 2016, p. 305). In such cases, following a positivist approach in objectively studying the phenomena (Bryman 2012) other methods are disregarded as being valid. Thus, the positionality of researchers involved has been often omitted while reporting the research findings. In other instances, the discussion of researchers' subjectivity as argued by Morawski (2005), Cook (2010), and Loughran and Mannay (2018), has been avoided.

The present study is innovative because my positionality as a 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher and researcher was considered throughout the research design; also being addressed with regards to the methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas faced during data generation and analysis (discussed later in this chapter). Additionally, the contribution of this study is unique because no interest in leaders and advocates developing, teaching, and

implementing meditative practices in Mexico has been shown before.[81] As Wilson (2014) remarks, "we need sustained studies of specific mindfulness advocates, especially those who are most influential, most representative, or who are pushing the boundaries of mindfulness" (p. 195). He provides as examples, two key leading figures in the US scene, Thich Nhat Hanh and Jon Kabat-Zinn, arguing for the insights these people's biographies can offer:

> The Vietnamese monk [Thich Nhat Hanh] and the Jewish-American [Jon Kabat-Zinn] scientist are quite different in their backgrounds and frames for mindfulness. We need studies of these and other figures that consider where they came from, how they got involved in mindfulness, how their teaching has changed over the decades, and what specific inputs they have made to the mindfulness movement (p. 196).

While I agreed with the importance of investigating 'mindfulness' proponents' professional trajectories, I also considered it imperative to investigate those advocates whose voices have not been heard, and who are underrepresented in the so-called 'mindfulness movement' I have critiqued in Chapter 3. In this context, semi-structured interviews were considered based on their usefulness to provide historical information (Creswell and Creswell 2018) using a biographical interview approach (Bornat 2008) for the exploration of interviewees' backgrounds as meditation practitioners and their understanding of 'mindfulness' and accounts regarding the historical development of meditative practices in Mexico. In this way, the emphasis on the psychosocial including people's biographies and journeys interwoven with the historical context (Walkerdine et al. 2001), appeared as a comprehensive approach to study both the emergence and evolution of meditative practices in Mexico (the past) and its influence in the current delivery (the present).

The above informed a pilot study conducted for over a month in Mexico City (from mid-December 2017 to late-January 2018) with the primary aim of testing and refining the research questions and methods proposed (Kim 2010).[82] Ethical approval was obtained from Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee before conducting the pilot study (see

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[81] My PhD project has been conducted in parallel with the research project "Beyond Personal Wellbeing: Mapping the Social Production of Mindfulness in England and Wales", which investigates the provision of Anglo-American mindfulness at a national scale in the UK context. The project is led by Dr Steven Stanley, in collaboration with Dr Alp Arat, Dr Peter Hemming, Prof. Richard King and Dr Elena Hailwood (see https://mappingmindfulness.net).

[82] At the time the pilot study was planned, my doctoral research was focused on studying "contemplative practices" in higher education settings solely, because I was interested in the pedagogical aspects of how these practices were being taught. However, before trying to understand a rather specific sector in Mexico, it was needed in the first place to broaden the scope of the study to explore the specificity of 'mindfulness' in the wider Mexican scene. This encompassed investigating how 'mindfulness' was defined by Mexican advocates, the historical and socio-cultural context and the multiple sectors where 'mindfulness' has been disseminated. Therefore, this shift was integrated in the emergent research design and formulation of my research questions.

letter of approval in Appendix D). This first application to the Ethics Committee served as an exercise for reflecting on the potential methodological and ethical challenges that could be faced during the fieldwork. For example, one issue identified was the difficulty in recruiting some participants due to a previous history of tensions and power dynamics experienced given by my 'insider' position. This is because I had performed different roles, from being known as an undergraduate student at UNAM (Chapter1), research assistant/employee, colleague, or simple acquaintance, in relation to some of the potential participants.[83] Therefore, in consideration of not facing the tensions and possible unbalanced relationships at an early stage in the study, a purposive sampling strategy (Blaikie 2010) was employed; drawing on my 'insider' knowledge as a former member of the Mexican 'mindfulness' community. As I go on to discuss, other types of sampling strategies (i.e. a systematic online search and the snowball technique) were employed to extend the final sample.

The pilot study involved the investigation of 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers and researchers' biographies and professional journeys through open-ended semi-structured interviews (Blaikie 2010). I initially envisaged my study sample as Mexican 'mindfulness pioneers', in disseminating, introducing, and adapting meditative practices in a variety of settings – from educational and clinical settings to workplace and Buddhist centres –. A preliminary search of documents and archives (e.g. flyers, books, handbooks, theses) was conducted with the primary purpose of mapping the dissemination and current provision of 'mindfulness' across Mexican sectors.

Overall, the pilot study proved the feasibility of the interview themes and questions proposed and the pertinence for searching and retrieving documents and archives in the field. Ethnographic work including participant observation at different sites (e.g. 'mindfulness' courses, seminars, retreats, and conferences) was considered fundamental for its inclusion in the fieldwork, since the exploration of the socio-cultural aspects influencing the delivery of meditative practices in Mexican settings would require the observation of teaching as it occurs in actual settings. The preliminary analyses of the data aided to establish the criteria for sampling the observational sites as I will specify in the fieldwork methods section. The study aims, research questions and objectives presented in turn were informed by the insights gained from the pilot conducted, which constitute my fieldwork carried out from mid-January to July 2019 in Mexico.

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[83] This point will become clearer in Chapter 6, where I discuss how the tensions and power dynamics became relevant in the analysis of my data. Specifically, since my professional biography as a 'mindfulness' practitioner and my position as a researcher overlapped with the participants' own biographies and positions.

4.3. Fieldwork design

4.3.1. Aims, research questions and objectives

The present thesis has three academic purposes. Firstly, it seeks to explore the topic of meditative practices in Mexico by accomplishing three aims: 1) to investigate the historical development of these practices and the *emic* conceptualisations on 'mindfulness' used by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers; 2) to describe the current social organisation of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu, and 3) to describe the current tensions and dilemmas in the dissemination and teaching of these practices across different Mexican settings arising from the socio-cultural particularities of the context. In doing so, this study attempts to fulfil the second academic purpose; that of becoming an emancipatory project in giving voice to the experience of practitioners, teachers and researchers which has not been yet portrayed in 'mindfulness' academic literature so far. It simultaneously reveals the complex tensions and contradictions that emerge from 'mindfulness' delivery in the Mexican context. The third and final academic purpose is that the decolonial framework might inform future social studies examining the global phenomenon of 'mindfulness' in other geographical and diverse contexts.

According to the three aims described above, the following research questions and sub-questions were formulated:

1. How have meditative practices emerged and evolved in Mexico according to interviewees' accounts and document analysis?

    1.1 What are the *emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context?

2. In what ways have Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers been shaping the implementation and dissemination of meditative practices across sectors in the Mexican context?

    2.1 What is the social organisation of the Mexican meditative practices' milieu?

3. What are the socio-cultural aspects influencing the way meditative practices are delivered in Mexico?

    3.1 What are the discourses used to disseminate and teach meditative practices in Mexican settings?

The following objectives were established to answer the research questions and sub-questions proposed:

1. To provide a historical account of the emergence and evolution of meditative practices in Mexico, using a critical historiography perspective informed by discourse analysis based on documentary analysis and archive retrieval (e.g. books, leaflets, articles, and public websites) and the analysis of biographical semi-structured interviews. Closely linked to this, the *emic* conceptualisations found among the interviewees and the role of Spanish and English in such conceptualisations are addressed.

2. To identify the Mexican 'pioneers' involved in the spread of meditative practices in Mexico, analysing their biographies and professional journeys as meditation practitioners, teachers, and researchers; understanding how they have contributed to the dissemination, adaptation, and creation of courses and programmes based on meditative practices. In addition to the analysis of interview data, documentary analysis of books, articles, newspapers, and multimedia resources was relevant in the understanding of two unacknowledged historical figures whose legacy is still present among contemporary Mexican meditative 'pioneers'. Studying the history of this living social organisation entailed positioning myself as a participant of the present research. The configuration of the current 'mindfulness' milieu in Mexico is explained drawing on intersectional analysis of both interviewees' positions and myself as the interviewer; as well as using network analysis to describe the arrangement of the different types of organisations and associations where interviewees work.

3. To describe the tensions arising from the dissemination of meditative practices in different settings due to Mexico's socio-cultural, linguistic, and historical context. For instance, the tensions between the private versus the public sector and the civil society ethos, and between Indigenous cosmologies and practices in contrast with the 'spiritual/religious' ethos of 'mindfulness' as it is taught on the ground. Also, the thesis seeks to identify the way these practices are delivered, and the discourses articulated. Although the analysis employed is largely based on ethnographic data, documentary analysis concerning interviewees and their organisations' public profiles and interviewee's accounts were also used.

To address the research questions and sub-questions proposed in the thesis, a qualitative research approach was chosen. Following Creswell and Creswell (2018), this approach seeks to explore and understand "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human

problem" (p. 4); in this case, the phenomenon of 'mindfulness', as viewed by Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers who are leading the implementation and adaptation of the meditative practices across different settings. This research entails a case study design focusing solely on the Mexican context, with an interest in developing an analysis of this single country (de Vaus 2001) given its specific historical, linguistic, economic, political, and socio-cultural characteristics.

Following the pilot study, ethical approval for conducting the fieldwork was obtained again from Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see letter of approval in Appendix E). As preparatory work before 're-entering' the field, a fieldwork plan was drafted in which potential interviewees to be contacted, and sites where documents and archives could be retrieved, were identified.[84] I also carried out an extensive and thorough online search to investigate the 'mindfulness' practices courses, retreats and seminars which would be happening during the timeframe in which the fieldwork was set up. In what follows, the three research methods as well as the sampling strategies used are described in more detail.

4.3.2. Open-ended semi-structured interviews

Open-ended semi-structured interviews (Blaikie 2010) were conducted to explore six overall themes: 1) participants' professional background and their roles in teaching or training teachers in meditative practices, including their views about being a 'pioneer' in introducing meditative practices in Mexican settings; 2) their teaching experience in delivering meditative practices and their experience of holding different roles and identities as practitioners, teachers, and researchers; 3) participants' journeys concerning their personal meditative practice if any; 4) their views on the different conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' addressing the topic about 'spirituality' versus 'secularity'; 5) participants' views about the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu including the challenges or obstacles faced when introducing these practices in different settings, and 6) the future development of meditative practices in the country (see full interview schedule in Appendix F). The interview schedule served as a guide for all the interviews. According to Berg (2009), this assures that relevant themes are addressed while permitting certain flexibility to focus on the different topics that arise individually during the interview process. Preparation time was taken before each interview for revision of the questions, and the consideration of making background reading to inform the

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[84] While there was a clear cut off regarding the period in which I was physically in Mexico collecting data for both my pilot study and my fieldwork, given my in-between insider-outsider positions it could be said that I have 're-entered' the field rather than 'entering' the field for the first time.

interview process with each participant. I took notes before and after the interviews in my research journal.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, some interviews took place face-to-face; however, most interviews were then conducted online using Zoom. Two main reasons were pondered in making this decision: a) the insecure situation faced in the country which prevented flexibility of travelling around the different locations in Mexico for a young female conducting solo research; and b) further practical limitations of the research project itself. For instance, the timescale for completing the PhD thesis, the long travel distances between the different locations in Mexico in combination with the lack of funding to fund these trips. Finally, a few participants were not living physically in Mexico, therefore, the use of an online tool to conduct the interview was necessary.[85]

4.3.3. Sampling strategy and participant recruitment

As a first step, a purposive sampling strategy (Blaikie 2010) was used to recruit research participants, which represented the six interviewees of the pilot study. As a second step, I carried out a systematic online search to find out the practitioners, teachers, and researchers who have been involved in the delivery of meditative practices in Mexico. Although this restricted the search to those who were publicly visible on the internet, it helped in expanding the sample beyond the people I knew based on my 'insider' perspective. Finally, a snowball sampling technique (Blaikie 2010) was also employed to recruit interviewees who might not have been identified by the online search. Likewise, this sampling strategy helped to refine my sample because some interviewees suggested people to be considered (in some cases, people were new to me, while other peoples' names matched with the list of potential participants I had planned). Another interesting methodological feature related to this sampling criteria was the membership of some of the interviewees of a private WhatsApp group that already existed before conducting my research. One of the research participants took the place of a 'gatekeeper' informing the members of the group about my study. Those who showed interest and agreed for their names to be shared with me, were included in the sample.[86]

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[85] Using Zoom was the most cost-effective platform to conduct the online interviews. Also, only one interview was conducted via phone call because it was the method preferred by the participant.

[86] The fact that some participants knew each other and were connected in this WhatsApp group appeared as an important element in the analysis of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu. I address this further in Chapter 6.

I approached all potential interviewees using my university email to introduce myself and explain the objective of the study, inviting them to participate either in a face-to-face or on online interview. I also sent the participant information sheet and the consent form (see Appendix G) for participants to review and respond to any questions they could have.[87] The platform Zoom was used to carry out the online interviews, and upon informed consent with the interviewees, the audio of the interviews was recorded using a manual device in all instances.[88] From the 45 research participants initially contacted, one female participant indirectly declined from taking part in the study by recommending me to contact another female she considered could help. Another female participant mentioned that she would get back to me, but it did not happen in the end, and the same happened with a male participant who did not reply to the email sent. Finally, in one instance, the main female leader of the organisation I approached did not accept participating in the study. She inquired about the budget I had for conducting "experts' interviews", arguing that she was not in the possibility to "offer tutoring activities or participating in research activities without financial remuneration" given that her private practice was the only means of livelihood. While I explained the financial constraints of my project and the consideration that interviewees were willingly participating and for the sake of scientific research, she suggested I contact another member of the organisation instead.

Research participants' informed consent was obtained following the ethical procedure of notifying participants about the purpose of the study, also explaining the reason for being invited to take part in and the process involved. Since I conducted interviews and ethnographic observations (I will expand on this later), I created a second version of the participant information sheet (see Appendix H), for the occasions in which interviewees might have granted access to conduct the ethnographic work. The element differentiating these versions was that, for the ethnographic observations, consent from the teacher teaching the meditative practices in the site was requested for audio recording the course or programme's sessions, as well as for producing fieldnotes from the observation taking place. In this case, the emphasis was made in that my research interest was not assessing the participant's work as

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[87] The email communication with the research participants as well as the interviews were in Spanish. Although the consent form and participant information sheet were originally written in English for obtaining ethics approval, these were also translated into Spanish for the research participants to read. This decision was made on the assumption that the Spanish language, common to the interviewees and the interviewer, was relevant in studying the *emic* conceptualisations of meditative practices as well as for gaining insights about the socio-cultural aspects influencing this social phenomenon. Yet, I discovered that the English language used by the interviewees, also played a significant role in the meaning-making process in my study. Important methodological implications arose which I will discuss in Chapter 9.
[88] A digital voice recorder (Sony ICD-PX470) was used for its practical handling (i.e. the small size of the device) and its functionality to transfer, save and manage the audio files securely.

'mindfulness' teacher, rather the way meditative practices were taught, and the content disseminated in the context observed. For the interviews, participants' informed consent was obtained to audio recording the interview and a transcription of it to be made. In all cases, the informed consent included information about participants' right to withdrawal from the study without consequences since their partaking was voluntary.

As for the purpose of the study, all participants were aware of the exploratory nature of the research focusing on the historical investigation of the emergence and evolution of meditative practices in Mexico, as well as the understanding of the socio-cultural aspects influencing the implementation and delivery of these practices in different settings. Although some explicitly asked about my analytic approach or my expected outcome, I clarified the emergent and exploratory nature of the qualitative study.[89]

Specifically, interviewees were aware of my interest to investigate their views about the conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' as well as their professional biographies, their roles as 'mindfulness' teachers and the streams informing their teaching approach. Having considered the debates on 'religiosity and spirituality' versus 'secularity' concerning the origin of and the teaching of 'mindfulness', I attempted to prevent participants' from experiencing psychological discomfort in two ways: informing interviewees about the sensitivity of these themes and their right to not to answer questions around this. Following the general disciplinary ethical codes and guidelines (i.e. the British Psychological Society [BPS] 2018 and British Sociological Association [BSA] 2017), and in an effort to maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality, I have employed pseudonyms and disguised participants' information when necessary.[90] Before discussing my other methods for data generation, I introduce briefly my study sample.

4.3.4. Study sample

The final sample comprised 42 interviewees of which 19 were female and 23 were male.[91] Research participants were well-educated with most of the sample having either a doctoral

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[89] For instance, this is reflected in changing the thesis title i.e. "Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution" which did not consider the decolonial theoretical framework at the time of my fieldwork, and which was informed inductively from the empirical data.

[90] Due to the complexity of my subject matter and the bricolage approach I employed in my study, ethical dilemmas about keeping anonymity and confidentiality while developing 'thick description' in the analysis emerged. I raise this as a research problem I faced in my study, which I discuss further at the end of this chapter.

[91] Topics such as sexual orientation nor the construction of 'gender' were not considered in my interview schedule. Yet a female participant freely disclosed being bisexual during the interview. Upon the reflection of this interview encounter and the consideration of other observations during my fieldwork

degree (10/42) or a master's level qualification (14/42). Eight participants were studying a postgraduate degree when the research took place, while the other six have studied a type of specialisation programme. Finally, four participants had studied a bachelor's degree only. Participants reported having professional backgrounds across a variety of disciplines with dominant training within psy-disciplines (20/42); that is, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, and psychology (from health and education to social and experimental psychology). Also, some participants reported having professional backgrounds in medicine and neurosciences (5/42), and few in natural sciences (4/42) and social sciences (4/42). This was followed by arts and humanities (3/42) and finally, other interdisciplinary fields (6/42).[92] The full analysis of the study sample in relation to participants' encounters with meditative practices and their training on these practices is presented in Chapter 6. However, it is worth mentioning that in general terms, interviewees' main areas of activities included education, health, psychotherapy, coaching, corporations, and participation in non-Christian religious groups. Also, most of the interviewees (32/42) were directors, co-directors or project leaders of associations established to deliver meditative practices specifically. Three interviewees were self-employed, and seven reported having introduced meditative practices at larger institutions where they work or their private practice. With regards to age range, more than half of the interviewees were middle age (24/42), 11 were young adults and seven seniors.[93] Anonymised data of my study sample are summarised in Appendix I.

On the one hand, almost half of the research participants (20/42) were Buddhist practitioners. For the interviewees of my study, there was an important distinction between being a practitioner in the sense of having the first-person experience of meditation practice (i.e. being a 'mindfulness' practitioner or Buddhist meditation practitioner), which does not necessarily imply a Buddhist affiliation, versus the 'Buddhist identity' of practising Buddhism or being a 'Buddhist practitioner'. This distinction was made by some of the interviewees indicating their positioning and identities as 'Buddhists'. Being a 'Buddhist practitioner' then, can signify either having been ordained within a specific Buddhist tradition or having taken refuge in the Three Jewels (i.e. the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha or community). On the other hand, other interviewees expressed their position as 'Buddhist meditation practitioners' which for them did

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as well as including the integration of feminist sensitivity and intersectional analyses, issues about gender in relation to the provision of 'mindfulness' became relevant as an emergent theme in my analysis.

[92] Within the last group of interdisciplinary fields, I included interviewees who have had professional training within Buddhist or religious studies to disguise interviewees' data. For the same reason, I have described participants' educational and professional background in general terms.

[93] I established the age range based on the categorisation employed in Mexico, where "*adulto mayor*" [senior] is considered from 60 years onwards (Gobierno de México 2017), demarcating middle age between 40 and 60 years, and young adult less than 40 years and older than 18 years.

not denote seeing Buddhism as "religious" or as if they were teaching Buddhism because they defined meditative practices from the discourse of 'secularity'.

Still, none of my interviewees self-identified themselves as Catholics, while only two of them openly expressed having a difficult relationship with Catholicism itself. Exploring participants' religious belief was not the focus of my interview schedule for being considered a sensitive topic. Nonetheless, two interviewees freely commented on this difficult relationship to Catholicism, interestingly referring also to some initial resistance to meditative practices due to its "religious connotation because of the statues of and reference to Buddha" (Carolina) and some sort of "cult to the teacher as heir to the tradition" (Julián).

As part of my data, I also integrated two case studies whose real identities were maintained for their relevance as historical figures, namely Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum and Alejandro Córdova Córdova.[94] The cases were discovered based on the analysis of documents and archives and through the interviewees' accounts since many of my interviewees have collaborated closely with either one or both at some point in their lives as I shall explain (Chapter 5). Finally, an account of reflexivity is presented in a form of an Epilogue before the analytic chapters, to address my social identity and positionality in the research, also integrated into the analysis throughout the empirical chapters.

4.3.5. Transcription of interviews

The length of the 42 interviews I conducted varied from 20 minutes (the shortest one) to 108 minutes (the longest one) having over 35 hours of interview audio recording to transcribe. The transcription of the interviews was an interpretative process itself (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Thus, it was important preliminary analysis stage since the transcription of all the interviews unfolded as a very vivid process of translating "oral discourse" to "written discourse" (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, p. 203). As a researcher, I stayed close to each of the participants' worldviews and the interaction as it occurred in each of the interviews, which felt like being in conversation with the person; for a day or even more, until I finished the process of transcribing the interview. This entailed generating a detailed transcript taking the following considerations: a) making linguistic annotations such as pauses, the intonation of the speech, laughs, changes in voice tone, overlaps/interruptions; b) considering certain linguistics

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[94] Dr Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum, a Mexican neurophysiologist and psychologist, is considered an enigmatic figure because of his disappearance in 1994, leaving much of his research work at his psychology laboratory at UNAM inconclusive. Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova, a Mexican psychiatrist, Erich Fromm's disciple and Vipassana meditation practitioner, died in 2013.

aspects about the use of Spanish and English throughout the interview (i.e. use of italics to recognise these changes); c) the annotation of different expressions and idioms, culturally sensitive to the use of Spanish as the main language to conduct the interviews, also relevant in revealing emotionality such as idioms in Spanish to express frustration, complains or joy. I also wrote memos about my own insights during the transcription process itself. These notes were added to the field notes made in my research journal after I conducted each interview. From a total of 35 hours of audio recordings, 622 pages of interview transcript were generated.

One important methodological aspect was translating the extracts taken from the interview transcripts in Spanish for writing my analysis in English. I have reflected on the issues of 'translating back' and dilemmas of representation about the findings of my thesis in Chapter 9. For now, it is worth noting that I translated the quotes presented for the analysis considering that Spanish is my mother tongue and that I conducted both the interviews and their verbatim transcription. The translation of quotes from Spanish to English was also necessary when analysing documents and archives. I will comment on the type of sources employed in the empirical chapters.

4.3.6. Documentary analysis and archival search.

The search for documents and archives has been considered more than just a complementary source in the literature review or supportive of the interview data (Mogalakwe 2006). The documents analysed constituted essential historical sources (e.g. Ventresca and Mohr 2017), first, for the insights provided regarding the development of meditative practices in Mexico, and second, for the information and further understanding they have offered about the way in which this social phenomenon has been discursively constructed (Bailey 1994). The archives retrieved uncovered interesting contradictions as well as providing evidence that I would not have been able to access with the interview method. According to Prior (2003, p. 5), documents are not unidimensional since they are also composed of pictures, diagrams, emblems; therefore their analysis is not restricted to text. Given the diversity of documents, how documentary analysis and archival material can deepen understating is varied. In the present study, this concerned accessing knowledge through books, journal publications, posters, and manuscripts developed by two of the historical figures whom I did not interview as mentioned above, whose documents have been held in organisations' archives and online repositories. Atkinson and Coffey (2011) contend how important is "to recognise the extent to which many social settings are self-documenting" (p. 78). They argue about the relevance of using documentary analysis for understanding such settings, a method which is often neglected over ethnographic fieldwork. Some documents such as leaflets, manuscripts and

books were given by the interviewees themselves revealing the centrality of these sources for their understanding of 'mindfulness' and the influences in their work.

Also, due to the relevance that public profiles and websites have in the present-day dissemination of meditative practices, retrieving documents publicly available on the internet was a key methodological decision to study the differences found between interviewees' accounts regarding the practices they teach, and their conceptualisations of these practices and the discourses articulated online, including the marketing strategies used to advertise their courses, training programmes and retreats. This was fundamental because "electronic and digital resources [are] among the ways in which documentary realities are produced and consumed" (Atkinson and Coffey 2011, p. 78). The documentary analysis was used throughout the whole period in which the research was conducted, although I realised there were certain limitations when searching while I was based in Cardiff.[95]

I visited different sites for retrieving physical materials in special collections and archives (see Table 3) mainly libraries at higher education institutions and Buddhist centres in Mexico City; where I stayed most of the time during my fieldwork.[96] My stay in Mexico City was central to having access to these sites. The procedures for accessing and retrieving the documents and archives were challenging. For instance, some of them were stored as photographs taken with my mobile phone since photocopying was not allowed and in other cases, I could only take notes during my visit to the site. Notes and pictures were taken during the visit to the different sites gaining insights of the organisations. Additionally, digital documents were gathered from different websites and repositories (e.g. Erich Fromm's archive, Erich Fromm Online [no date]). I conducted a systematic search in the catalogues of the four higher education institutions; from which three are public universities UNAM (2021), Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia [ENAH] (2021), and El Colegio de México (COLMEX 2021), and one private university (Universidad Iberoamericana [IBERO] 2021).

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[95] The online search conducted while based in Cardiff was restricted under the European data protection law (see Google Transparency Report 2014). I realised that some results from the Google search differed from the ones found while I was in Mexico, since some of the entries were removed under aforementioned regulation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning early 2020, I did not have the opportunity to go back to Mexico and retrieve further online or physical documents.

[96] During my fieldwork, I stayed most of the time in Mexico City, except for the occasions in which I travelled to ethnographic sites. Accommodation in Mexico City was provided by my family which otherwise would not have been possible to fund. Although my PhD was funded by the Mexican National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), I did not have extra financial support to conduct fieldwork.

Table 3 Sites where the Archival Search was Conducted

Site	Name
Higher Education Institutions	*Biblioteca Central* [Central Library] at UNAM in Mexico City.
	Daniel Cosío Villegas Library at *El Colegio de México,* COLMEX in Mexico City.
	Guillermo Bonfil Batalla Library at *Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, ENAH* [National School of Anthropology and History] in Mexico City.
	The library at *Instituto Mexicano de Psicoanálisis A.C.* [Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis] in Mexico City*.*
Buddhist Centres	The library at Tibet House in Mexico City.
	Centro de Meditación Kadampa Mexico [Kadampa Meditation Centre Mexico], where I collected leaflets publicising meditative practices courses in Mexico City.
	Centro Budista de la Ciudad de México [Buddhist Centre of Mexico City].
	Centro Budista de Cuernavaca [Cuernavaca Buddhist Centre] in Morelos.

4.3.7. Multi-sited ethnography

To generate a rounded understanding of the socio-cultural aspects shaping the delivery of meditative practices in Mexico and engage in the first-hand exploration of the settings where these practices are being taught, observations and participant observation work were conducted (Bailey 1994). The observations were relevant to study what practitioners and teachers did in practice during 'mindfulness' courses, retreats, conferences, and seminars, documenting the multiple ways in which meditative practices were delivered across sectors. On the one hand, this provided important insights about the tensions and obstacles that arose in the distinct sectors, revealing how the practices were presented and the discourses articulated by practitioners, and teachers. On the other hand, the ethnographic work was fundamental for knowing more about the types of audiences attending the different 'mindfulness' events and how these were tailored.

Regarding my engagement with the first-person experience of 'mindfulness' meditation during the ethnographic observation at the different events, embodiment was fundamental in two ways. On the one hand, as Coffey (2011) asserts:

> Fieldwork is necessarily an embodied activity. Our body and the bodies of others are central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork. We locate our physical being alongside those of others, as we negotiate the spatial context of the field. We concern ourselves with the positioning, visibility and performance of our own embodied self as we undertake participant observation (p. 59).

Thus, embodiment was key for my 'participatory' role as a researcher in the sites where the observation took place, because of the nature of 'mindfulness' as a mind-body practice, and for the interactions taking place while 'mindfulness' was delivered (e.g. exchanges with other attendees, the physical arrangement of bodies in the spaces, as well as the spoken discourses

and silences occurring during the meditation instructions and activities). My arising sensations, emotions, and thoughts during the meditation periods as well as the reflections concerning how the meditative practices were guided and received by the attendees and myself were also included.

Still, the overlapping positions of 'meditation practitioner' and 'ethnographer in the field' produced an interesting methodological tension. Rather than being concerned with an interactionist micro-sociological approach (e.g. Pagis 2010; 2019), I delved into my subjectivity largely informed by self-identity reflexivity and the experience of difficult feelings and emotional reactions informed by the psychosocial method (Walkerdine et al. 2001) as I shall explain later in this chapter.

4.3.8. Sampling strategy and selection of ethnographic sites.

The decision of including ethnographic observations as a research strategy was not easy. The absence of a single site of the phenomenon under study (Hannerz 2003) represented a challenge due to the extensive territory of Mexico and considering the practical limitations of the study such as the timeframe to conduct the PhD thesis and the restricted budget to fund travel costs and other expenses (i.e. involving courses and retreats fees which tend to be costly). Another important limitation faced was the insecure situation in the country which could have hindered my safety.[97] Even though solo research itself can expose the researcher to risks when collecting data in the field, for this study, being a young female researcher was identified as a key theme. Firstly, being a young female in Mexico is considered a risk factor due to the high percentage of femicides (approximately about 10 women are killed daily, Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública 2020). Therefore, extra security measures were taken since conducting solo research in this context was more dangerous as opposed to being a male researcher collecting data. Secondly, the intersection of being a 'young' 'female' researcher appeared as a significant challenge when interviewing some middle-aged and senior participants (I will address these power dynamics in Chapter 6).

The criteria developed to select the ethnographic sites were based on three principles. As preliminary findings from the pilot study, I found four main currents of meditative practices being taught in Mexico (i.e. religious/spiritual, Indigenous/local knowledge, hybrid including both Buddhist and 'secular' approaches, as well as scientific protocols). I used these

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[97] In my research journal, I noted a mixture of feelings such as frustration, fear, and anger towards this situation since relevant ethnographic sites were purposely avoided for security reasons.

categories to first organise the 'mindfulness' events advertised by practitioners, teachers and organisations working across different sectors. Additionally to this, a systematic online search was conducted upon my arrival to Mexico. This was because the organisations and teachers were publishing the events as the 2019 year commenced (I arrived in mid-January 2019), and new courses and retreat opportunities arose while I was there. The target audience or sector to which the meditative practices were delivered was also considered within the criteria: public and private education, vulnerable groups, public and private health, psychotherapy services, companies/corporations, and non-Christian religious groups.

My first ethical approval for conducting my fieldwork entailed creating information sheets and consent forms for both the teacher being observed in the 'mindfulness' course, seminar, or retreat as I mentioned earlier, and a third version for the attendees of these activities (see Appendix J).[98] However, additional ethical approval was requested to amend a few points. The first revision was approved on 21st February 2019 (see approval letter in Appendix K) which involved getting authorisation to obtain participants' oral informed consent. On the one hand, it was argued that written consent could have been too formal and could have potentially frightened the participants in some of the research sites. Although the focus of my investigation related to observing teachers delivering meditative practices, this request was sensitive to one of the teacher's concerns about participants attending his event (i.e. a silent meditation retreat), and given the nature of such setting, the written consent could have been intrusive and "overcomplicated" for the retreat attendees.[99] On the other hand, oral consent for conducting interviews was also obtained, considered adequate for participants who would prefer oral communication rather than written form. This was linked to the second amendment

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[98] The third version of the participant information sheet and consent form were produced to request informed consent from the attendees of these activities observed. This version emphasised that my focus of attention was the way that meditative practices were being taught, the content of the course or retreat being observed as disseminated by the teacher. It was further explained that if they did not agree to the consent or decided to withdraw, any information regarding their "attendance" in the activity would not have been included. This was used when observing my research participants teaching in practice. However, the observations in the field also included public conferences on 'mindfulness'.

[99] Indeed, for some of the attendees in one of the events where I took part in, providing their written consent appeared as "strange" since it seemed to be too formal and rather something new to them; since many were not familiarised with research-informed consent procedures, and they were just happy to express verbally their agreement. This revealed local understandings of research processes or "foreignness of the idea of informed consent" (Guenther 2009, p. 414), which contrasted with conventional notions of consent in UK ethical committees. It is interesting to note that, most of the teachers I observed, were very positive about me conducting ethnographic work in their activities since they were supportive of the 'scientific investigation' of these practices. Influenced by their professional background in research and scientific disciplines, many interviewees found important to study the way meditative practices are taught in Mexican settings and how they are received by the population. Although many of the interviewees' assumptions were about positive outcomes of 'mindfulness' provision rather than the emergence of tensions and dilemmas.

that was approved on 29th April 2019, which involved changes to the inclusion of Indigenous youths as a vulnerable population.

Appendix L shows an overview of the 11 activities where the ethnographic observations were conducted, which altogether account for around 192 hours spent in the different sites. This included seminars, conferences, retreats, and online courses on meditative practices in Mexico. For those activities where the audio recording was possible, I produced verbatim transcription obtaining a total of 45 pages, while field notes taken during or after the events were recorded on A6 notebooks. From the 11 activities, the provision of meditative practices was sampled across six states in Mexico; that is, most of the observation 73% (8/11) carried out in province, and 27% (3/11) in Mexico City, the capital.[100] The negotiation to enter the sites varied and the researcher also had different degrees of immersion which I will consider in relation to each specific site (see Chapters 7 and 8).

4.4. The rationale for using a bricolage methodological approach

The use of a bricolage approach was envisaged initially due to the exploratory nature of the study and its emergent design. During the data analysis process, I could not find a 'single' methodological and analytic perspective that could address the breadth of the Mexican context in multiple senses along with my subject matter all at once. The bricolage concept seemed useful not only to address the complexity of the subject matter being studied but for the multi-modal qualitative data collected and multiple analytic strategies informing my methodological choices. As Kincheloe et al. (2011) assert, the bricolage "involve[s] the process of employing these methodological processes as they are needed in the unfolding context of the research situation" (p. 168). Taking a bricolage approach in this study was pertinent since it allowed the multi-modal data to be read from different angles, simultaneously permitting the application of the analytic strategies with different emphasis as required to be able to respond to the research questions formulated.

Additionally, my in-between insider-outsider positions were considered. On the one hand, my three-fold positionality as Mexican 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher, and researcher, was essential for providing 'insider' credentials to conduct the research in the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu. On the other hand, my 'outsider' position for having lived abroad for a while was fundamental in 're-entering' the field to conduct my PhD research with a critical

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[100]One of the ethnographic observations planned did not happen; as I will explain in Chapter 8, I decided to include the site's geographical location in my sample of ethnographic sites given the significant discussion given to this case.

lens.[101] In this sense, I embraced the stance of a bricoleur researcher, moving into the domain of complexity, as Kincheloe (2004) describes it:

> Appreciating research as a power-driven act, the critical researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naive concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge … The bricolage exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world and the complications of power (p. 2).[102]

Besides, such bricolage stance is informed by the position of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002), which at its core engages with the ways through which knowledge is generated but also the type of knowledge produced is questioned (Mignolo 2012; Bhambra 2014). In this line, the methodological bricolage in my study does not entail an approach from a sole discipline nor the use of the "master's tools" (see Lorde 2018 in Mignolo and Walsh 2018, p.7) for traditionally researching within the social sciences or in cultural psychology, specifically. Instead, a multiplicity of perspectives was brought together to conduct interdisciplinary research, facilitating the articulation of a decolonial theoretical framework, with methodological and analytic perspectives to understand the historical development and current provision of meditative practices in Mexico. In doing so, it could seem that from the decolonial critique, the methodological bricolage adopted in the thesis still does not "epistemologically transcend, [nor] decolonise the Western canon and epistemology" (Grosfoguel 2007, p. 211) completely; as I have borrowed methodological and analytic perspectives from critical theory, feminism and critical psychology coming from the "Western thinkers" (p. 211). Yet, these have emerged on the margins of psychological research (e.g. Morawski 2005; Gordo López and Rodríguez López 2015) and therefore, have been committed to addressing issues of oppression, decolonisation, and power relations, as well as intersectionality; which are key in the feminist and decolonial theoretical framework informing this study (Chapter 2).

Likewise, due to my geographical location while conducting this research (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) and in recognition of both the psychological knowledge and training gained previously in Mexico City and more recently as a social scientist in the UK, I critically reflect on the

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[101] With this, I mean that my perspective as a social scientist going back to Mexico for collecting my data was different from my former perspective as experimental psychologist (see Epilogue). However, it is important to emphasise that during my fieldwork, I did not have an already 'fixed' theoretical framework not I had decided on the analytic strategies to be employed.

[102] The notion 'researcher-as-bricoleur' is understood in relation to its historical situatedness and local knowledge production following Kincheloe and Steinberg's (2008) line of research, aiming for the construction of borderland epistemologies. That is, "different systems of knowing, knowledge production and knowledge assessment" (as cited in Darder et al. 2008, p. 26) rather than advocating to universalising understandings. For a genealogy of the words *bricoleur* and *bricolage* in previous sociological work such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Georg Simmel see Denzin and Lincoln (1994).

difficulties of having been educated on what Cupples and Grosfoguel (2019) call the "Westernized University" curriculum (p. 2).[103] As Mignolo (2000) contends, "the decolonisation of knowledge, occurs in acknowledging the sources and geopolitical locations of knowledge while at the same time affirming those modes and practices of knowledge that have been denied by the dominance of particular forms" (cited in Bhambra 2014, p. 134). For instance, both the biographical approach to conducting semi-structured interviews and both documentary analysis and archival search are rarely used among social psychologists in general, whilst the interest in these methods within the social scientific study of 'mindfulness' in Anglo-American contexts has increased just recently (e.g. Drage 2018a, Kucinskas 2019). Yet, while ethnographic research is predominantly employed in sociological and anthropological studies of Buddhist meditation (Cook 2010; Pagis 2010; 2015; 2019) it has been less common to find a multi-sited ethnographic design (e.g. Gleig 2019; Hedegaard 2020).

Inspired by Gurminder K. Bhambra's commentary in an interview conducted in the context of the conference "Beyond the Master's Tools: Post- and Decolonial Approaches to Research Methodology and Methods in the Social Sciences" (2016), this research accounts for how the "particular intellectual genealogies" as developed within specific socio-cultural, economic and political contexts, might also be impacted by global "historical incidences" and specifically, by those aspects of the arguably different context where they are being employed.

In short, aligning the bricolage methodological approach with the decolonial theoretical framework involves: 1) moving away from the "master's tools" which often underpins Eurocentric disciplinary perspectives when conducting social scientific research, and simultaneously, 2) choosing to borrow methodological perspectives which on the one hand, have been developed from the 'Other' position within the "Global North". Nevertheless, its relevant usage when researching from the "Global South" (Grosfoguel 2011) can be justified following Mignolo (2002) and Bhambra's (2014) methodological advice regarding geopolitics of location and its centrality to the production of knowledge.

Next, I present a post hoc explanation about the methodological journey undertaken in the conception of the bricolage approach.

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[103] The "westernized university" is a "site where learning and the production, acquisition and dissemination of knowledge are embedded in Eurocentric epistemologies that are posited as objective, disembodied and universal and in which non-Eurocentric knowledges such as black and indigenous knowledges are largely ignored, marginalized or dismissed" (Cupples and Grosfoguel 2019, p. 2). Another contribution in the line of decolonisation of the university and the consequences of such agenda can be found in Bhambra et al. (2018).

4.4.1. Methodological journey: Encountering 'messiness'

In trying to make sense retrospectively of my methodological journey, encountering 'messiness' during my data analysis helped me to embrace and develop further the bricolage in my study. Due to the emergent nature of my project, I did not employ 'pre-established' analytic strategies. Because of this and the amount of multi-modal data collected, I initially felt lost in such 'messiness'; noticing there was not a straightforward way to address my research questions. In trying to decide which analytic strategies I would use, I understood that to fully address the themes I was finding in my data, inevitably I needed to use different theoretical, methodological, and analytic perspectives. But then I thought: what would this look like in terms of conducting decolonial research? I came up with a creative yet rigorous and systematic process (Kincheloe 2004) for assembling all these together: a bricolage approach.

As Barboza Fernandes and de Carvalho Martins (2015) assert, "the well-trained researcher can get loose from technical formalization in order to create what his/her studied phenomenon and context require" (p. 69). The bricolage approach might be seen as somewhat unconventional or a bit 'radical' in the way it pushes certain well-established boundaries within certain disciplines and its methods.[104] However, it does respond to the flexible and dynamic process of qualitative research while maintaining a "constant critical attitude towards the methodological decisions being adopted to safeguard … rigor and methodological consistency" (González Gil 2009, p. 1). In that sense, the bricolage was open to the plurality found in the findings, acknowledging the complexity the overlapping themes found entails, as well as carefully assessing the intersections of the multiple layers involved and the methodological limitations faced.[105]

My first reading about bricolage was the book chapter "Eclectic and Theoretical Analyses of Interview" in Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) book "*InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*", which I used to prepare myself before conducting my fieldwork and later during the transcription of the interviews. When reading about transcription and interview analyses in the book, I resonated very much with the interview analysis as bricolage as an "eclectic form of generating meaning – through a multiplicity of ad hoc methods and conceptual approaches" (p. 267). However, I found out this was insufficient since I employed other research methods to collect data and therefore, I needed to extend this "eclectic form" of

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[104] In the case of my study, I found that tensions between the different methodological and analytical perspectives I employed emerged specifically when pondering ethical issues, as I shall clarify at the end of the chapter.

[105] For instance, that ethnographic observations were not possible in every single site or 'mindfulness' course found.

analysis and include the documents, audio-recordings as well as my field notes gathered during my ethnographic observations in different sites. Bricolage has been used more in the field of education (Kincheloe and Berry 2004; Berry 2015) and critical pedagogy (Kincheloe 2005; Berry 2011; Kincheloe et al. 2011) than in other fields within social sciences (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Kincheloe 2001; Rogers 2012) or cultural and critical psychology (e.g. Barboza Fernandes and de Carvalho Martins 2015).

While the principles of the bricolage made sense to me, I certainly did not find a straightforward example regarding 'how to' bring the bricolage strategy to encompass the multi-modal data collected. It took me a while to sit comfortably with 'not knowing how'. My position as a 'mindfulness' practitioner in accepting the 'present moment' experience was conspicuous by its absence; since I constantly came across and 'fought against' the epistemological and theoretical lenses of the 'experimental psychologist', and the frustration that would accompany it.

Nevertheless, I discovered that finding the way through the bricolage approach entailed two related things. Firstly, learning to embrace the 'messiness' of qualitative data analysis and more specifically, of my research data related to 'mindfulness' and the Mexican case study since it reflected the complexity of the social phenomenon understudied. Secondly, the bricolage approach also compelled me to attend to the strong feelings and difficult emotions I was experiencing and 'welcome' them with acceptance and curiosity – attitudes frequently cultivated through 'mindfulness' practice. But more importantly, starting to investigate further these emotions and feelings as they were arising during the data analysis process while also looking further into those emotional reactions written in my fieldnotes and research journal (Walkerdine et al. 2001) turns out to be a significant and productive move for meaning-making. Including my subjectivity as a researcher (Loughran and Mannay 2018) became not only part of my methodological journey but relevant from the analytical point of view and the bricolage approach itself, which is the topic for discussion in the following section.

4.5. Analytic perspectives

In their critical discussion and contribution to the 'emotional turn' within social sciences, Loughran and Mannay (2018) contend that "for the most part researchers have proved reluctant to cross-examine their own emotional motivations, or how their emotional relations to their research topics affect their methodologies and findings" (p. 5). Following the authors' call for acknowledging the centrality of the researcher's subjectivity into the research processes, I discuss the use of the Researchers' Social Identity Map as a reflexivity tool

(Jacobson and Mustafa 2019) to address my in-between insider-outsider positions. This methodological tool was useful in connecting the rest of approaches that have informed my analysis, namely: intersectional analyses and feminist sensitivity (Phoenix 2006; Viveros Vigoya 2016), the psychosocial analytic perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Walkerdine 2008); and pattern-based discursive analyses specifically interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988; Wetherell and Potter 1992), as well as rhetorical and ideological dilemmas (Billig 1996; Goodman 2017). I employed these approaches because they helped me to understand the multi-modal data collected for answering the research questions and sub-questions I proposed. Analytically, these multiple analytic tools allowed me to approach my subject matter from the grounds of complexity, understanding 'mindfulness' from different angles, elucidating its multiple and contrasting meanings (Billig et al. 1988) and what these tensions and dilemmas meant in the context of Mexico.

Being reflexive of my three-fold positionality has been essential throughout the different stages of the research process: from the moment of designing and preparing the study, the decisions regarding the research methods employed, the interaction with research participants, and the data analysis itself. Thus, I used the Researchers' Social Identity Map created by Jacobson and Mustafa (2019) as a practical tool to foster my self-reflection.[106] This tool also supported my analysis, being rigorous during the interpretation of my data while integrating my position as researcher and my subjectivity on it. This was the case, not only based on my 'insider' position but because literally, I became part of the research. I realised that my professional biography and trajectory as 'mindfulness' practitioner and teacher in Mexico had provoked certain emotional reactions in the research participants, having influenced their views and accounts shared during the interview. I was also caught in some of the strong feelings and emotional reactions that emerged during the fieldwork due to the overlapping of our positions, which, in some cases, were accompanied by power dynamics. Additionally, many interviewees assumed I had certain knowledge for being Mexican and for having lived in the country. More explicitly, some interviewees also asked my perspective with regards to the spread and delivery of meditative practices in Mexico; on many occasions with reference to my experience of studying in the UK - one of the "leading nations" in scientific research on 'mindfulness' (Melero Ventola and Yela Bernabé 2014).

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[106] Some of the categories included in the Researchers' Social Identity Map are gender, class, citizenship, age/generation, and occupation. As Jacobson and Mustafa (2019, p. 11) discuss, whilst the process of identifying social identities and positions in the map might be categorical, the positions drawn on the map are considered rather fluid and interconnected. Sometimes they would be shifting slightly depending on the interviewee's social identities in play, on other occasions might have appeared in conflict from the researcher's positions. I have included the template of Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) Social Identity Map including an example in Appendix M.

I took the analysis of social identities and positions of both the interviewees and myself as the interviewer further, by drawing on intersectional analyses. In this type of analysis, the researcher recognises that "everybody is simultaneously positioned within social categories, such as gender, social class, sexuality and 'race'. So even when focusing particularly on one social category … intersectionality reminds us that we cannot understand that category in isolation" (Phoenix 2006, p. 22). It was acutely clear that my in-between insider-outsider positions intertwined with my professional biography and history in relation to 'mindfulness' in Mexico, overlapped with interviewees' own biographies and positions as meditation practitioners, teachers and researchers. Besides, this was complicated even further by our social identities which intersected in different ways and which prompted noticeable power relationships. As Phoenix (2006) observes, "a full understanding of any social category requires the analysis of differences, as well as commonalities, within groups" (p. 22). Bringing attention to and analysing the differences, points of encounter and the tensions that emerged from this, made it possible to uncover some of the particularities of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu (Chapter 6); given the relevance of social relations between the members of this community. In this way, intersectionality was analytically relevant since it provided a framework for recognising the overlapping positions between interviewees and myself and thus, understanding difficult feelings (e.g. defensiveness) as well as the contradictory views found among the research participants. The intersectionality approach taken departs from "the ontological understanding that social categories and social relations intersect in complex ways" (Phoenix 2006, p. 22), in alignment with my bricolage approach.

Besides, following a decolonial feminist stance elaborated in Chapter 2, the intersectionality analysis conducted was sensitive to reveal instances of oppression, power dynamics, and inequalities due to overlapping of social identities and positions specifically linked to the phenomenon of disseminating and teaching meditative practices in Mexico. In the analysis, "interrogations of race, ethnicity, gender, and patriarchy, but also of the heteropatriarchal frameworks and norms that organise social structures and institutions, as well as most aspects of everyday life" (Walsh 2018, p. 40) were central. For example, acknowledging the 'spiritual' perspectives and meditative practices as seen from Indigenous cosmologies (Marcos 2009; 2017) and their 'encounter' with Buddhist-inspired meditation practices, which nonetheless have been overlooked in the dominant frameworks of meditation and science (see Chapters 6 and 8). In doing so, the decolonial feminist perspective also informed the reflection regarding ethical dilemmas emerging from the analysis and representation of my data, as I will expand later in this chapter and in the conclusion of the thesis (Chapter 9).

With regards to analytically investigating strong feelings and emotional reactions, I followed a psychosocial approach (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Walkerdine 2008). This perspective was consistent with my personal 'mindfulness' practice as an introspective attitude towards my inner experience including emotional reactions, feelings, and thoughts.[107] The use of a psychosocial approach was relevant for three reasons. Firstly, as part of my analytic strategy in getting insights into the interview dynamics as well as my positions when listening to the audio recordings and analysing the fieldnotes of my ethnographic observations. Secondly, for understanding the phenomenon of meditative practices that I study since it is a highly emotionally charged milieu and dependent on interviewees' social identities and positions (e.g. being a 'mindfulness' or a Buddhist practitioner, teacher, or researcher). Finally, for its theoretical explanatory strength in understanding participants' subjectivities intertwined with the broader socio-cultural context of Mexico. It is important to mention that although I did not conduct life history interviews, I used timelines as "an organising principle for the events" (Adriansen 2012, p. 40) that research participants narrated in their accounts, connecting these with the wider socio-historical context of Mexico as I also examined through the analysis of documents and archives (see Chapter 5). Using timelines as an analytic strategy was useful given the biographical approach I took during my interviews and as a synthesising tool to map interviewees' journeys and identify patterns across them (see Chapter 6).[108]

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, understanding language as discourse has been fundamental in conceiving the multiple *emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context. In this regard, interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988;) have been employed as an analytic concept to present this main finding (Chapter 5). This is because of my focus on language, i.e. the different Spanish terms to define or talk about 'mindfulness', and my interest in understanding what is achieved using multiple repertoires (Wetherell and Potter 1992, pp. 90-91). For instance, distancing from Anglo-American 'mindfulness' conceptualisations. Additionally, a pattern-based discursive analysis of rhetorical and ideological dilemmas (Billig 1996; Goodman 2017) was used to uncover rhetorical devices and discourses articulated by Mexican practitioners and teachers during the dissemination and teaching of meditative practices across settings. This analytical perspective was used to examine the ideological dilemmas and tensions (Billig et al. 1988) that arose in different settings due to the broader socio-cultural context of Mexico, where epistemological

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[107] For research using mindfulness as methodological practice in psychosocial investigations see Stanley et al. (2015).
[108] In contrast with Adriansen (2012), who employed timelines with interviewees as part of the data generation process, I elaborated the timelines as an inductive analytic strategy after having transcribed my interviews.

perspectives such as the 'secular' and scientific one and the Indigenous cosmologies "coexist".

4.6. Data analysis process

For the analysis of my data, I have used a thematic analytic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013) as an organisational principle to map the themes across the different data sets (i.e. interviews, documents and archives, audio recordings as well as field notes gathered during ethnographic observations). For this, I first coded the data across all the data sets to have an overall picture of the emerging themes. Second, I employed a bricolage approach to put data together; that is, I collated data from different data sets in relation to the themes identified to conduct a more focused analysis to respond to my research questions and sub-questions. In this sense, the bricolage approach I employed (Kincheloe 2004; Berry 2015; Rogers 2012) facilitated the use of the analytic perspectives chosen with different emphasis on the data.

Although conducting the data analysis manually might be considered time-consuming and labour intensive, I found that coding and highlighting by hand and using computer-based coding in Word documents was significant for making-meaning. I drew diagrams and maps linking the analytic themes and the more specific trends found across the different data sets.[109] Moreover, I have looked inductively at individual cases or group of cases to deeper in the analysis of the findings that have been more fascinating concerning the Mexican context, 'zooming out' from these particular cases when necessary, to then consider the analysis of the wider picture of my data and relate to the overarching themes (Braun and Clarke 2013). The final decision in selecting the cases to be presented in the four analytic chapters of my thesis has been based on my research questions and the saliency of the overarching themes identified (for a diagram illustrating this process see Figure 5).

For writing up the analysis and presenting my findings, the principle of a bricolage approach was also used. I considered that assembling the multiple cases together (i.e. people, organisations, and sectors) while collating the significant themes from the qualitative multi-modal data sets, would illustrate the complexity of the phenomenon under study. In contrast,

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[109] While learning to use data analysis software such as NVivo, Atlas ti 6.0, etc. required time to be trained, a real obstacle I faced was that many of the software relied on having the data in English language to be able to use them. This is something that I encountered as well when I looked for transcription programmes for example. Consequently, I decided to do both the transcription and data analysis by hand. Yet, I had to adapt myself to conduct a considerable part of my data analysis and thesis writing up without being able to access printing services. Due to COVID-19 measures these services were not available at the university for about six months restricting my freedom to interact with physical documents.

presenting the analysis by sectors (e.g. public health, education, clinical settings, etc.) could have been simplistic making it difficult to see cross-sectoral patterns. Above all, it would not have been appropriate for describing the breadth of overlapping themes as well as the multiple connections between research participants at different levels (from the individual, the organisational, to the meta-level of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu as presented in Chapter 6). A bricolage approach for writing the analysis also contributed to overcoming the difficulty of not having been able to cover fully all sectors I mapped for the present thesis (given the space constraints to write about the case studies), which could have made the analysis look somehow incomplete.[110]

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[110] The three main research questions proposed in the present thesis could have been, with good reason, three independent research projects. Yet the study of a multi-layered social phenomenon like 'mindfulness' in a complex socio-cultural context such as Mexico, required approaching the subject matter from different angles and at from different levels, which consequently, justifies elaborating research questions encompassing this multiplicity and intricacy.

Figure 5 Diagram of Data Analysis and Writing Process

Research questions and sub-questions:
1. How have meditative practices emerged and evolved in Mexico according to interviewees' accounts and document analysis?
    1.1. What are the *emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context?
2. In what ways have Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers been shaping the implementation and dissemination of meditative practices across sectors in the Mexican context?
    2.1. What is the social organisation of the Mexican meditative practices milieu?
3. What are the socio-cultural aspects influencing the way meditative practices are delivered in Mexico?
    3.1. What are the discourses used to disseminate and teach meditative practices in Mexican settings?

Note. The diagram shows the different grouping principles (represented by the black-line oval figures) that I used to build the overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013); which, articulated together, respond to my research questions and sub-questions forming the analytic chapters of my thesis. The first grouping principle consists of the different data sets 1) that is, interviews, field notes, audio recordings, documents, as well as my biographical account. The data collated was then used to articulate a set of case studies 2) which could be understood in relation to different levels which characterise the Mexican milieu 3) this includes individual level (people), individuals forming institutions or associations, and the public, private civil society sectors. Finally, based on the overlapping themes across the various case studies, the overarching themes were then gathered to inform the answers to the research questions.

4.7. "Mindful ethics" in a qualitative bricolage study

As I will exemplify, I have drawn on Lazard and McAvoy's (2017) strategies of "limited disclosure" and "withheld disclosure" when writing up the research, simultaneously taking into account the ethical issues arising from these decisions by engaging with "mindful ethics" (González-López 2011). In her sociological research about sexuality in Mexican populations in the US and Mexico, González-López (2011) conceptualises "mindful ethics" for researchers "to [be] keenly aware of the taken-for-granted social contexts and circumstances that shape research participants' lives" (p. 449). This was of relevance in my study due to the interdisciplinary nature of my bricolage approach for conducting qualitative research in Mexico, and the conflicts that arose from competing stances of the different disciplines and methodological perspectives I employed.

The foremost ethical considerations in this regard were handling issues of anonymity and confidentiality. On the one hand, historical research would give importance to 'historical facts' requiring the researcher to openly report the events and name people. In fact, some interviewees asked, "how would you be doing historical research without naming people?". However, it is usually the case that historians' endeavour deals with life's events and histories of figures who have died, rather than studying living and active social people and organisations. Other perspectives such as oral history and feminism would be concerned with giving voice to unrepresented groups (Thompson and Bornat 2017) which also would be aligned with the emancipatory aim of conducting decolonial research (see, for example, Smith 2012). Still, this might also require carefully considering situated conceptualisations of vulnerability and harm (Macleod and Mnyaka 2018). I initially explored the possibility of making this study an 'open case' considering two reasons. Firstly, within a decolonial praxis keeping participants' voices anonymous could be suspected of reproducing colonial hierarchies (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010).[111] And secondly, because some interviewees expressed their interest in being named. Yet, in unravelling this ethical dilemma, the ethics committee

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[111] It is imperative that the ongoing need for decolonising methodologies to counter the perpetuation of colonialism through research might be pursued for future studies, because otherwise "the cycle of colonialism is just that, a cycle with no end point, no emancipation" (Smith 2012, pp. 203–204). As Ashdown et al. (2018 p. 276) points out, that the common goal of "self-determination" of Indigenous methodologies and methods that Smith (2012) outlines is central when conducting research with Indigenous peoples for which a model of five degrees of anonymising or naming participants can be proposed (i.e. 'true' anonymity, 'full' anonymising, 'soft' naming, 'full' naming and co-authorship). This model might "serve as a resource for discussions with regulatory bodies and community groups" (see pp. 284-285). Nonetheless, this implies a major task which would require further active engagement with the "Unsettling Eurocentrism in the Westernized University" as Cupples and Grosfoguel (2019) call for, and articulating and Indigenous research agenda (see Smith 2012, pp.111-142).

demanded that I follow the "norm" of anonymity (Ashdown et al. 2018, p. 274) keeping participants' confidentiality too, for three important reasons I develop below.

Firstly, I found that the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu I was investigating comprised extremely political and highly intense emotions and reactions, embedded both in the interview encounters, and within participants' accounts. This reflected important personal investment from interviewees as well as from myself (as the researcher and 'insider' of such milieu), exposing the sensibility attached to the viewpoints discussed as well as vulnerabilities created because of it. In consideration of the macro-level perspective on ethical issues described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) I pondered "the social [unintended] consequences and uses of the knowledge produced" (p. 354) which could have disclosing interviewees' identity; either in their relationships with other researcher participants or within the organisations where they work (e.g. generating difficult emotions among colleagues or producing negative views towards organisations which represent interviewees' livelihood). Here, I resonated with González-López's (2011) reflection of "mindful ethics":

> Far from being simply "subjects" participating in a qualitative study, the informants who are willing to share their life histories and stories are human beings with complex everyday lives characterized by unique social circumstances. These life contexts not only reflect mundane everyday circumstances, but are also potentially important aspects of the participants' relationships with us as researchers (p. 448).

Indeed, according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) "seeing interviewing as a social practice encourages researchers to go beyond the micro context of the interview situation" for example, participants requesting being named, "to conceptualize the effects of interviews on the broader cultural context" (p. 354). I extended this notion to the other modes of data I collected; since in the end, the data collated together resulting in the research output itself also constitute a social practice which "at once [are] affected by its social context and can contribute to shaping, supporting, or changing that context" (p. 354). This is, the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu in the case of this study.

Secondly, making research participants' identifiable in the study would have also promoted issues of representations which in turn could have reinforced racial and gender stereotypes towards certain groups of people fostering inequalities and contradicting the decolonial praxis. Whilst ensuring I dealt ethically with this unexpected issue of representation; I simultaneously encountered the methodological constraint of articulating an Indigenous research agenda (Smith 2012) in the research design of my study. To deal with this important dilemma of representation I used Lazard and McAvoy's (2017) strategies mentioned earlier. On the one hand, I employed a "limited disclosure" approach in order to reveal "something meaningful

about the research process" (p. 13) and of 'mindfulness' as the research topic itself, by unpacking the broader context of such particular experiences and perspectives without necessarily presenting the specific private occurrence. For instance, experiences of power dynamics reported by one or many members of an organisation were then exposed as a major tension discussed rather than to be attached to a specific group of individuals within a recognisable workplace. Another way to exemplifying this is the way I dealt with sensitive complaints with regards to access to training programmes abroad which are expensive for practitioners, teachers and researcher living and working in the "Global South". This reflected not only inequality regarding the excess of working hours and lack of resources for professional training due to living and working conditions in Mexico, but the undemocratic status of various 'mindfulness' training programmes in countries of the "Global North".[112]

Thirdly, due to the emergent research design and exploratory nature of this qualitative project, I did not have an anticipated plan regarding my research findings. Besides, my engagement with methodological and analytical strategies common to critical psychology (to examine tensions and dilemmas as well as discourses and the focus on difficult emotional reactions) informed my decision of keeping participants anonymous by using pseudonyms and masking confidential information. Thus, protecting interviewees and myself in two ways. As an 'insider' of the social organisation I studied, I had "ongoing relationships" (Floyd and Arthur 2012, p. 174) with some of my informants which started years before I began my PhD, and so I considered the issues of trust and professional collaboration fundamental.[113] Closely linked to this, I also pondered my professional career as a researcher (Braun and Clarke 2013) and possible unintended consequences resulting from the research as mentioned earlier.

With regards to the "withheld disclosure" strategy; that is, "what researchers choose to reveal or hide from view" (Lazard and McAvoy 2017, p. 14), I found myself manoeuvring constantly in making these choices during the writing process. While I describe these instances in more detail as I present my findings in the analytic chapters, it is worth noting that two major issues arose. The first one related to managing participants' confidentiality and anonymity during the interview interactions since interviewees would either asked me who else was included or

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[112] Although currently there are more organisations and networks of practitioners and teachers (e.g. the Mindfulness and Social Change Network and Mindfulness Network for People of Colour) who are committed to making meditative practices accessible. The dominant and widespread 'mindfulness' programmes and protocols are yet restricted to teachers and practitioners who can financially afford being trained in high-status institutions very often abroad.

[113] Braun and Clarke, (2013) also name it as "dual relationships" (p. 85) and detailed important considerations with regards to interviewing across difference and power dynamics, interviewing strangers versus people the researcher knows, interviewees' distress as well interviewing vulnerable people and people occupying societal positions with greater or lesser power than the researcher's one, which I considered under the lens of intersectionality.

suggest their colleagues be considered in the research; and the second one concerned my positionality as practitioner and teacher of 'mindfulness' beside my roles as a researcher. Having a background as 'mindfulness' practitioner facilitated gaining access to observation sites and sometimes it was almost a 'requirement' expected by the teachers at the ethnographic sites. However, being a participant in the activities also uncovered my vulnerability as researcher (Loughran and Mannay 2018).

It was not easy moving from my heavy experimental psychology background in my undergraduate degree and managing my anxiety for conducting ethically sound social research. While ethical considerations permeate the research process in both fields (i.e. experimental psychology and cultural psychology), specifically, within qualitative research the ethical issues that arise are according to Braun and Clarke (2013) "potentially more uncertain, complex and nuanced … partly because of the fluidity of qualitative research" and because "particular concerns arise … [which] require broader thinking about ethics" (p. 64). In the next final section, I discuss the ethical dilemmas I encountered when I attempted to maintain anonymisation and confidentiality while avoiding diminishing the 'thick description' of my findings.

4.8. Ethical dilemmas and embracing complexity in the bricolage

I carefully thought through the ethical considerations that a bricolage approach has generated in studying 'mindfulness' in Mexico from multiple theoretical, methodological and analytical perspectives. Although I did not find a 'right answer' to the ethical dilemmas nor assumed there was a 'simple solution'. As Guenther (2009) asserts, "these dilemmas are important components of the experiences of conducting fieldwork and presenting and disseminating data, and should not be taken for granted" (p. 412). Hence, I decided to raise this as a research problem because of the implications these dilemmas have had in writing the analysis and research findings.

On the one hand, efforts to anonymise and maintain confidentiality were made at four levels: interviewees' identities, the organisations providing courses and programmes on meditative practices, the type of programmes offered, and the sites where the ethnographic work was conducted. Interviewees were given pseudonyms (except the two historical figures mentioned earlier whose real names were kept), and for the analysis of a public mindfulness conference, I employed the acronym 'MBSP' to disguise the type of Anglo-American MBI I analysed (see Chapter 7). Lazard and McAvoy's (2017) strategies of "limited disclosure" and "withheld

disclosure" were employed (e.g. not presenting demographic data such as age or the geographical locations where people and their organisations were based and describing interviewees' professional backgrounds in general terms only). The organisations mapped through the study sample were also anonymised represented by the alphabet letters in the analysis (Chapter 6). Besides, when online or physical documents related to the organisations or the interviewees' public profiles were analysed, the source of information was replaced using the phrases "Organisation's website" or "Interviewee's document". Finally, the geographical information of the observation sites was blanked out. Even though Mexican territory is extensive, this was an effort to reduce the possibility of identifying interviewees and their organisations through the description of their location and the uniqueness of the social organisation studied and given that the 'mindfulness' milieu in Mexico is relatively small (compared with the Anglo-American 'mindfulness' world).

Deciding carefully on these dilemmas was not an easy task. I struggled with the significance of details that needed to be blanked out or masked. This posed important questions regarding the 'think description' that rigorous research involves, considering also what Macleod and Mnyaka (2018) ponder as "how and if this adds or detracts from the credibility of research" (p. 228) and the limits of anonymisation. Having collected multi-modal data added another level of complexity and given that there were contrasting positions from the different methodological and analytical perspectives I drew on, it was difficult to find a decision that could be in agreement with the multiple perspectives used. It seems to me that while a bricolage approach helps bring an interdisciplinary understanding of a complex phenomenon, it also raises important questions that challenge conducting the qualitative study since guidelines of a 'single' discipline are not followed, questioning the assumptions made when following conventional practices of anonymity and confidentiality (e.g. Macleod and Mnyaka 2018).

Due to the centrality of the Spanish language for gaining insights about the specificity of 'mindfulness' in Mexico, regarding its historical development, the lineages identified and the way it is disseminated and conceptualised by the Mexican interviewees nowadays, I stick to the use and analyse some of the Spanish terms I found during my fieldwork (e.g. REBAP as the Spanish version of MBSR, *alimentación conectada* as a type of 'mindful eating' practice). Pondering both the 'mindful ethics' considerations as well as the ethical dilemmas discussed above, I have tried to attend to the situated negotiation of ethical considerations (Stanley 2004) in my study, carefully thinking of protecting interviewees' identities "at the expense of making convincing, nuanced arguments" (Guenther 2009, p. 413).

The next section constitutes an Epilogue where I discuss 'What is Mexican and what is not?' as my reflexivity account. The Epilogue aims to outline the implications of the insights gained through my reflections and my stance as the researcher, and their relevance for knowledge production about the thesis' topic.[114]

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[114] Stanley's (2004) PhD thesis Epilogue inspired me in introducing my reflective account in this way, although I decided to put it at the end of the methods chapter and as a transition to the empirical chapters of my thesis.

4.9. Epilogue

4.9.1. 'What is Mexican and what is not?' Implications in researching the specificity of Mexican meditative practices

There is a set of questions that arose while conducting my research project. The first question, 'What is it to be Mexican?', relates to my personal experience of living abroad while studying the PhD and the self-reflexive work I have done in relation to my identity as a Mexican woman researcher studying the phenomenon of meditative practices in my own country. I have taken being reflexive as a stance, as "the ability to evaluate the influence of oneself within the very act of knowing (research)" (Popoveniuc 2014, p. 205).[115] Before starting my research, I assumed I knew what is to be 'Mexican' and how I define myself as a 'Mexican woman'. Nevertheless, both the experience of living away from my home country and exploring it with a critical eye have shaken my personal and academic worlds together. Some might be surprised that I came to this moment just now. It could be easy to assume that we develop different levels of 'consciousness' at different stages of our life and in relation to the situations we live in and the conditions we encounter.

Yet, following Moreno Figueroa's (2011) work, this can be largely explained by what she calls "'racist logics' and specifically in the Mexican case, 'mestizaje logics': a variety of strategies of racial differentiation that permeate social life" (p. 135). As she argues, such 'racist logics' have neither been recognised institutionally nor publicly, given that Mexico's own 'racialisation processes' of the (failed) national project of mestizaje, but are still "lived as an individual-embodied experience" (p. 123). I will refer to this as an experience of 'fragmentation' of my identity. In Moreno Figueroa's (2011) analysis, this is considered a space of "ambiguity" and "ambivalence"(p. 124) that can be painfully vivid, explained on the basis that precisely the very notion of 'Mexican identity' (i.e. Mexican as equivalent to *Mestiza*) is problematised as racialised.[116] Needless to say, this project has taken me to a journey of deconstruction[117],

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[115] I decided not to employ Giddens' (1991) theoretical work on the reflexive self since the empirical analysis of my data guided me to investigate the construction of identity, both mine as a researcher and of the phenomenon I study, in a contextualised and situated manner (e.g. see Adams 2010). Stemming from my reflective stance while doing my research (Popoveniuc 2014), I am following an inductive approach using a decolonial framework to explain my findings.

[116] The Spanish term *Mestiza* (feminine) or *Mestizo* (masculine) emerged as a racial category linked to the formation of Mexico as a Nation-State and the myth of *mestizaje* (Chapter 2), as preferred subject of Mexican national identity. As Moreno Figueroa (2011) asserts, *Mestiza(o)* is a polyvalent term, having for instance, relatively 'neutral' associations such as 'all Mexicans are Mestizas/os', being also highly 'loaded' since it denotes both 'inclusion and exclusion to the national myth' (p. 122).

[117] I borrow the concept of 'deconstruction' in the sense of analysing categories and questioning their apparent unity and pre-given meaning, as it is used within intersectional and decolonial research (e.g. Phoenix 2006; Macleod et al. 2020).

which has been far beyond what I expected in both the personal level and my subject matter (i.e. 'mindfulness'); and due to its methodological and analytical implications in my research I thus consider discussing it in depth.

The second question I pose is linked specifically with my attempt to explore and understand the specificity of Mexican meditative practices, which includes a) the features defining what I have initially presumed to be a Mexican 'mindfulness field', and b) the socio-cultural aspects of Mexico that have and continue to shape the delivery of meditative practices and how the Mexican context is also influenced by meditative practices. In other words, in what way can 'Mexican meditative practices' be characterised as such? And who are the Mexican pioneers who have introduced and disseminated these practices across different sectors? As I progressed in the analysis of my data and writing up, I realised that the third question 'What is Mexican and what is not?' came up as a fundamental matter; very much aligned with the deconstruction of my identity as a 'Mexican woman' and the investigation of what makes meditative practices to resemble 'Mexican'. While this third question could be an investigation of a whole thesis itself, problematising it sheds light on important themes for explaining the complexity and the specificity of the Mexican meditative practices milieu.

Inspired by the work of Walkerdine et al. (2001) in their psychosocial explorations of gender and class in young girls in Britain, I have turned to the analysis of strong emotions and feelings such as anger and frustration as they have emerged during almost the entire research process but with a heightened incidence at the fieldwork and the data analysis period. This approach has allowed me to acknowledge the fact that, as an insider of the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu due to my three-fold positionality as 'mindfulness' practitioner, facilitator, and researcher, I also carried with me a professional biography and history during my fieldwork. This happened in different ways and with different emphasis in my encounters with my research participants throughout the interviews' dynamics and during the participant observation I conducted in various sites. I shall explain the situatedness and fluidity of my insider-outsider positions as I address the different case studies to discuss my findings; but for now, it is important to state how relevant it was to record the affective reactions in my fieldnotes during my fieldwork as well as to attend to them as I analysed my data. As Walkerdine et al. (2001) state when discussing Jennifer Hunt's (1989) work, "the essential aspect of using psychoanalysis as a tool is that the researcher herself is the primary instrument of enquiry" (p. 86). In my research, this refers to the self-reflexivity of my identity as a 'Mexican woman' and practitioner, facilitator,

and researcher of meditative practices.[118] Also, this analysis considers the emotional reactions that emerged all the way through the research process in interconnection with interviewees' subjectivities (e.g. care, trust) also interwoven with the socio-cultural and historical aspects of Mexican society; to deepen the analysis of the patterns and themes noticed in the way in which meditative practices are taught and disseminated in Mexico. Considering this is that the psychosocial approach I draw on recognises the imbrication of the psychic, the social and cultural (Walkerdine et al. 2001).

In turn, I shall explore firstly my encounter with introspective practices such as *atención plena* and *consciencia corporal* (body consciousness), and how this occurred *in the margins* of my professional training as a psychologist with a strong influence of positivistic underpinnings and quantitative approach to research. Secondly, by reflecting on my assumptions about being a 'Mexican woman' and how this linked to my upbringing in a particular economic, political social, and cultural context. I conclude by pointing out the implications my reflections have had in researching the specificity of Mexican meditative practices.

4.9.2. 'Mindful journey' and reflexivity – changing positions

Reflexivity was not part of my professional training as a psychologist, at least not as it is employed within social sciences research (Popoveniuc 2014). My training as a psychologist was strongly founded in looking at psychological phenomena as objective entities that can be measured and which therefore required experimental or quasi-experimental research designs to study them and assess the impact of interventions. This was the perspective that predominated and still prevails in my former university which also reflects a broader trend of psychology as a discipline.[119] However, during my psychology degree I simultaneously became familiar with the practices of *atención plena* and *consciencia corporal* (body consciousness) (Chapter 1) which allowed me to work introspectively with my bodily sensations, thoughts and beliefs, as well as emotion regulation; as it taught me to become aware of some of my beliefs, emotional reactions and automatic response. My engagement with such 'novel' psychological paradigm' occurred *in the margins* of the mainstream and mandatory curriculum taught within my Psychology Faculty in Mexico in a group led by female psychologists. It was the first time indeed that, as a psychologist in training, I became closer to my 'inner world'. Paradoxically, only clinical psychologists like psychotherapists and

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[118] Unlike Walkerdine at al. (2001) who employed psychoanalysis as a research tool and theoretical lenses, I used the Researcher's Identity Map (Jacobson and Mustafa 2019) as a reflexivity tool to aid my analysis as discussed in Chapter 4, drawing also on intersectional analyses (see Chapter 6).
[119] It is not the intention to review here the history development of Psychology as a discipline (see for example Freedheim and Weiner 2013).

psychoanalysts must adhere to a personal psychotherapy or analysis processes as part of their own training and good practice when seeing patients (Sociedad Mexicana de Psicología [SMP] 2009).[120] Still, the prominence of experimental psychological work, as well as clinical psychology based on cognitive and behavioural sciences in the Faculty of Psychology have overshadowed any possibility of even approaching the study of subjectivity or engaging with an introspective practice as an important enterprises of psychological practice and research. As Morawski (2005) states, "objectivity is avowed in scientific method demanded either the total eradication or practical irrelevance of self-consciousness" (p. 81). And as I will describe in Chapter 5, this has been the environment within which the development of meditative practices in Mexico has occurred: *at the margins*.

Although at the periphery of psychological knowledge and more established perspectives within the Faculty of Psychology where I studied, I found *atención plena* as a radical practice. On the one hand, I found it conflicting being trained in a profession which, broadly speaking, aims to deepen in the understanding of the mind and behaviour and where we are expected to be working with individuals, groups, and communities across different settings. But simultaneously, encouraged us to be distanced from our own subjective experience; or in other words, "the discipline's disregard for the problems of reflexivity" (Morawski 2005, p. 78). So the practice of *atención plena* was radical to me since it aided the development of a 'mindful journey' into questioning my own beliefs and assumptions, many of which were strongly culturally influenced and hard to navigate without such introspection and relational practices for self-knowledge.[121]

On the other hand, the practice of *atención plena* did not permeate my approach to the research process as such, since my experience was largely related to the translation and validation of scales to measure *atención plena* in the Mexican population and to design studies to assess the impact of the practice on different psychological variables such as academic stress, emotion regulation, among others. This has changed during the last few years where I have worked to develop further a 'mindful inquiry' approach (Bentz and Shapiro 1998) following my ambivalent feelings towards 'mindfulness' (see Chapter 1). So, while training as a social scientist, I have turned towards my subjectivity (Loughran and Mannay 2018),

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[120] However, to become a psychoanalyst in Mexico, the psychology student must undertake training in an external institution since psychoanalysis does not figure within the psychology curriculum and its scientific dominant perspective.

[121] Although we practised *atención plena* individually, the work on body consciousness and the application of *atención plena* in certain activities was done in a relational way such as in pairs, triads and in group dynamics. Expanding on this point goes beyond the focus of the thesis.

employing reflexivity practice to investigate the topic of meditative practices in my cultural context.

Throughout the research process, I realised how my position as a researcher and the critical reflexive stance I have adopted has conflicted with my positions as a 'mindfulness' practitioner and teacher. A clear example of this relates to having felt uncomfortable upon the realisation of the 'spiritual/religious' associations made in some of the activities where meditative practices were disseminated (i.e. public conferences, seminars and meditation retreats) which I observed or had taken part during my fieldwork (Chapters 7 and 8). This brought to my attention the tensions that emerge from delivering 'mindfulness' across settings and considering the public versus private sectors, and the wider socio-cultural Mexican milieu (Stanley et al. 2018b). As I said before (Chapter1), as a practitioner, I was not too concerned about this conflict between 'spirituality/religiosity' and 'secularity'.

Noticing the overlapping of positions and social identity in both my personal experience and my interviewees' biographical narratives prompted me to explore this topic further in my research. As I shall exemplify (Chapter 6), this theme explains the current Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu as well as some of the main tensions found in the provision of meditative practices in Mexico. Hence, the reflexive stance (Popoveniuc 2014) employed appears as crucial in generating insights about my research topic and as such "becomes central to the exercise of building knowledge" (Lazard and McAvoy 2017, p. 15). Methodologically speaking, "the reflexive management of these issues allows for an exploration of what studies can or cannot tell us about the topic and why that might be" (p. 14), as well as situating the ethical dilemmas that also arise from such tensions and my multiple positions as a researcher (Chapter 4). In the next section, I delve into the self-reflection of my identity as 'Mexican'.

4.9.3. Initial explorations of my identity as a Mexican woman

While studying abroad, I have been questioned on my physical features for not looking very 'Mexican' rather like a Greek female or one with Middle Eastern origins. On many occasions, I was left with feelings of frustration after people failed to see me as 'Mexican' as I would expect, or when they seemed to be clueless of what to say when I asked – when I was not too shy – what would they imagine me as to be 'Mexican'? I locate being trapped in such resentment because I found it hard to understand why people would not identify me as 'Mexican' and what would their expectations be as to recognize someone as 'Mexican'?

On the one hand, one of the major and painful insights I have had is the fact that my skin colour, as well as family history (my compound last name reveals the Spanish descendance within my family tree), distance me from what I naively considered to be a 'truly Mexican' identity. I was born in a Catholic middle-class family in Mexico City, an urban area where my twin sister and I have the privilege to attend private education (under a scholarship scheme to pay the fees) until secondary school where we studied English as a foreign language. And later the opportunity to get into a public, yet renowned University to continue further and higher education. Nevertheless, as for the deconstruction of my identity as 'Mexican female' I recognise a subjective experience of 'fragmentation'; feeling somehow lost in navigating what is it to be a Mexican and with a sense of 'lost identity', for both not being identified as 'Mexican' and for not being the 'truly Mexican' I assumed I was.

On the other hand, depending on the geographical location, i.e. being in Mexico or the UK, I could appear to be either "white" for some or seen as belonging to "people of colour" groups. I do not sit comfortably with this binary categorisation since, I believe, it does not allow me to accurately describe the complexity of my experience with regards to my identity as Mexican of Spanish descent.[122] In retrospect, I do not remember identifying myself as a 'Mestiza' at any point in my life. It troubles me to think that, while the homogenising project of mestizaje has been so pervasive in creating the Mestiza as the 'ideal' representing national Mexican identity, I hardly relate my experience to such a categorisation. I assumed a sense of 'Mexicanness' highly articulated around Mexican citizenship and my appreciation of social-cultural aspects. But even then, as a girl, I recall feeling uneasy about my compound last name of Spanish origin, since I experienced it as threatening to my sense of belonging as 'Mexican'. It has been until recently that I have experienced a 'fragmentation' of my identity, occasioned partly by the external assessment of my physical features based on stereotypes and views on looking or not like 'Mexican' while living in the UK, and the interiorization of assumptions which I have never critically reflected on before.[123]

The situatedness of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002) and the reflection on the 'fragmentation' of my identity as 'Mexican' was significant throughout the research process. The latter arose

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[122] I have not yet explored the Basque ethnic root in my family in depth. However, I am aware that the Basque country from where my great grandfather came from, is considered an Indigenous community (Minority Rights Group International 2018).

[123] I argue that this sense of 'Mexicanness' cannot be only understood rationally from the racializing and political point of view of the homogenisation project of Mexican identity, that of mestiza, but as affectively experienced and lived. Yet, this has been rarely explored as Moreno Figueroa (2011) points out. I consider that this affective bond with Mexican culture explains a sense of 'Mexicanness' by the interviewees who originally were born abroad but have embraced and expressed such affinity by living in Mexico.

significantly during my fieldwork when I experienced mixed feelings when my 'insider' position as 'Mexican' was challenged during my participation in one of the sites, and when I also faced a dilemma questioning my position as 'outsider' to enter the 'field' in another case. As Moreno Figueroa (2011) argues, "identifying oneself as racialised is problematic, be it Mestiza, Indígena Afro-Mexican or 'white'" (p. 143). Although the question of how to take political action remains for Moreno Figueroa, the analysis of mestizaje as not only as a "hegemonic political ideology, a cultural, social and racial promise of equality" but also as a "racialised experience, or a *racist logic* that distributes privilege and exclusion within everyday life" (Moreno Figueroa 2011, p. 143) is analytically helpful allowing the visibility of such '*racist logics*' reproduced in wider ideologies and power structures such as discourse practices about meditative practices (see Chapter 8).

While articulating an answer to the question 'What is Mexican and what is not?' goes beyond the aim of this thesis, so far, my reflexive account shows two things. Firstly, that the study of 'mindfulness' in a context of the "Global South" such as the case of Mexico, is linked to issues of identity and taking seriously discourses and practices of neo-colonial and internal colonialism. Secondly, rather than "essentialising" (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010; Figueroa Moreno 2011) or determining how meditative practices can be characterised as 'Mexican', my thesis explores some of the specificities of meditative practices as they are taught in contemporary Mexico. Thus, my reflective account rounds the discussion started in Chapter 2 about decolonising myself in the process of conducting this research, simultaneously providing the ground to transit to the discussion of my findings in the next empirical chapters.

Chapter 5: The Historical Unfolding of Meditative Practices in Mexico

5.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. On the one hand, it describes the *emic* conceptualisations of meditative practices that Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers conveyed in the interviews. In doing so, the chapter illustrates the ways in which these meanings have been entangled with the historical unfolding of these practices in Mexico and its situated socio-cultural and linguistic context, as it was uncovered in the analysis of documents and archives. With this historical analysis, I respond to my first research question *1. How have meditative practices emerged and evolved in Mexico according to interviewees' accounts and document analysis?* And sub-question *1.1 What are the emic conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context?* Before addressing the distinctive 'mindfulness' interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992) identified in the data, I first turn to explain the justification for conducting this historical analysis, the methodology and analytic strategy followed.

5.2. Rationale for conducting a historical analysis

"A place on the map is a place in history" (Ric 1986 p. 212)[124]

During my fieldwork, I had a particular fascination with the intersection between interviewee's professional biographies and the historical dissemination and implementation of meditative practices in Mexico. I explored a few alternatives such as life and oral history (e.g. Plummer 2001) for analysing my data, but I found it challenging to "fitting" such methodological and analytic perspectives in the larger design of my study. Initially, I was interested in describing interviewee's backgrounds and journeys, understanding how the individuals and the institutions where they work were organised in a larger 'milieu' (see Chapter 6). Simultaneously, I was interested in the way in which interviewees' biographies and journeys, including my professional biography, were historically, socially, and culturally situated in the context of Mexico; and what the analysis of these intertwined histories could tell us about Mexican 'mindfulness'. Specifically, how meditation practices are understood by this Mexican sample and how such conceptualisations emerged.

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[124] As cited in Mendieta (2000, p. 117).

The data analysis in this chapter was informed by the biographical approach taken to conduct my interviews (Chapter 4) because I was concerned with articulating a historical narrative from the point of view of the research participants. Additionally, I also retrieved and analysed documents and archives from different sources (online and multiple physical sites) which allowed me to access information for those historical figures whom I was not able to interview (as explained Chapter 4) and to also contrast the findings from the interview data. My analysis is therefore partial as it is constrained to the views of the participants of my thesis; as well as for the documents and archives I had access to. Besides, Wetherell and Potter's (1992) interpretative repertoires as a discursive strategy used to interpret the *emic* conceptualisations I found, is situated and "sensitive to linguistic nuances" (Wetherell and Potter 1988, p. 183), and so the meanings uncovered are contextualised in relation to my study sample.[125]

As part of my analysis, I used timelines based on participants' biographies as an analytic tool (see Chapter 4) to trace their trajectories (i.e. regarding their encounter with 'mindfulness' and other meditation practices and their training backgrounds), and to also track the milestones that occurred chronologically in the context of Mexico. The interviewees' timelines helped me to synthesize what I was finding both as common and distinctive events in participants' biographies, linking these with the wider historical development in Mexico. In this way, I noticed turns, differences, and gaps, concerning circumstances that have made possible the emergence of these practices in specific settings, instead of just assuming a chronological and linear historical evolution.

While is true that I do not have a training background as a historian and I do not pretend to be one, the particularities of my subject matter have required me to bring a historical perspective in my research for three different reasons. One "easier justification", as Richards (2010) puts it, "is simply that we cannot understand the present situation without knowing something about how and why it arose" (p. 8). Indeed, when I initially conducted my literature review, I found no comprehensive research looking at the phenomenon of 'mindfulness' and its spread across Mexico nor about the way it was being taught in different sectors. During my thesis-writing period, I only found Gómez Rodríguez's (2019) book written in Spanish on the analysis of Buddhist meditation as an antecedent of some contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches

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[125] Wetherell and Potter (1992) define interpretative repertoires as "broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images … we can talk about these things as system of signification and as the building block used for manufacturing versions of action, self and social structures in talk" (p. 90). In my study, I identified the repertoires based on the different Spanish terms used to conceptualise 'mindfulness', the nature of the interpretative resources employed (e.g. the psychological language attached to their meanings), and their function (i.e. distancing Mexican conceptualisations from the Anglo-American MBIs, and challenging dominant histories of 'mindfulness').

such as Anglo-American MBIs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, his analysis only comprised texts which mainly were from Anglo-American and European sources, while only one reference was made about work conducted in Mexico (i.e. Martínez Ruiz 2015). Therefore, in attempting to describe the present configuration of people and organisations disseminating and teaching meditative practices across Mexican sectors, I also had to look back and understand its antecedents as well as the context where it had emerged. Concurrently, this also appeared to be a meaningful way of understanding both the people and social organisations disseminating and implementing these practices in the wider context of Mexico, as I will point out in Chapter 6. Finally, although at a glance there might be a similarity between the historical approach I undertook to Foucault's "history of the present" (Gutting 1990, p. 328), it is important to state that the analysis I conducted is sensitive to uncover the colonial as well as the neo- and internal colonial layers that have influenced the dissemination and development of 'mindfulness' in Mexican settings. Instead of investigating the genealogies of discourses and the structures in which these have been articulated (Bastalich 2009). Yet, I have engaged with a critical historiography perspective (Fox Lee 2019) in the analysis and description of the *emic* conceptualisations found in my data.

I employed my decolonial theoretical framework to articulate an account that is based on the histories and experiences of Mexican practitioners, teachers and researchers, either currently living in Mexico or maintaining a meaningful and strong relationship through their work in delivering meditative practices in the country.[126] This links to my second reason for investigating the historical development of these practices in Mexico under this framework: mainly documenting unheard and hidden voices to articulate local histories (Mignolo 2012). The scientific literature about 'mindfulness' including the historical revision of its dissemination has been produced mainly from the Anglo-American perspective (Wilson 2014; Drage 2018a; Kucinskas 2019; Pagis 2019). I hardly found any studies documenting this social phenomenon in Mexico nor in Spanish apart from Gómez Rodríguez's (2019) work. Thus the need to give voice to people whose accounts have been unrepresented in the scientific literature and which remained unknown until today.

My approach to the historical analysis was also influenced by the feminist perspective in emphasising the role that women have been having in the endeavour of bringing these practices to different settings in Mexico, which has been largely overlooked. Also, I highlight the challenges this poses in terms of the coloniality of gender (Lugones 2010) within the

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[126] As I will explain in Chapter 6, the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu has an important transnational feature due to Mexicans living abroad but actively working in Mexico too.

Mexican meditative practices milieu. Finally, the third reason underpinning my historical investigation relates to the critical and psychosocial perspectives I embrace with the broader objective in contributing with my research work to the field of cultural psychology and specifically to Mexican indigenous psychology. This entails, psychology's commitment to addressing the historical and contextual production of psychological knowledge in alignment with a perspective of psychology that honours the idea that history is also part of the discipline (Richards 2010; Teo 2015). Firstly, by situating the researcher's subjectivity in conducting research (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Loughran and Mannay 2018), and secondly, to embrace the indigenisation of psychology (Pickren 2009; Pavón-Cuéllar 2020a). As for the contribution of this chapter, its main aim is to generating knowledge from perspectives within Mexico i.e. exploring participants' meanings of 'mindfulness', thus challenging 'universal' and dominant mainstream histories.

As a final but important note with regards to maintaining research participants' anonymity and confidentiality. As explained in Chapter 4, I have pondered this decision considering the tensions arising from the diverse theoretical, methodological, and analytic perspectives underpinning my research under my bricolage approach, as well as the shortcomings this decision entails. Above all, I have guided my choice based on the ethical considerations of possible unintended outcomes of my research which Richards (2010) concisely sums up:

> The psychologist is not outside the things which he or she studies, not an external 'objective' observer of the human psyche, but an active participant in the collective psychological life of their community, culture and, ultimately, species. This means that what psychologists say and do, the theories, images and models of the psychological they devise and promote, have, …, real consequences for everybody else. They are in an even weaker position than physical scientists to disclaim responsibility for what society does with what they produce, for even in producing it they are participating in this collective social psychological process (p. 7).

In the sections that follow, I introduce my thesis findings to answer my research question *1.* and sub-questioned *1.1* stated above. A key overall finding is that there is no sole 'mindfulness' conceptualisation in the Mexican meditative practices milieu. I have used the interpretative repertoire analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988; 1992) to organise such different conceptualisations sensitive to the use of Spanish and the cultural meanings attached to them. As it is demonstrated throughout the chapter, participants' conceptualisations of meditative practices have had a distinctive history in the Mexican context, which contest importantly the taken-for-granted definitions widely spread in the Anglophone scientific literature.

5.3. Discursive repertoires of meditative practices in Mexico

Although in her analysis regarding the role of *atención consciente* ('mindfulness') as a silent revolution in contemporary education Martínez Ruiz (2015) did not present empirical data collected in Mexico; the author underscores the risks of incorporating the English concept 'mindfulness' uncritically, since this could either makes us "take its meaning for granted" or "to make this term a kind of bag where everything fits" (p. 13). As I found during my fieldwork, meditation practitioners, teachers, and researchers in Mexico articulate various definitions of 'mindfulness' and have indeed, critically questioned the usage of the English term 'mindfulness'.

The notion that participants conceptualise differently the practices they teach was explicitly voiced by interviewees themselves. Thus the 'variability' of definition was an *emic* concern. For instance, I was told "the concept about mindfulness a person who has studied Buddhism for 20 years has, is maybe very dissimilar from that of someone who is in the field of research and psychology" (male, middle-aged MBI teacher). I wondered: how can I make sense of these variations? How can they be differentiated? While in the literature review chapter I examined the etic definitions based on the psychological and medical discourses (i.e. MBIs such as MBSR, MBCT and MBPM) and the Buddhist scholars' historical revisions of the Pali term *sati*, it was clear that such binary categorisation did not account for discursive repertoires my interviewees draw on and the complex context within which these are situated.

In my analysis, I identified a multiplicity of repertoires some of which draw on wider contemporary debates on the ethical foundations of 'mindfulness' (Stanley et al. 2018b). That is, either conceptualising 'mindfulness' as a) a Buddhist-inspired practice embedded in a larger ethical and moral framework (Kirmayer 2015; Stanley 2013), versus 2) a 'universal' practice which can be applied across cultures (also Kirmayer 2015) sometimes referred to as 'contemplative practices' among my interviewees. Yet, I also identified that the way some of these repertoires have been articulated in certain contexts such as psychotherapy and educational settings relied on the use of larger theoretical frameworks, such as mind-body therapies and socio-emotional learning skills, respectively. Secondly, and more crucially, the analysis of interviewees' accounts also highlighted that such repertoires are socially and culturally situated since they are dependent upon the use of Spanish.[127]

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[127] These Spanish terms are *atención plena*, *atención consciente*, and *plena consciencia;* firstly introduced in Chapter 1 and which I will clarify as I present the interpretative repertoires.

While the linguistic nuances have been an important feature for some interviewees in their conceptualisation and characterisation of the courses and programmes that they have adapted to the Mexican context, I also found that other interviewees articulate repertoires in which they distance their conceptualisations from the popularised definition based on the English term 'mindfulness' as, in Jon Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme, thus contesting dominant historical accounts. Nevertheless, an interpretive repertoire of 'mindfulness' as an umbrella term was also uncovered. This repertoire was difficult to characterise as it was loosely articulated revealing contradictory views between participants' accounts (where they resist using the English term 'mindfulness') versus its usage on documents and public websites disseminated by interviewees and their organisations where it served as a marketing function.[128]

5.4. Unveiling the specificity of Mexican 'mindfulness'

The historical review of participants' biographies and professional journeys in encountering meditative practices in the Mexican context and the articulation of their *emic* conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' uncovered two things. At least three relevant hidden histories. The first two related stories account for the introduction of Buddhist meditation - known by participants in Mexico as *atención plena* - during Erich Fromm's presence in Mexico and continued with the work of one of his direct disciples, the Mexican psychiatrist Alejandro Córdova Córdova. The third story concerns the experimental work on consciousness and human communication developed by the Mexican psychologist Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum, who introduced the concept of *meditación autoalusiva* [self-regarded meditation]. These important milestones in the Mexican context have been however, obscured by the pervasive Anglo-American conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' innovated by Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues.[129] I now turn to the discussion of the specificity of Mexican 'mindfulness' concerning the Spanish language.

In contrast with the two words employed in the English language (i.e. mindful and mindfulness), the linguistic diversity to conceptualise this practice in Spanish is rather complex demonstrating that there is not *the* mindfulness concept, but rather a diverse array of conceptualisations. Indeed, the meanings of the three main different Spanish terms used to speak about and disseminate 'mindfulness' in Mexico are conveyed in discourse in different

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[128] Some participants commented that even though they resisted to couple their work with the ideas of the Anglo-American 'mindfulness' or Kabat-Zinn's perspective, 'mindfulness' was a word popularised in the public and therefore play a function to broadly frame and publicise their work.

[129] The analysis will show that the emergence and dissemination of meditative practices in the case of Mexico was made a fertile field *at the margins* of psy-disciplines, and this process has gradually taking these practices to mainstream psychology.

ways. On the one hand, the Spanish terms themselves are the combination of different words in the Spanish language which uncoupled have their own connotation: 1) first I found *atención* [attention] + *plena* [full], literally meaning *atención plena* [full attention]; 2) *s*econd, there is *atención* [attention] + *consciente* [conscious] forming *atención consciente* [conscious attention]; finally 3) the third variation, *plena* [full] + *consciencia* [consciousness] denoting *plena consciencia* [full consciousness]*;* which unlike the two previous ones, does not refer to 'attention' itself, but rather to 'consciousness' (also translated as awareness in English).[130] On the other hand*,* studying closely the subtle differences in the Spanish words is relevant due to the linguistic and socio-cultural particularities of Mexico as well as for the understanding of the way interviewees use in practice these conceptualisations. The different repertoires discussed below will illustrate the type of "psychological language" articulated in relation to 'mindfulness' exploring the historical context where such concepts have emerged (Danzinger 1997).

5.5. The *atención consciente* repertoire

When the Spanish word *consciente* is used as an adjective, it can be used to refer either to perception or knowledge of the self and the surroundings (e.g. being aware or being conscious of) or as related to ethical and moral matters, that is, conscience (e.g. a person "is aware of something or becomes aware of it, especially its own actions and their consequences", RAE 2019). These meanings indicate that there is an ethical framework surrounding the use of this Spanish adjective as in term 2: *atención consciente*. When the word is used as a noun, there is a theoretical distinction highlighted by the presence or absence of an "s" in the spelling. That is *conciencia* in reference to the moral aspect [conscience] and *consciencia* meaning perception or knowledge [awareness], in a more general sense. However, such distinction is not always the case in practice because the simplest spelling is preferred (RAE 2005). Arguably this is also conflicting in spoken discourse where the situated context should be therefore analysed. Finally, as for the use of the terms in the psychological language it is understood as the "ability of the human being to be aware of itself and its surrounding" (DEM 2020b) and commonly discussed in relation to other mental processes (e.g. attention, language, perception, memory, and metacognition).

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[130] None of the Spanish terms has been incorporated in the official dictionaries of the Spanish language yet, nor in the Mexican Spanish Dictionary (Diccionario del Español de México [DEM] 2020a) neither in The Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española [RAE] 2020). Interestingly, the translation of the English word 'mindfulness' into Spanish rendered by the Cambridge Dictionary is *consciencia plena* (2020), one that is rarely used in scientific literature on the topic or by the research participants.

As for the first repertoire identified across the interviewees' accounts, the preference for *atención consciente* over *atención plena* was fundamental not only for the crucial reference to the mental psychological processes implicated in interviewees' conceptualisations but also for differentiation it made between Kabat-Zinn's MBSR school and the approaches interviewees have adapted. For instance, Diego, a male middle-aged psychotherapist, stated "it is not just *atención plena* [full attention] on something without judgment"; instead, as he continued, "it is about 'why would it be important to pay attention in this way? What is it connecting us with? It connects us with our consciousness; and with aspects of our consciousness that have a deeper meaning". Here, being *consciente* [conscious] is expressed as a reflection process that accompanies the 'mere act' of bringing attention to an object, posing questions about the wider context in which such 'act' is accomplished. It might make people question not only the value of the practice but its consequences, or it might also lead her to 'connect with' possibly inner, profound, or transcendental matters. Besides, it could be argued that in Diego's account there is a delinking from Kabat-Zinn's view of 'mindfulness' and its key definitions of the 'non-judgmental aspect in bringing attention to the present moment' (see Kabat-Zinn 1990; 1994b); since he argues for what is beyond such non-judgemental quality.

Itzel, a young psychologist, 'mindfulness' teacher and researcher explained that while *atención consciente* "has a component of being present with what is happening to you" it also entails "being conscious; like going one step further. You don´t just realise something; for instance, that you are angry, but you choose what to do with your anger". She related 'being conscious' with a broader ethical framework where one "it is not just aware of where your attention is, but aware of your emotions, actions and their impact", emphasising the involvement of decision-making processes when attending to inner experience such as emotions. In that sense, Itzel argued, "it is not only about training your attention or being merely in the present moment". In a similar way, Carla, a female senior psychotherapist, 'mindfulness' teacher and researcher underscored the 'conscientious attribute' to the practice of *atención consciente*. According to Carla, it entails a higher level of mental activity processes such as introspection and metacognition, rather than simply attending the mental content fully (in *atención plena*) or in the present moment

> I decided to talk about atención consciente in a reflective way. Because even if you are, say, "following the thread of your ideas", you are attending them fully, but not consciously. I mean, atención consciente is the choice that you make to pay attention to an object and keep your attention there, right? And if you realise, it is a little bit different from what is said about atención plena. What this [latter] proposal says is: attend to the present moment. But in atención consciente, there is a choice to maintain [your attention] and not take it as a habit; but *to be aware that you want to pay attention*; and that you are carrying out an introspection, or monitoring, from a metacognition perspective (emphasis added).

In her account, Carla contended that such introspective process is not explicitly trained within the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh's perspective; at least, as it is associated with the development of Kabat-Zinn's work on MBSR.[131] And because of this, Carla reported preferring instead the "didactic or pedagogical strategies and organisation [of the practice] used within the Tibetan Buddhist perspective". This repertoire is particularly interesting since, from the point of view of Kabat-Zinn's most cited definition in the scientific literature; that is, "the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 1994b, p. 4), there is not a connotation to a 'conscientious or conscious attitude' as it occurs when the Spanish term *atención consciente* is used discursively, nor a link to a form of introspection. Indeed, as argued by Buddhist scholars and cultural commentators, this has been one of the major critiques to modern Anglo-American 'mindfulness' interventions since it is argued that the 'non-judgmental' element removes any ethical framework for the use of the practice; decontextualizing it form the ethical and moral framework from which it initially originated (Gethin 2011; Purser and Loy 2013; Purser 2019). Even then, the debates around this have rapidly developed in the "Global North" as it has been argued that there is an "ethical approach" (e.g. William and Kabat-Zinn 2013 cited in Mindful Nation UK 2015, p. 72) in the contemporary Anglo-American MBIs. These debates seem to be articulated differently in the Mexican milieu, as the meaning and use of the Spanish terms will reveal.

Although this first repertoire is not the only one where interviewees distanced themselves from Kabat-Zinn's mainstream 'mindfulness' definition, it is relevant to mention that according to interviewees' accounts, the reflection process and the 'conscientious or conscious attitude' articulated to this *atención consciente* conceptualisation seems to be having an important impact on the ground. For instance, in his interview account, Victor, a middle-aged Buddhist meditation practitioner and teacher and PhD researcher recalled an anecdote about a conversation he had with Jon Kabat-Zinn. Victor was interested in exploring the "core elements" that made MBSR effective from "Jon's perspective"; since he was designing an intervention "for alleviating stress at the workplace". Victor described it as follows:

> He told me, "look, first is to recognise the role that you have in your experience of stress, right? So stress depends on how you interpret with your mind". That is the first one. "Second, recognising that you have the internal resources to deal with stress;

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[131] It is important to highlight that, although seldomly the Spanish terms *atención consciente* and *atención plena* are employed indistinctively in the scientific literature on 'mindfulness' in Spanish, *atención plena* is the term that in the Spanish-speaking world is strongly linked to Kabat-Zinn's 8-week MBSR programme. This was certainly the case for most of the Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers I interviewed although they would equally see the English term 'mindfulness' associated with MBSR. In my study sample, Thich Nhat Hanh's lineage and its Buddhist Order of Interbeing was also distinctly connected to one of the Spanish terms presented above.

[and] three, that you apply them" … [Victor then paraphrased Jon's words] One is the recognition that your mind plays a very important role. Two, that you have internal resources; that is, you can say that you can develop internal competencies to deal with stress; and three, that you know how to apply it right? … I absolutely agree with him.

Yet, what the interviewee found extraordinary, as he recalled, was that Jon "did not mention mindfulness". Nevertheless, as they continued their conversation around the time that participants are asked to practice meditation daily at home as well as the teacher's role in inspiring participants to keep their meditation practice, Victor argued for the relevance of the "reflection or analysis process" in the effectiveness of the interventions. The self-reflection process for example, "identifying what your patterns are, why do you get stress? And how are you relating to your experience?" is central according to Victor and his revision of the literature regarding cognitive therapy effective interventions. However, according to Victor's interview account where he recalled his meeting with "Jon", the latter stated that for him reflection was not part of the "core elements" in his MBSR intervention. This is because "people in the US are too much in their heads, and I'm anti-reflection". Victor strongly disagreed with Jon in this regard, because from Victor's experience, if teachers rely on people practising sitting meditating daily 'only' they expect to lose about 70% of the people in courses. Therefore, Victor underscored the importance of self-reflection or analysis as core elements to be considered. This account evidence how meditative practices are conceptualised differently in the context of Mexico.

Finally, a male middle-aged psychotherapist, 'mindfulness' practitioner and PhD researcher reported that the model he has been developing involves an "emphasis on metacognition". For Vicente, this involves that participants at his courses practise a particular technique of "labelling"; which "allows them to *concientizar* [make aware] or in other words, create metacognitive awareness" about their experience. Vicente argued that this is "a construct currently being proposed as the global mechanism of action in mindfulness" and his research focuses on investigating a model in the Mexican population that emphasises learning the development of this metacognitive awareness.[132] This *atención consciente* interpretative repertoire was predominantly voiced among interviewees (Carla, Diego, Itzel, Victor and Vicente) who have a strong background in psychology and who also have been engaged with

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[132] I employed "mindfulness" in Vicente's quote because he used the English term. However, his conceptualisation was still encompassed under the *atención consciente* repertoire due to the emphasis given to the metacognitive aspect. However, Vicente also argued having no major interest in the terminology, "what matters to me is that people understand it. If they already know a term, I prefer to use that term; and if there is confusion or ambiguity, then clarify". This statement is an example of the repertoire of 'mindfulness' as an umbrella term since the interviewee reported having 'accommodated' in practice, the programme he teaches to people's preconceptions.

the development of scientific research along with the adaptation of the courses and programmes.

Unlike the term *atención consciente*, the translation *atención plena* tends to be highly associated with the Anglo-American 'mindfulness movement' as 'originated' by Kabat-Zinn's MBSR school (Fox Lee 2019).[133] Interestingly, however, as I discovered in the *atención plena* repertoire across interviewees' accounts and the analysis of documents and archives, the conceptualisation of *atención plena* also has a different, yet lesser-known history.

5.6. Contesting 'mindfulness' history: The *atención plena* repertoire

Here, I refer particularly to *atención plena* in Spanish understood as a Buddhist-inspired meditation practice in contrast with the use of 'mindfulness' from the Anglophone perspective, specifically associated with the Anglo-American MBIs (e.g. MBSR, MBCT and MBPM). As I shall demonstrate, the description of this interpretive repertoire challenges dominant histories regarding the emergence of 'mindfulness' in non-Anglophone contexts. In the case of Mexico, it reveals the important influence that Mexican psychiatrists and psychoanalytic circles had in the importation of Buddhist meditation in particular Zen at first, and later, Vipassana meditation informed by the Theravada Buddhist tradition. These findings overlap with recent critical historical reviews of the US scene (Harrington and Dunne 2015; Helderman 2019).

5.6.1. Building bridges: Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism

One significant event as referred to in international research on the expansion of Buddhism to the 'West' is the visit of Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki to Mexico (Fields 1992; Kostner 2018). However, as Baumann and Prebish (2002) mentioned, "the brief accounts [that] exist of Buddhists and Buddhist activities" regarding places such as Mexico are "too scarce and occasional" (p. 6). Besides, such accounts rarely elaborate comprehensively on what such encounters have meant in the case of Mexico (for exceptions, see Derbez 1981; Funk 2000; Silva García 2006). Suzuki was a Japanese Buddhist scholar and translator working at Columbia University who popularised Zen Buddhism in the US. In August 1957, he also visited Mexico to participate in the one-week seminar on "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis",

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[133] Consider that, for example, the term *atención plena* was chosen for the translation of Kabat-Zinn's books into Spanish (e.g. the bestseller "Coming to Our Senses. Healing ourselves and the World through Mindfulness" (2005) was plainly named "*La Práctica de la Atención Plena*" (2007), literally 'The Practice of Atención Plena'). Besides, in the translation of MBSR into Spanish, the programme has been systematically named in accordance with the *atención plena* term, that is, REBAP (*Reducción de Estrés Basada en Atención Plena*) as explained in Chapter 3.

organised by Erich Fromm and the Psychoanalysis Department of UNAM Medical Faculty.[134] This event marked the development of psychoanalysis in Mexico as much as it did the inclusion of Buddhism into the psy-disciplines. As Kostner (2018) asserts, it was only until "psychoanalysts and psychodynamic psychotherapists began reading actual Buddhist texts and studying under the auspices of actual Buddhist teachers that the dialogue took off" (p. 29; see also Molino 1998). It is recorded that about fifty psychiatrists and psychologists (the majority of them psychoanalysts) from Mexico and the US attended the seminar "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" held at Fromm's house in Cuernavaca, Morelos (Fields 1992; Silva García 2006). Such good attendance might have reflected a significant interest in the topic of Zen Buddhism considering that psychoanalysis was on its rise among a small and elite group in Mexico, reflecting a wider international trend with regards to psychoanalytic perspectives. As Magid (2003) asserts:

> This was a convergence that arose from *inside* the analytic community, under the impetus of some of its most prominent and innovative thinkers, such as Fromm and Karen Horney. These psychoanalysts, struggling to articulate an alternative to classical Freudian metapsychology, found in Zen a compelling method of radical personality change that seemed to operate on wholly different principles than those of the standard model. For Fromm, the crucial step was to move from a psychology of illness to a new psychology of well-being, which he called "humanistic" psychoanalysis (p. 252).

If we look closer and consider the context in which the seminar "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, it is possible to notice that this might have entailed a broader shift in the psy-disciplines in relation to studying the psychological within psychotherapy. It is difficult to properly assess this based on limited evidence which will also require future scholarship. For instance, during that seminar in Cuernavaca, presentations by other medical doctors took place which argued for revising humanism considering Jung's work as well as Zen Buddhism.[135] However, as Fromm wrote himself in the foreword, only his paper and Suzuki's conference were published under the title "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" (Fromm et al. 1960); whereas no record of the other papers is found. Furthermore, something that caught my attention was the reference to the only women among the other presenters at the seminar, Charlotte Selver, who gave a paper on "Sensory Awareness and Body

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[134] This might have also had a broader appeal among Mexican population as Silva García (2006) documented. Suzuki and Fromm were invited to hold a series of conferences at UNAM Faculty of Philosophy and Literature, which as Silva García (2006) reports "took place before a large and attentive audience in Mexico City before the seminar took place in Cuernavaca, Morelos" (p. 6).

[135] For example, the psychiatrist James Kirsch with the talk "The Role of the Analyst in Jung's Psychotherapy", the psychotherapist Ira Progoff with "The Psychological Dynamism of Zen" and "The Concept of Neurosis and Cure in Jung", among other seven presenters including Suzuki (see Fromm et al. 1960).

Functioning". Not only the unequal title as "Miss" versus the "Dr" used for the other male presenters struck me (she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco in 1995, while The Sensory Awareness Foundation was then set up in 1971 to promote the legacy of her work, The Sensory Awareness Foundation [no date]) but realising her work has gone almost unnoticed and overshadowed in the literature documenting Suzuki's visit to Mexico. An exception was Derbez's (1981) memoir; where he briefly underscored how Selver's work was particularly stimulating for the majority who attended the seminar.

It is important to note this since Selver influenced the work of many eminent figures such as Erich Fromm, Alan Watts, Moshé Feldenkrais, Ron Kurtz among others (see Barrat 2013, p. 64). Ron Kurtz, for instance, in turn also influenced some of the psychologists I interviewed and who had introduced somatic psychology practices as well as *atención plena* in their therapeutic, educational, and psychological work.[136] Due to the significance of Fromm and Suzuki's encounter in Mexico, according to interviewee's accounts and documents analysed, I examine this event in more detail.

5.6.2. Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova and the psychoanalytic thread: The shift to Vipassana meditation

It seemed to me that, the influence of the dialogues held by these two prominent international figures, Fromm in psychoanalysis and Suzuki in Zen Buddhism, was tangential in the Mexican psychology community. While some attended the "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" seminar in Cuernavaca, their engagement with such ideas was not very prominent institutionally. Fromm's arrival to Mexico in 1949 was concomitant with the institutionalisation and professionalisation of medical practice in the country (Millán and Gojman-de-Millán 2000; Reyna Chávez 2010). The first department of "Medical Psychology, Psychiatry and Mental Health" was created in 1955 as part of UNAM Faculty of Medicine (de la Fuente and Heinze Martin 2014), and after his encounter with a group of Mexican psychiatrists, Fromm was invited to participate in the first-ever specialisation course on psychoanalysis at UNAM Medical School (Silva García 2006). Before that, Mexicans who were interested in training as

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[136] Due to space limitations I can only briefly mention that the stream of somatic psychology and *atención plena* has been largely influenced by mind-body therapies such as the "Hakomi Method of Body Centered-Psychotheraphy and the Method of Mindfulness Based, Assisted Self Study" created by the US psychotherapist Ron Kurtz (Prengle 2009). Julián, a male senior psychotherapist reported having invited Kurtz to Mexico and his account highlights how other 'hidden' histories have influenced the development of meditative practices in Mexico. Other female psychologists were also influenced by Kurtz's work (Carla, Carolina, Itzel, and Isabel). Thus the relevance for conducting studies about this thread in the future.

psychoanalysts used travelled to the US to do so. Psychology itself was a College dependent on the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature at UNAM, reaching its independence as a Faculty of Psychology later in 1973.[137] This transition was relevant in marking the development of Psychology as "scientific discipline" mostly following the US and European trends with the introduction of experimental methodology by Mexican psychologist Rogelio Díaz Guerrero, leaving the two "oppositional" psychoanalytic perspectives (i.e. Freudian and Frommian, see Yáñez de la Mora 2018) at the margins of this academic faculty.[138]

Following this thread, and in relation to my interviewees' accounts, I found that the seminar had a long-lasting impact within the Mexican psychoanalytic community. For most of my interviewees with backgrounds in psychology, psychoanalysis or psychiatry, Fromm's stay in Mexico and his interest in Buddhist meditation influencing some of his direct Mexican disciples (i.e. Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova), represented a watershed moment in the emergence of meditative practices in Mexico. I argue that this made a fertile ground and paved the way for the later spread of Anglo-American MBIs, specifically MBSR as I shall demonstrate.[139]

The Mexican psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova (1935-2013) was part of the 5th and last generation (1968-1972) who trained directly with Fromm.[140] While Dr Córdova's name is mentioned seldomly in some of the memoirs written by Fromm's first generation of psychoanalysts (e.g. Derbez 1981) and more in recent historical reviews (Reyna Chávez 2010; Jiménez Rosas 2020), yet his role in continuing Fromm's legacy as well as the possible introduction of Buddhist meditation into psychoanalytic training at IMPAC has been unexplored.

In the IMPAC archives, I found a copy of the first issue and volume of the institute's official Bulletin dated 1995. Surprisingly, there was a two-page long article about the study group held

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[137] At UNAM, the division of the university in Schools is also named "Faculty"; whereas the term "College" refers to a department that relies on a Faculty or School.

[138] The *Sociedad Psicoanalítica Mexicana* [Mexican Psychoanalytic Society] was set up firstly in 1956. Eventually, it was moved physically to its own institute next to UNAM campus in 1963, becoming the *Instituto Mexicano de Psicoanálisis*, A.C. known as IMPAC [Mexican Psychoanalysis Institute] founded by Fromm. This is not to be confused with the Freudian perspective known as SPM *Sociedad Psicoanalítica Mexicana A.C.* [Mexican Psychoanalytic Society] which opened in 1972.

[139] In relation to the *emic* conceptualisations used by my interviewees, it appears that Buddhist meditation associated to the *atención plena* term developed first and *before* the importation of the Anglo-American 'mindfulness'.

[140] The records show that there were 13 generations trained within Fromm's humanist psychoanalytic perspective in Mexico, although only the first five groups were trained by Fromm directly during his stay in Mexico between 1949 and 1974 (for further details see Reyna Chávez 2010). From now on, I will refer to Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova as "Dr Córdova" to render the way in which my interviewees spoke about him. Naming people by their academic title is common in Mexican society to show respect to the person, who might be seen as an authority figure.

at the institute; this was the "*Grupo de Estudio sobre Psicoanálisis y Budismo*" ["Study Group on Psychoanalysis and Buddhism"] coordinated by Dr Córdova. It is said that the group was set up in 1993, "in order to systematically investigate the relationships between the theory and practice of humanistic psychoanalysis proposed by Fromm, and Buddhism; and its method of Vipassana meditation" (Córdova Córdova 1995, p. 15).[141] The IMPAC Bulletin is one of the 'earliest' physical archives documenting the activities designed and coordinated by the Mexican psychoanalyst, Dr Córdova, to systematically engage with both the revision of Buddhist texts as well as the actual practice of Vipassana meditation within the framework of developing psychoanalytic practice.

The study group activities announced in the Bulletin are presented after a framework on Fromm's work is elaborated. A particular attention is given to the emphasis Fromm gave to the "research spirit" that the psychoanalyst might have as "one of the exhilarating adventures that can be undertaken during the analysis as long as this continues to evolve out of a daring and non-dogmatic spirit" (p. 14).[142] According to Dr Córdova, Fromm's interest in this "investigative spirit" (Córdova Córdova 1995, p.14) within the humanist psychoanalyst perspective was part of the motivation in organising the seminar with Suzuki in Cuernavaca in 1957. It is well known that Zen Buddhism had not only a vital significance in Fromm's life but for the study and development of psychoanalysis itself (Molino 1998; Funk 2000; Kostner 2018; Helderman 2019).

Interestingly, during my field work, I found that this line of work was developed further at IMPAC, specifically by Dr Córdova who had also influenced a further generation of students. In the 1995 Bulletin I analysed, it is mentioned that the IMPAC psychoanalytic community came to know the role Buddhist meditation had in Fromm's psychoanalytic perspective through the 1989 posthumous publication "*Del Tener al Ser: Caminos y Extravíos de la Conciencia",* titled in English "The Art of Being", edited by German psychoanalyst and the executor of Fromm's literary estate, Rainer Funk.[143]

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[141] To do so, three main activities were announced for the psychoanalysts to take part in 1) reading and discussing Buddhist texts every last Saturday of the month (between 10:30 to 14:00 hrs); 2) explorative sessions of the Buddhist Vipassana meditation method on Thursday's evenings (from 20:00 to 21:00 hrs); and 3) regular quarterly meetings with Buddhist scholars and practitioners with wide experience in Buddhist meditation encompassing four-hour sessions.

[142] Fromm was influenced by the Nyanaponika Thera, a German-born Sri-Lanka-ordained Theravada monk, on this idea. I will expand on Fromm's relationship with Nyanaponika Thera later in this chapter.

[143] Interestingly, the book title in the English version is "*The Art of Being*", which contrast with the one used in Spanish, literarily meaning "*From Having to Being: Paths and Astray of Conscience*" – and where "conscience" is employed (i.e. *conciencia*, see above). The English version was first published in 1993 by Continuum; although I have consulted the latest edition available, 2013, to conduct the analysis. Funk explains in the foreword that "*The Art of Being*" contains never-before-seen manuscripts and chapters originally written by Fromm between 1974 and 1976 in preparation of the book "*To Have*

Alejandro Córdova echoed Fromm's reflection that in Buddhist meditation, he has "found a simple, unmystifying and non-suggestive form of meditation that has the aim of bringing one nearer to the Buddhist goal, that of the cessation of greed, hate, and ignorance"; and Dr Córdova continued, "the aim of Buddhist meditation is maximum awareness of our bodily and mental processes" (Córdova Córdova 1995, p. 14). This context articulated in the Bulletin provided the background for psychoanalysts to engage with Buddhist meditation practice due to its ability to facilitate the process of self-analysis as Fromm might have done. As Dr Córdova commented further "the model of self-analysis, one of Fromm's last and most interesting proposals, is essentially constructed according to the steps or moments of the Buddhist meditation called Vipassana" (p. 14).[144] It was striking to find out this for two reasons. Firstly, because studies reviewing the historical development of psychoanalysis in Mexico have disregarded the influence of Buddhist meditation within the psychoanalytic practice after Fromm's stay in Mexico as well as Dr Córdova's legacy. And secondly, because many of my interviewees with backgrounds in psy-disciplines revealed that it was a 'kept secret' that Buddhist meditation was informing their psychotherapy practice: incorporating meditation into the clinical practice was a practice not well-seen among psychoanalytic circles, plus in general, the study of Buddhist meditation was limited to a rather "privileged" group of educated people. Sara, a female, middle-aged psychotherapist, and Dr Córdova's student expressed her complaint with the analogy of "having been producing chocolate using an artisanal method versus the Snickers-chocolate bars produced massively". She explained the drastic change she perceived when psychotherapists started to introduce *atención plena* in their private practice and the effect it has had on the recent popularisation of Anglo-American 'mindfulness'.[145]

5.6.3. 'Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis 50 years later': from Vipassana to REBAP in Mexico

The 50th anniversary of Suzuki's visit to Mexico for the seminar "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" was commemorated with an international meeting at a higher education institution (*Centro Universitario Hispano Mexicano*) in the city of Veracruz, Veracruz state in

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or to Be?" (1976). The latter was cited by Jon Kabat-Zinn in his 1990 book "Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness using Mindfulness Meditation".

[144] This reflects an interesting shift from Zen Buddhism to Vipassana meditation influenced by Nyanaponika, as I will clarify.

[145] This shift has been of such magnitude involving the 'institutional endorsement' of the practice, since it is claimed that even authorities at the IMPAC institute have also practised Buddhist meditation themselves, while Diplomas on the topic including the word 'mindfulness' have been created (e.g. "Buddhism, Mindfulness and Psychotherapy" in 2015).

2007 (see Appendix N). The black and white copy of the poster advertising the event in Spanish starts with a paragraph emphasising the pioneering nature of the event:

> In the month of August 1957, 50 years ago, Buddhism made its public presentation. It was launched in Mexico through psychoanalysis, with the pioneering seminar in the world, organised by Erich Fromm and the recently formed group of Mexican psychoanalysts, which Fromm would have trained for six years. The seminar was held under the auspices of the then Psychoanalysis Department of UNAM Medical School at Erich Fromm's house in Cuernavaca.
>
> … Given the importance that psychoanalysis, according to some scholars of culture, has had in the formation of Western thought, the seminar has been considered a summit meeting between Western and Eastern thought.

It could be argued that such event early demonstrated tensions of what today we discuss in the debates of 'secularity' and 'spirituality/religiosity' in the study of contemporary 'mindfulness'. This is because the 'secular' nature of the site, namely, a higher education institution, and psychotherapists attending an event linked to 'spiritual' or 'religious' practices such as Buddhism. However, it seems that such tensions went unnoticed or at least not publicly debated. Dr Córdova, the author of the poster, pointed out that while Fromm contended the relevance that studying Buddhism has both to psychoanalysis and for the psychoanalysts themselves in the book he co-authored with Suzuki and de Martino (1960), it was difficult to comprehend and to test some of the hypotheses proposed at that time, due to the restricted access to Buddhist texts on which Fromm's ideas were based.[146]

Nevertheless, the circumstances changed as the translation of Buddhist texts in different languages became more widely available, and part of IMPAC's commitment was to systematically investigate the influence of Buddhism in Fromm's thought, as stated in the poster. A programme with similar activities in the aforementioned 1995 Bulletin is promoted. Still, in this 2007 document the concept of *atención plena* is used as an explanation of 'Vipassana' meditation, revealing Nyanaponika's influence. The inclusion of a fourth activity in the poster is of interest, namely the course in Spanish REBAP (*Reducción de Estrés Basado en la Atención Plena*) as the equivalent of MBSR. This was described as:

> Based on the application model of Buddhist meditation created by Jon Kabat-Zinn. This model is being applied with great success in the Stress Reduction Clinic at the

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[146] The text and the image of the poster (the statue of Buddha sitting on a mediation position and the figure of a European White, male depicting a Renaissance painting next to it) convey what nowadays would be seen as an "Orientalist" approach to Buddhism as am "Eastern religion" (conceptualisations that I critiqued in Chapter 3). Yet, both the *practice* of Zen Buddhist meditation and Vipassana as main activities to be engaged with are underscored (see Appendix N).

University of Massachusetts Medical Center and has been disseminated to more than 300 centres and clinics in the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

This evidences an important shift, since according to the documents I found in Spanish among my study sample, the poster documents perhaps for the first time both Kabat-Zinn's work in Massachusetts and the REBAP programme being taught in the Mexican context. As it is reported, a first five-day REBAP course, attended by many psychoanalysts from IMPAC in Mexico, was co-organised in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center's team, at the same higher education institution in Veracruz back in 2003. Analysing the poster was of great relevance for understanding the emergence of *atención plena* and the insertion of the REBAP programme in the Mexican context since many of interviewees reported having attended the 2003 REBAP intensive course. While Zen Buddhism was enmeshed with the development of Frommian psychoanalysis in Mexico in the early 1950s, *atención plena* as understood in the REBAP programme was making its way into its incorporation of Mexican psychological and medical practice at the beginning of the 2000s, via the shift to Theravada (Vipassana) meditation, as I explain now.

5.6.4. Global trends and local moves

As Helderman asserts (2019), Fromm was "one of the first psychotherapists to take up" Buddhist meditation (p. 148); which he learned not only from these dialogues and work done with Suzuki, but also from the teaching of Nyanaponika Mahathera. Fromm met Nyanaponika during Nyanaponika's visit to Locarno, Switzerland where Fromm was living towards the end of his life (Córdova Córdova 2012; Funk 2000). Helderman (2019) adds that in contrast with the well-known and often cited encounter of Suzuki and Fromm[147]; Fromm's friendship with Nyanaponika was practically unknown (p. 148). This was something disclosed also in a conference paper by Córdova Córdova (2012) kept at IMPAC's archives, where he expressed the reasons why Mexican psychoanalysts trained under Fromm initially did not pursue Fromm's proposal on self-analysis: "we totally ignored Fromm's relationship with Nyanaponika, who apparently was a very important influence in Fromm with regards to including Vipassana meditation practice from the Theravada school in the model of self-analysis" (p. 2). And as mentioned earlier, Mexican psychoanalysts at IMPAC knew about it from Fromm's posthumous book (1993). Helderman's (2019) research concerning US

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[147] He, nonetheless, omits the geographical location where the encountered happened. Fromm first came across Suzuki in the 1940s, but as Frunk (2000) asserts based on Fromm's correspondence to Suzuki (October 18, 1956), it was only after Suzuki visited Fromm in 1957 in Mexico, and Fromm's returned to visit Suzuki to New York, that Fromm first had "the feeling that I understood Zen, as if something had 'clicked'" (p. 133).

psychotherapists interest in Buddhist teaching and practice, provides further evidence on the communication that Fromm and Nyanaponika maintained (through the analysis of not-known-before letters retrieved via Erich Fromm's archives managed by Rainer Funk).

As for the Mexican context, evidence shows that on the one hand, the systematic study of Buddhist meditation within Frommian psychoanalysis was carried out by Dr Córdova throughout the following almost four decades after Fromm left Mexico.[148] Besides, Dr Córdova's great interest and commitment towards meditation and the practice of self-analysis, took him to what seemed a personal journey of continuous Buddhist meditation study and practice and the integration of it within his psychoanalytic practice. As he stated in the conference paper presented at the XVII International Federation of Psychoanalytic Societies (IFPS) Forum in 2012, a year before Dr Córdova died:

> My interest in Buddhist meditation started almost 30 years ago; during which I have regularly practiced Zen meditation for eight years and Vipassana meditation for 22 years. In the last six years, I have combined meditative practice with self-analysis as recommended by Fromm and I have come to the same conclusion as him, that I would not know how to live without doing it, and I think that is the most important thing I do.

As seen in the above extract, Dr Córdova referred to "Vipassana meditation" as well as "self-analysis" while 'mindfulness' was absent. The use of *atención plena* instead of the English term was also noticeable in the documents analysed earlier. While Dr Cordova's speech cited above might have been presented publicly at the psychoanalytic community at the XVII IFPS Forum in 2012, this is newly discovered knowledge with regards to the historical review of meditative practices in Mexico as they have developed during the last decade or so. While Dr Córdova's work can be seen as the continuation of Fromm's development and integration of Buddhist thought and practice within psychoanalysis, Dr Córdova's journey had a large influence on both the trajectory of other generations of psychotherapists as well as at the institutional level. One of Dr Córdova's nearest students Santiago, a young medical doctor, meditation practitioner and *atención plena* instructor I interviewed, narrated the history of how his teacher firstly practised Zen meditation since Fromm used to practise it during his stay in Mexico at IMPAC:

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[148] Dr Córdova first published a paper on "*De los Salmos a las Sutras" El Intinerario Espiritual de Fromm* ["From Psalms to Sutras": Fromm's Spiritual Itinerary"] in 1992. Also consider the study group on "Psychoanalysis and Buddhism" set up in 1993 at IMPAC and the documents retrieved from IMPAC's archive regarding Dr Córdova's documents and his reference to and discussion of Fromm's work (1995, 2007, 2012); as well as other non-dated manuscripts kept on record (e.g. notes on Buddhism written by Fromm but translated into Spanish by Dr Córdova).

> After knowing that Fromm had shifted to Vipassana meditation - *atención plena* - years later, my teacher started to investigate what was this '*atención plena*'. So is the story that, the search for what *atención plena* was, led him to a Theravada monastery in the United States; and from there, he helped found a monastery here in Mexico. That this, is the Dhamma Vihara Monastery which is the only Theravada Buddhist monastery in Mexico (emphasis added).[149]

Santiago underscored that because of these antecedents, he considered Dr Córdova as a "pioneer". The recognition and admiration of Dr Córdova as a key figure in the dissemination of Buddhist meditation, as well as *atención plena* and the REBAP programme among psy-disciplines in the Mexican context was shared by other six of my interviewees (Sara, Mariana, Mario, Antonio, Laura, Rogelio); who all knew him and at least four of them, also collaborated closely with him. Besides, at least other five interviewees (Carolina, Carla, Vicente, Clara, Ernesto) referred to activities in their own trajectories which were directly influenced by Dr Córdova, noting the leading yet hidden figure he has been in the Mexican context. Dr Córdova had a prolific trajectory in both the field of psy-disciplines and within Buddhism in Mexico. On the one hand, his background in medicine with specialisation in psychiatry and psychoanalysis (under Fromm's training) and his active career at the IMPAC led him to contribute to the institutionalisation of psychiatry at public health and educational institutions (Madrigal de León 2013). On the other hand, he also promoted the creation of Buddhist organisations, specifically the dissemination of Theravada Buddhism towards the end of the 1990s.

The way interviewees talked about Dr Córdova showed the deep affection and respect they have for him, as well as how prolific and popular in those fields he was. For instance, Mario, a male, middle-aged Buddhist practitioner, previously ordained within a Buddhist tradition, commented Dr Córdova was characterised by his ability to attract people, and because of him many people were attracted to the Theravada Buddhist Monastery. Mario met him at an inter-Buddhist meeting in the late 1990s/early 2000s; when Dr Córdova was the only one who was practising *atención plena* at that time.[150] Another female, senior psychoanalyst, a colleague at IMPAC, recalled "he was a well-prepared, objective man, a holy man ... that man was

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[149] Although I planned to visit the Theravada Monastery in Veracruz, I decided not to go because of the insecure situation in the state.

[150] Although I did not find documents in the online and archival search conducted to expand on the anecdotal report provided in the interview, it is important to note the following. The inter-Buddhists meetings have as antecedent the interest of various Mexican Buddhist groups to gather and meet each other in the 1980s. Then, the first "*Encuentro Interreligioso*" [Interreligious Meeting] happened with the presence of the XIV Dalai Lama in 1989 in Mexico City (I will return to this later in this chapter), after which the CIM "*Consejo Interreligioso de México*" [Interreligious Council of Mexico] was set up. The CIM was "formed by eight spiritual traditions, churches and traditional religious associations in order to establish ties based on tolerance and foster a respectful and harmonious interfaith environment" (Comunidad Budista de México 2021, para. 3). Interestingly, it is reported that the Zen Buddhist teacher Ejo Takata mentioned in Chapter 3, was member of the CIM until he died in 1997.

enlightened! He was light. A precious man. Dr Córdova was intelligent, perceptive, equanimous, and loving. With good humour, and a great eater" (Mariana). The good appetite and humour might be associated with some features of Mexican idiosyncrasy, yet he was described as a charismatic and almost religious figure. Even another female interviewee reported that Dr Córdova "died as a Buddhist monk" (Laura, middle-aged clinical psychologist, and Buddhist practitioner) echoing the previous account and representation of Dr Córdova as being "enlightened".[151]

Still, I could not find any comprehensive work concerning Dr Córdova's professional biography or any records reporting such a relevant event. Laura recalled how she met Dr Córdova in the context of his private practice as a psychiatrist in 2000 in Veracruz when she was in her early 20s, and he commented to her "you will not find the types of questions and the sort of concerns that you have in mainstream psychology". Laura described it as "knowing a world that was unknown to me"; namely, Buddhist meditation practice, as Dr Córdova took her to *La Casa de las Campanas* [The House of Bells] in Veracruz state, where she started to meditate. Later Laura moved to another city where she studied her PhD realising that "he was right. He never knew that after that [years later] I dedicated myself to this [practising Buddhism and teaching *atención plena*] Because I wanted to talk to him. He never knew the impact it had on me; it changed my life".

Finally, a male, middle-aged psychologist, MBI trainer and researcher commented that Dr Córdova "was quite a character". Antonio remembered the times in which him and other female colleagues used to go to a vegetarian restaurant years ago to have conversations. Even before then (around the early 2000s) "Dr Córdova have already brought this topic concerning Jon Kabat Zinn … he was a monk for a while, and then he was the first in making the bridge between Massachusetts and Mexico; without being necessarily trained [as MBSR teacher]. I actually knew him, and he was quite old indeed" (Antonio). Dr Córdova played an important role in making such transnational connections. However, as I found through my interviews and documentary analysis and which was rarely highlighted, the influence of lesser-known women who facilitated importantly this milestone.

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[151] Generally speaking, the quality of being "enlightened" would relate to the Sanskrit and Pali word *bodhi* as "awakening" which describes Buddha's highest attainment through meditation practice. For further discussion about the meaning evoked by the English term "enlightenment" see McMahan (2008, p. 18).

5.6.5. "The bridge between Massachusetts and Mexico": Female leaders' role in transnational bonds

Nowadays it might be almost obvious to assume that Dr Córdova 'naturally' gravitated from his interests in Vipassana meditation to learning the REBAP programme. However, the context in which the exportation of both REBAP (early in the 2000s) and MBSR (later in the 2010s) to Mexico is far more complex.[152] The male, middle-aged medical doctor, Rogelio, is the founding director of a US-based organisation teaching REBAP, which basically represents the branch of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR in Spanish; for Spanish-speaking communities in the US, as well as in Latin America and Spain.

When Rogelio first met Kabat-Zinn in 1994, he claimed to have already a journey of personal investigation on "oriental traditions, sacred traditions, and mysticism".[153] Later, for a year and a half, he worked as a medical interpreter in a US inner-city clinic facilitating the communication between Latin American (mostly Spanish-speaking) patients and the health professionals who only spoke English. As Rogelio recalled, "who was a pioneer at that time, and from whom I learned the most, was Kabat-Zinn's boss, [unknown name] and two of her best researchers: Lori Pbert and Milagros Rosal".[154] As the interviewee continued describing "I did not know all of that would have taken me to attend a conference in October 1994, in Boston, and met Jon Kabat-Zinn". Interestingly, the time when this encounter happened was a crucial moment.

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[152] It has not been possible to have access to Dr Córdova's own biographical account regarding what he did and why since he died in 2013. The historical review presented is based on archival research and interview accounts with Dr Córdova's students and colleagues. Nevertheless, one of my interviewees narrated how the REBAP programme emerged as the version of MBSR for the Spanish speaking world thanks to the contributions of Dr Córdova. Interestingly, this analysis reveals that although REBAP is broadly based on the 8-week MBSR protocol with the variation of the Spanish language, there are important differences, mainly the history behind the development of REBAP and its status in the Anglo-American 'mindfulness movement'.

[153] The interviewee narrated how after spending 45 days "reflecting" at a cabin in the woods, he found the book "*A los Pies del Maestro*" ["At the Feet of the Master"] by Jiddu Krishnamurti regarding a story of children from the Vedanta tradition. Rogelio was then already a member of the Theosophical Society and initiated an exploration of yoga practices (Yoga Sivananda in Pennsylvania and at the Himalaya Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy with Swami Rama) by the beginning of the 1980s. He travelled by train in Canada and the US, also visiting Mexico after meeting some Mexicans at the yoga trainings. He became interested in the Mesoamerican cultures and their mystic and meditative traditions studying the codices of Maya pre-Hispanic culture such as the *Popol Vuh* and the *Chilam Balam*.

[154] It has been common to find reference to people who have not followed their professional practice or developed their research in line with REBAP or MBSR specifically. Such is Milagros Rosal's case, a Venezuelan psychologist whose role was relevant in developing the Spanish programme in Worcester's inner-city clinic.

According to Rogelio's account, there were attempts to bring MBSR to the "poor neighbourhoods" in Worcester although the health professionals either have proficiency in the Spanish language but did not live in the city or spoke Spanish but did not have a good understanding of 'mindfulness'. Apparently, Rogelio said, this was something Kabat-Zinn did not like and therefore decided to close the clinic. However, the fact that Rogelio was working as a medical translator and had a background practising meditation and other 'mind-body practices', made him a suitable candidate for the implementation of a version of MBSR in Spanish. Rogelio recalled, "after Robert Bly read a poem from Machado before 2,000 people, he [Kabat-Zinn] asked me 'do you speak Spanish and live in Worcester? And do you like these things? What about eating next week?".[155] Rogelio remembered he knew Kabat-Zinn from the TV programme "*La Sanación de la Mente*" ["Healing and the Mind"][156], but it was only until after the 1994 conference that he really started to know health professionals (mostly women) who have had trained with Kabat-Zinn and who also had delivered MBSR to Hispanics in the US (e.g. the medical doctor Margarita Loina, originally from Dominican Republic and the US Beth Roth). So it was then that Rogelio trained himself under the MBSR programme.[157]

With regards to Mexicans being interested in Kabat-Zinn's programme in Massachusetts, Rogelio revealed he knew about a Mexican woman from Cuernavaca, Morelos, named Gabriela Monharat, who had taken a training course with Kabat-Zinn before 1994. Nevertheless my interviewee never managed to contact her (nor did I). He found only materials where she rendered the English word 'mindfulness' as *presencia mental* [mental presence].[158] It was fascinating to hear the acknowledgement of Mexican women leading the dissemination of 'mindfulness'. In his research concerning the history of 'mindfulness' in the US and UK scene, Drage (2019) underscores Peggie Gillespie's role in working closely with Kabat-Zinn "in the very earliest days of his Clinic in Worcester". To this, we can add the contribution of women, interestingly with an important Latin and Caribbean background as mentioned above, in the bilingual MBSR courses in Worcester (see Chapter 3).[159]

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[155] Robert Bly is a US writer, poet, editor, and translator. He translated the work of major poets into English language including the work of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado (e.g. see Bly's book Times Alone: Selected Poems of Antonio Machado 1983) which have been used by association with Kabat-Zinn's work.
[156] Featuring 45 minutes long video clip called "Healing from Within" Kabat-Zinn appeared on the US TV programme "Healing and the Mind" produced by Bill Moyers and broadcasted for the first time in 1993 (see Stress Reduction Tapes 2021).
[157] Rogelio's biographical trajectory (i.e. his interest and background in New Thought authors and practices and his membership of the Theosophical Society) reveals the influence of the Mind Cure movement Hickey (2019) has mapped as an important antecedent to the '1970s US Mindfulness movement' (p. 7).
[158] I did not come across the use of this term during my research.
[159] I noticed the same pattern when reviewing the development of psy-disciplines in Mexico – the growth of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in Mexico was totally male derived. Eventually women started to be

A similar story has been for the participation of Mexican psychologist, Dr Albertina Contreras. The only record found is a photo of her with my interviewee, Rogelio, and Dr Córdova in Xalapa, Veracruz in 2002 (Organisation's website). According to Rogelio's account, Contreras had a great interest in *atención plena* and hosted them during a 'tour' the pair was doing at that time.

Indeed, Rogelio came to know about Dr Córdova thanks to Macarena and Rocío Carretero, two Mexican sisters he met in the US, who had also taken the same intensive MBSR training course he took. They knew Dr Córdova because he was their teacher. Specifically, Rocío had trained in psychoanalysis with Fromm and interestingly, was the only one who continued in the line of teaching and researching 'mindfulness' but in Spain. Although Rogelio and Dr Córdova had initial conversations via email, it was not until 2002 that Rogelio visited Mexico. As he revealed in the interview, the purpose of this trip was related to the third meeting of the *Centro para la Enseñanza de la Meditación Vipassana en Español* or CEMVE [Centre for Teaching Vipassana Meditation in Spanish]. The CEMVE was created two years earlier after all the instructors who were teaching Buddhism in Spanish gathered following Jack Kornfield's invitation to Spirit Rock, California. The second meeting was held in Massachusetts, where Rogelio invited Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg and then met another Mexican based at Vallecitos, New Mexico and who proposed to organise the third meeting in Mexico.[160] The meeting was held at a Mexican private university (*Universidad de las Américas*) in Puebla. As Rogelio explained, among the attendees were Dr Córdova, the Carretero Mexican sisters, and Vicky Gurza, director of Vipassana Meditation House.

Nonetheless, this gathering proved to be something else. During Rogelio visit to Mexico, at least seven other events were organised (workshops and conferences) mainly in the state of Veracruz and Mexico City, for disseminating *atención plena* among health professionals as well as the public interested in Vipassana meditation. After listing these events based on the notes of his diaries, he enthusiastically said "that was my introduction to Mexico. I went for this

meeting about Vipassana, and it turned out that a whole tour was prepared for me!" And so it was the introduction of REBAP in Mexico.

The transnational (Nehring et al. 2014) bonds between Mexicans living/working abroad and their previous contact with co-nationals in Mexico, made the bridge between Massachusetts and Mexico possible. This did not take an institutional collaboration with Kabat-Zinn, the "father" of MBSR nor with Saki F. Santorelli, professor of medicine who was executive director of the UMass Medical School Center for Mindfulness in Medicine from 2000 until 2017 (UMass Medical School Communications 2017). Although there was the initial antecedent of an Argentinian organisation who reached both Rogelio and Kabat-Zinn to bring MBSR to Latin America, the emergence of REBAP as the Spanish version of MBSR overlapped with the development of Vipassana meditation and *atencion plena* that Dr Córdova was facilitating in Mexico.[161] This happened on the one hand, with the promotion of Vipassana meditation through the inauguration of the Theravada Buddhist Monastery in Mexico, and the study group on Psychoanalysis and Buddhism at IMPAC at the end of the 1990s. On the other hand, Dr Córdova along with other members of the Theravada Centre Association began to be interested in setting up a "secular" branch to explore the practice of *atención plena.* As they observe on the organisation's website:

> In 2002, a group of the founding members considered it important and interesting to explore the practice of atención plena (Vipassana meditation) within a completely secular framework or context. But maintaining the study of texts of the Theravada school as well as the reading of texts of scholars, masters, and instructors that with their practice and thought are forming what nowadays is known as the emergence of Western Buddhism.

In this extract, the Spanish term *atención plena* appears as the translation of the English 'mindfulness' as it is explicitly conveyed as Vipassana. Besides, the importation of Buddhist modernism (McMahan 2008, Sharf 2015) is evident in the paradox of the Theravada

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[161] I was struck by the realisation of some political tensions between MBSR and REBAP and the leading figures of each version. In the email that Rogelio and Kabat-Zinn received from the Argentinean organisation, the group's financial limitation to travel to Massachusetts to train themselves in MBSR was mentioned. But in one of my interviews, it was disclosed that although the group was pleased to know they would have been going to Argentina, the woman asked to have "the authentic one" (i.e. Kabat-Zinn) to deliver the MBSR course. So it was implicitly conveyed that the REBAP version did not hold the same status as if MBSR was taught by Kabat-Zinn himself. The visibility of REBAP has not been the same as MBSR; neither in scientific studies nor as a training programme. For instance, the MBSR Teacher Training taught by a Mexican organisation in Mexico has been possible since 2019. Before that, other diplomas and type of training programmes have been available such as REBAP or the possibility to travel to Massachusetts to be trained under the MBSR Teacher Training. As I mentioned before, apart from Kabat-Zinn's visit to Argentina, I did not find more record of him or Santorelli visiting any other country in Latin America.

association shifting towards a 'secular' uptake of 'mindfulness' since they became interested in "applying meditation in some of the fields of human activity" (Organisation's website) beyond the Buddhist centre or the monastery. Simultaneously, the creation of the US-based organisation teaching REBAP took place, for which Dr Córdova had an important influence. As Rogelio narrated in the interview:

> So atención plena emerged with Alejandro. Because I was using the term presencia mental when I went to Argentina. But when meeting Alejandro and going deeper into Vipassana in that meeting [in Puebla] we found that in some of the Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein they used the expression atención plena for [translating] mindfulness. Therefore we thought it was a more appropriate expression; mainly because it was found already in books. Besides, Alejandro also told me that we were required to have the bibliography of the [MBSR] programme translated into Spanish, which wasn't available. This is, "Vivir con Plenitud las Crisis" – "Full Catastrophe Living" – so I said I will do my best.

It was fascinating to uncover how *atención plena* gained ground over the previous Spanish terms used (i.e. *presencia mental*). It initially emerged associated with Vipassana meditation via the Spanish translation of texts about Buddhism. But then it also started to be associated with MBSR taught by Kabat-Zinn in Massachusetts. It is important to note however, that according to the documentary analysis and some interviews' accounts, the English word 'mindfulness' itself or the acronym 'MBSR' did not feature as the conceptualisations known and employed in the Mexican context at least during the first decade of the 2000s. This seems contradictory and almost difficult to grasp but based on the empirical data collected, and particularly based on participants' *emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness', it was clear they did not designate the same meaning to such terms: *atención plena* was seen as derived from Buddhist meditation yet not Kabat-Zinn's MBSR; whereas its translation to 'mindfulness' appears to be then influenced by Vipassana meditation as taught by Nyanaponika as the "commodified" practice which had its origins in the medical approach developed by Kabat-Zinn and from which interviewees argued to be distanced. Still, a different repertoire regarding Vipassana meditation and less clearly Transcendental Meditation (TM) emerged associated with the controversial figure of Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum.

5.7. Consciousness and the 'unorthodox' repertoire

If one were to search for a meditation course in Mexico City nowadays, one would probably find a poster advertising "*Prácticas de Meditación Autoalusiva"* ["Self-regarding Meditation Practices"], followed by the statement "an inheritance of Dr. Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum". In between and over a black background, two figures representing a human's head would be

facing each other, showing how their 'consciousness' - represented by a complex clock-like machinery in each's head - communicate through waves. The communication process would not be linear, but circular around the heads, creating what seems an interrelated 'consciousness field'. Unlike common representations of cross-legged individuals practising sitting meditation, this poster conveys a 'radical' meaning of what *meditación autoalusiva* might involve.[162] Interestingly, these weekly meditation sessions would have been guided by one of Grinberg-Zylberbaum's early female students, who after 26 years of her teacher's disappearance, renewed the application of such practice. Between the late 1980s and early 1990s Grinberg-Zylberbaum and a group of students were conducting pioneering research work on the psychophysiological study of consciousness at the Human Communication Laboratory at UNAM Faculty of Psychology. Yet their work remained unfinished since Grinberg-Zylberbaum disappeared without a trace in December 1994.[163]

Son of European Jewish immigrants, Grinberg-Zylberbaum was born in Mexico City in 1946. Initially interested in physics, he decided to start studying psychology at UNAM in 1966, being mentored by Professor Héctor Brust-Carmona in neurophysiology and psychophysiology. He excelled by becoming a teacher at the Experimental Psychology Laboratory at UNAM National High School, also leading the Psychophysiological Research Laboratory at Anahuac University (Interviewee's book). Later in the early 1970s, Grinberg-Zylberbaum was accepted as a PhD student at the New York Medical College at the Brain Research Laboratories of E. Roy John, PhD, a pioneer of quantitative electroencephalography (now EEG, a method of recording brain electrical activity). Grinberg-Zylberbaum became fascinated by the latest findings on the neurophysiology of perception and importantly, the postulates of unifying transformation of brain activity acting as an energy field. He explored this using experimental methodologies at Roy John's laboratory, where he also met leading scientists such as Karl

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[162] For Grinberg-Zylberbaum (2008), *meditación autoalusiva* entails "the observation of the unity of all the components of the experience that can be contemplated" involving also the observation of "the result of the union of all the elements of oneself in the sensation of 'self'" (p. 87), at the moment of the practice. Thus its meaning as "self-regarding meditation".

[163] Different theories about his disappearance are held so far. One that has been more widely known and researched, is having been abducted by the CIA due to their interest in the applications of Grinberg-Zylberbaum's research findings. Potentially in collaboration with his second wife, Teresa Mendoza, who also disappeared in 1995 (for a review of the evidence around this case see the recent film "*El Secreto del Doctor Grinberg*" ["The Secret of Doctor Grinberg"] 2020 directed by Ida Cuellar). The second popular explanation with less evidence is the claim around the tension that existed between Grinberg-Zylberbaum and Carlos Castaneda, US author and anthropologist who claimed to have been the apprentice of the Yaqui Indian shaman Don Juan Matus (also called a "nagual"). Grinberg-Zylberbaum decided to break his relationship with Castaneda because the latter proposed him to leave his research and his daughter and join Castaneda's community in California. Further discussion of his mysterious disappearance is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, what remains certain is that all the material and data of his latest investigations at the UNAM Laboratory also vanished, and that his laboratory was dismantled, not long after Grinberg-Zylberbaum disappeared.

Pribram, emeritus professor of psychology and psychiatry and proponent of the holonomic theory of the brain (Interviewee's book). Interestingly, it was at Roy John's laboratory that the renowned US neuroscientist and leading researcher in contemplative sciences Richard J. Davidson, also had studied at, as Grinberg-Zylberbaum's female former students documented in their book dedicated to him.

Upon his return to Mexico and intrigued by the question of the relationship between brain activity and the way experience arises, Grinberg-Zylberbaum started writing about the physiology of consciousness and the construction of reality, while living in Tepoztlán, Morelos.[164] Based on his autobiography narrated in a documentary by colleagues and relatives (Marmolejo 2009), it was reported that Grinberg-Zylberbaum not only visited the monastery of a yogi where he started meditating but he also encountered a shaman, Don Lucio, from the state of Morelos.[165]

During the mid-1970s and after moving to Mexico City to work at UNAM, he started practising TM at Maharishi Centre in Mexico City[166], an experience which greatly influenced his way of understanding his subject matter, "neuroscience helped him to give sense to his spiritual practice, and in turn, the spiritual practice helped him to understand human mind" (Interviewee's book). Grinberg-Zylberbaum immersed himself in various spiritual traditions throughout his life (León Diez 2020). Having already studied with the greatest Cabbalists from the Jewish Kabbalah[167] during his visit to Israel in the early 1960s (originally, he was born into a Jewish family and religious background which he did not abandon) he also became interested in Asian traditions such as Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism. Importantly, he was fascinated by the investigation of the experiences of Mexican shamans as representing Mesoamerican cultural traditions too (Marmolejo 2009). His encounter with Barbara Guerrero,

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[164] Tepoztlán is a "Magical town" surrounded by mysticism. It is located at the foot of the "El Tepozteco National Park" (State of Morelos) where an Aztec archaeological site is found at the El Tepozteco peak, so it is associated with pre-Hispanic traditions and cultural expressions (e.g. culinary, handcrafts, and medicinal) in the town. Simultaneously, it is a symbol of the counterculture for its relaxed and bohemian atmosphere, and the cradle of contemporary ecotourism and holistic centres related to spirituality and wellness (e.g. spas, massages, *temazcal*, meditation, and yoga).

[165] Some scholars would question the use of the categories such as 'shaman' and 'shamanism' in the study of Mesoamerican cultures (e.g. Madsen 1955; Pharo 2011). To maintain consistency in this historical review, I have maintained the reference to the words as employed by Grinberg-Zylberbaum in his work between the 1980s and 1990s.

[166] Maharishi Foundation has taught Transcendental Meditation (TM) in Mexico for more than 50 years (Fundación Maharishi de Mexico 2020). Also, one female interviewee mentioned having had practised TM for a couple of years which she then stopped; yet TM "served a lot as a gateway to study in a way, on my own, everything that at that time was called the body-mind approach" (Clara, senior Buddhist practitioner and medical doctor). There was no further reference to TM in my study sample.

[167] Kabbalah, which in Hebrew means 'tradition', refers to esoteric Jewish mysticism claiming to provide "secret knowledge" to approach God directly (Encyclopædia Britannica 2021b, para 1).

aka Pachita, a healer in her late 70s from Parral, Chihuahua was one of the most controversial events in his career. Margarita López Portillo, Mexican novelist, and sister of the Mexican President at that time introduced them at "*Los Pinos*", the official residence and office of Mexico's President (El Secreto del Doctor Grinberg 2020) around 1976. It is documented that Margarita wanted to learn meditation and was also keen to support Grinberg-Zylberbaum's initiative of creating the National Institute for the Study of Consciousness or INPEC for its initials in Spanish[168] in 1987 (Interviewee's book; Marmolejo 2009).

His work with Mexican shamans and healers took him on an unanticipated journey. Grinberg-Zylberbaum was impressed by witnessing Pachitas' interventions. She was popular for performing "psychic surgeries"; that is, operating without anaesthesia and using healing procedures, a sort of capacity to affect energy and matter (e.g. ill bodies) with the mind. Although sceptical at the beginning, Grinberg-Zylberbaum was discovering an explanation of his findings on the electrophysiological correlation of verbal and non-verbal human communication at his Laboratory at UNAM Faculty of Psychology (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1987; 1993). The basic tenet of his theory was the existence of brain activity between individuals interconnected through a 'neuronal field' and direct brain influences on the matter (León Diez 2020). Hence, the possible explanation of the curative skills of healers such as Pachita when entering states of trance before the surgeries. Grinberg-Zylberbaum was awarded funding from the Mexican Research Council (CONACYT) to conduct research with more shamans across Mexico, which eventually lead him to publish seven volumes on "Mexican Shamans". During his studies measuring Mexican shamans' neuronal fields, Grinberg-Zylberbaum found, for instance, that in the case of Don Rodolfo, the EGG levels of his brain functions reported very high frequencies of coherence; which he defined as "the capacity to contemplate experience with high levels of abstraction or consciousness" (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1987 cited in Grinberg 2013). He postulated that such high levels of coherence or interconnectivity constituted a neuronal field which consequently interacted with a fundamental pre-space structure which could be a correlate of our conscious experience and accountable for its unity (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997, p. 456); something he called "Syntergic Theory" (where the word 'syntergic' or *sinergía,* is a neologism from the words synthesis and energy).[169]

Nevertheless, the work with Mexican shamans brought scepticism from his colleagues at UNAM Faculty of Psychology where he had established the Human Communication

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[168] INPEC stands for "*Instituto Nacional para el Estudio de la Conciencia".*
[169] This is a rather brief discussion of Grinberg-Zylberbaum's ideas and development of his work. However, some of the interesting points to highlight are a) his approach to the experimental study of consciousness in Mexico and b) his attentiveness to the nature of experience and reality from the exploration of different spiritual and cultural traditions including Mexican shamans.

Laboratory in 1987, and where more than 16 students were collaborating with him in developing research on the psychophysiological study of consciousness. On the one hand, some of the phenomena Grinberg-Zylberbaum started to investigate (e.g. telekinesis, telepathy, and extraocular vision) were and continue to be categorised as topics of parapsychology. Besides, the incipient interest in Mexican healers (or "autochthonous psychologists" in Grinberg-Zylberbaum's words) was possibly reflecting a wider socio-cultural and political context in Mexico.[170] Yet, healers and their arguably ancestral medical practices were not seen as worthy of scientific study among the Mexican psychology community as Grinberg-Zylberbaum contended in his writings:

> Science is not defined by the subject. Science is defined by its method … there is no conflict or opposition between science and my topic of research. I can study Mexican shamans using quite strict, serious procedures leading to truthful knowledge … Science does not have anything to do with being close-minded. It opens new ways where there are too many cultural controls to avoid taking different paths. A healthy culture enables and fosters in creative individuals that sense of urgency required to explore science at different levels, in such a way that our culture can become richer (cited in Interviewee's book).

Described as "ahead of his time", Grinberg-Zylberbaum had a profile like many prominent 'mindfulness' meditation proponents today. As a neuroscientist, he was conducting cutting-edge experiments to study consciousness in his Laboratory at UNAM. With other collaborators he published in peer-reviewed international journals (e.g. Grinberg-Zylberbaum and Ramos 1987; Grinberg-Zylberbaum et al. 1994; Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1997) as well as in several Mexican psychology journals (BIBLAT 2020).[171] Having also written over 50 books during his prolific career, it is argued that Grinberg-Zylberbaum's greatest contribution to what is now called the field of "contemplative sciences" (Interviewee's book) was developing the Syntergic Theory in the early 1980s (Grinberg-Zylberbaum 1981).

Grinberg-Zylberbaum also initiated himself in different spiritual traditions. For instance, he engaged with different yoga gurus such as Swami Muktananda during his stay in New York;

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[170] Consider for example, how Pachita was highly regarded in the Mexican political sphere. Additionally, at that time, Grinberg-Zylberbaum was also interested in Carlos Castaneda's anthropological work as mentioned earlier. Castaneda's work was published from the late 1960s to the beginning of the 1990s influencing the larger Mexican as well as the US popular cultures, although it is regarded as controversial since many anthropologists questioned the truthfulness of his account.

[171] BIBLAT stands for *Bibliografía Latinoamericana en Revistas de Investigación Científica y Social* [Latin American Bibliography in Scientific and Social Research Journals]. It is a specialised online archive where scientific and academic journals published in Latin America and the Caribbean can be retrieved. Grinberg-Zylberbaum published his work in Mexican journals such as *Revista Mexicana de Psicología*, *Revista de Cultura Psicológica*, and *Revista Intercontinental de Psicología y Educación*.

he learned MT at Maharishi Centre in Mexico City and had also travelled to Asia undertaking long meditation retreats and meeting other Indian yoga and meditation teachers including S.N. Goenka.[172]

Additionally, he also attended an ecumenical ceremony during the first visit of the Dalai Lama to Mexico in 1989, i.e. the Interreligious Council of Mexico (CIM) mentioned earlier. The photograph available online (see Public Facebook group Jacobo Grinberg Científico – Escritor 2019), shows 12 male religious representatives from different religions including Grinberg-Zylberbaum on behalf of the Jewish religious community; all gathered at Mexico City's Cathedral (Interviewee's book), during the visit of the Dalai Lama to Mexico in 1989.

What has been less discussed in the documents retrieved, but which some of the interviewees in my study revealed, is that Grinberg-Zylberbaum pioneered the teaching of meditation at UNAM Faculty of Psychology. It is interesting to see how his work shifted towards the revision of Buddhist meditation practices and the articulation of his proposal of *meditación autoalusiva* [self-regarded meditation] in alignment with his Syntergic Theory to explain conscious experience. Grinberg-Zylberbaum's work is considered, among some of my interviewees, as an important milestone in the development of meditative practice in Mexico.[173] As I analysed the documents I found and traced some of the early scientific work on the study of meditation elsewhere, some themes become apparent in explaining the reasons why the contributions from a Mexican scientist have been unacknowledged, arguing at the same time, its relevance in understanding present-day delivery of 'mindfulness' in Mexico.[174]

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[172] In his 1987 book "*Meditación Autoalusiva*" ["Self-regarding Meditation"], Grinberg-Zylberbaum cited having had personal communication with S.N. Goenka in 1984. Satya Narayan Goenka was a Burmese teacher who learnt Vipassana meditation through the layman Sayagyi U Ba Khin (a particualr Theravada Buddhist lineage, Wilson 2014, p. 33). S.N. Goenka's Vipassana meditation influenced Kabat-Zinn's work on MBSR since the latter trained as a meditation teacher with Kornfield, Goldstein, and Salzburg at the Insight Meditation Society who were former students of S.N. Goenka (see Wilson 2014, p.35).

[173] One interviewee, Antonio, was critical about locating Grinberg-Zylberbaum's work as "mindfulness" or in reference to "Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness" lineage. He positioned Grinberg-Zylberbaum's perspective at the "fringe".

[174] His legacy is alive since some of his former students and collaborators have been confirming the research work, they were developing at the UNAM laboratory, publishing never-seen-before findings and manuscripts in memory of his disappearance and unfinished work. Also, the impact of his work is still widespread in Mexican culture. For example, the public Facebook group *Jacobo Grinberg Científico – Escritor* [Jacobo Grinberg Scientists - Writer] set up as a space for study and discussion of his work, is formed by almost 9,000 members. Additionally, his public profile on this social media (i.e. @jacobogrinberg) is also followed by over 4,000 people, who are constantly updated on the recent developments such a newly launched website (Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum 2020) and online books shop, where unpublished as well as new editions of his work can be purchased.

Nevertheless, similar to Ken Wilber's model of transpersonal psychology (Fisher 1997), Grinberg-Zylberbaum's research was not critically examined by his psychology peers, not even today. I wondered to what extend ostracizing him as well as the research being conducted at the UNAM laboratory uncovered the preconceptions not only towards the exploration of 'non-traditional' subjects under the scrutiny of the scientific method in psychology but the study itself of those aspects deeply associated with epistemologies (e.g. pre-Hispanic knowledge and practices or even the re-invention of these) which have been largely oppressed and denied by Mexican psychologist themselves due to the colonising nature of reproducing Anglo-American models, theories and interventions.

According to Shapiro and Walsh's (1984) collection on classic and contemporary perspectives on meditation, several studies were being conducted on altered states of consciousness (among which standout the ones conducted by Richard Davidson, Daniel Goleman and Gary E. Schwartz since the mid-1970s, see pp. 227-231; 572-580; 599-632). Although some other studies were about the study of self-regulation strategies in clinical psychological research and the investigation of physiology of meditation using EEG, the studies included in the book represented largely US-based researchers.[175] The authors of the volume claim in the preface "this book contains articles which represent a broad overview of the field and which illustrate different methodological approaches" (p. xvii). In illuminating "both the art and the science of meditation" the studies report phenomenological experience from "Eastern classical texts and from data measured by the most technologically advanced scientific equipment" (p. xvii). Certainly the importance of only particular meditation practices was articulated (i.e. Asian meditation practices). Furthermore, in the last part of the book regarding views on the state-of-the art on meditation US Albert Ellis, creator of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, alerts the reader of an "antiscientific meditation" which besides consisting of the "same kind of focusing or cognitive concentration techniques" (as the 'scientific meditation'), it is characterised by a "mystically oriented philosophy that is not empirically verifiable". According to Ellis, "one of the goals of Western psychology and psychiatry can well be that of aiding scientific and unmasking antiscientific meditation" (Shapiro and Walsh 1984, p. 673). The scepticism echoed by Ellis towards the non-scientific meditation practices represented some of the concerns at that time.

There was a parallel rise of the New Age from the 1960s to the early 1970s in the US which also impacted Mexico in different ways; and which arguably influenced the way in which the

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[175] From the 59 authors of the publications included in Shapiro and Walsh's (1984) book, only 10 came from other countries such as England, Autralia, Canada, Japan, France, India, and Wales (with Paul Williams from the Department of Psychological Medicine, University Hospital of Wales).

introduction of the study of consciousness and meditation into mainstream psychology was then seen with caution.

5.8. Conclusion

Participants' *emic* conceptualisations of meditative practices based on an interpretative repertoires analysis as presented in this chapter provides evidence that contests the assumption of a 'universal' definition of 'mindfulness' as conveyed in psychological, social scientific and cultural studies from the Anglophone perspective (Wilson 2014; Gleig 2019; Kucinskas 2019). While some psychological experimental researchers (López and Hernández-Pozo 2016) have also strived for the development of a unified conceptual description of MBSR to maintain its 'essence', at the same time that it is also adapted to specific socio-cultural contexts, the interview data and documentary analysis reveal that Mexican 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers and researchers used different definitions on the ground. Therefore, a sole conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' cannot be assumed.

In responding to my first research question *1. How have meditative practices emerged and evolved in Mexico according to interviewees' accounts and document analysis?* and sub-question *1.1 What are the emic conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context?* this chapter evidences another two important findings. First, that the varied conceptualisations or repertoires employed by the participants in practice are sensitive to linguistic nuances since they are dependent upon the Spanish language (e.g. the *atención consciente* and *atención plena* repertoires) as well as the use of the English term 'mindfulness'. And second, that the emergence of these practices is historically and socio-culturally situated in the Mexican context. It has been intertwined with the development of psychoanalysis and experimental psychology, the spread of different Buddhist traditions (Zen and Theravada) in Mexico overlapping with the growth of Anglo-American MBIs such as Kabat-Zinn's MBSR. Indeed, the interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988; Wetherell and Potter 1992) identified relate to historical influences: the encounter of Suzuki and Fromm, the shift of Fromm's meditation practice to Vipassana as taught by Nyanaponika, and the development of the Spanish version (REBAP) of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR.

The critical historical analysis undertook also exposed fascinating trends. On the one hand, the varied historical routes and turning points aligns with recent historical work (Harrington and Dunne 2015; Fox Lee 2019; Helderman 2019; Hickey 2019) challenging the central narrative concerning the origination of the "mindfulness movement" with the creation of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme in the 1990s. In particular, I uncovered milestones such as Erich

Fromm and Dr Córdova's legacy and Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum's lines of work, which shaped significantly the historical development of Mexican meditative practices. On the other hand, in line with Drage's (2019) findings, my analysis reveals the 'hidden' role of women leaders in the dissemination of 'mindfulness', through the construction of transnational bonds with Mexico, as well as early contributions in the translation of MBSR for Hispanic population more specifically in the US.

Finally, the findings of this chapter make a novel contribution in discovering a tension between the development of MBSR and the Spanish version REBAP which allows us to ponder two things. Firstly, the state-of-the-art regarding scientific research on 'mindfulness' in the Spanish language (Chapter 3) given its particular historical development in Mexico. Secondly, the implications that the Anglocentric point of view on the topic of 'mindfulness' has by overshadowing our understanding not only about the emergence and evolution of 'mindfulness' in Mexico but the way in which meditative practices are conceptualised in Spanish, and the practical consequences this might have on the ground for the Mexican case. For instance, it was found that Mexican psychologists and psychotherapists tend to articulate their 'mindfulness' repertoires in reference to "psychological language" – attention, consciousness, awareness, and self-analysis. Using Gilbert and Mulkay's (1984) metaphor of opening Pandora's box, the analysis has allowed me to "give some of these voices the opportunity of being heard" (p. 2), evidencing not only the various repertoires articulated but the relevance of examining the *emic* conceptualisations within the Mexican context considering a situated gaze.

The next chapter explores who the Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers are disseminating and teaching meditative practices, the social organisation of the institutions they conform to, and the sectors in which they deliver these practices.

Chapter 6: The Mexican 'Mindfulness' Network

6.1. Introduction

Following the description of the interpretative repertoires of 'mindfulness' historically developed and linguistically and socio-culturally situated in the Mexican context (Chapter 5), the present chapter, aims to respond to research question *2. In what ways have Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers been shaping the implementation and dissemination of meditative practices across sectors in the Mexican context?* and sub-question *2.1 What is the social organisation of the Mexican meditative practices milieu?* To articulate my findings, I have organised the data in a three-level analysis which builds from both, the interrelated patterns of individual professional biographies and journeys of the research participants (level 1), to the formation of different associations and institutions across different sectors, i.e. the public and private sectors as well as the civil society in Mexico (level 2). The final meta-analysis (level 3) examines the social organisation (levels 1 and 2) of a Mexican 'mindfulness' network.

This chapter shows that the variety of 'mindfulness' approaches found in Mexico are largely explained by participants' biographical and professional trajectories.[176] Rather than constituting a cohesive 'mindfulness field' or continuing a 'mindfulness movement' (Wilson 2014, see Chapter 2), the provision of meditative practices across Mexican sectors seems to have a heterogeneous arrangement. Indeed, the examination of the social organisation of the research participants and the associations they belong to, reveals a complex configuration: a hybrid network shaped by a generational arrangement of both people and organisations established, with irregular ties between them. Besides, through my working thesis of 'pioneers' in combination with participants' overlapping social identities and positions, I uncovered the difficult feelings and micro-politics experienced in this milieu, as well as entangled and contradictory arguments concerning the 'authority' over teaching 'mindfulness' as I will exemplified.

Chapter 6 findings are based on interview data, online documents, and archives (i.e. people and organisations' public websites, leaflets), as well as my field notes; collated in alignment with a bricolage approach and following the thematic analysis as an organising principle

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[176] Influenced by a psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001), I want to stress that I see participants' biographical and professional trajectories interwoven with the Mexican historical and socio-cultural context I discussed in Chapter 5. I have addressed them in two different chapters for practical reasons to develop my argument and provide answers to the research questions proposed.

(Chapter 4). The bricolage strategy for this chapter involved a multiplicity of analyses driven inductively (e.g. construction of a matrix and tables for synthesising data, Mamas 2018). This was required due to the multidimensional aspects relating to my research question *2.* and sub-question *2.1* addressed in the three-level of analysis outlined above. Yet, two strategies guided the analysis of the multi-modal data gathered here, namely, the psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001) in relation to the difficult feelings and emotional reactions arising throughout the research process, and feminist intersectional analysis (Phoenix 2006) sensitive to the overlapping of social identities, social relations and power dynamics between interviewees' and the interviewer.[177] I now summarise the interviewees' biographies and professional journeys (level 1 of the analysis) as I documented in this study's sample.

6.2. Biographies and professional journeys (level 1)

The richness found in interviewees' narratives was fascinating to me since each journey appeared singular in its own right. As suggested in Chapter 5, investigating interviewees' professional biographies and their encounter with meditative practices in their personal lives, provided an insightful historical overview of the development of this phenomenon in the Mexican context. Further analysis in this line, had shed light on the current configuration of the Mexican meditative practices milieu. During my several participations in academic conferences and retreats on 'mindfulness' throughout my PhD, as well as during my fieldwork in Mexico, I became aware of how important it was for many practitioners, facilitators, and researchers to articulate the benefits and the relevance of these practices by elaborating on their personal meditation practice and the impact of it in relation to their own life histories and professional journeys (I have narrated my own in Chapter 1). I was then astonished by the prominence of this pattern both at the international level of the 'mindfulness field' and across the empirical data I collected in Mexico.[178]

In contrast with the overwhelming studies regarding the effects of 'mindfulness' on psychological and medical conditions, academic research concerning 'mindfulness', practitioners, and teachers' trajectories from a biographical point of view, has been scant. The studies available so far have focused on exclusively in the US scene (Stiles 2011; Wilson

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[177] For theorising the 'mindfulness' network in the meta-analysis, I employed scientific literature on Social Network Analysis (SNA). However, rather than being interested in conducting any metrics or considering classical sociological theories for the analysis, I only produced a visual representation of the network in a diagram showing the complexity of patterns and relationships among interviewees and organisations.

[178] While the biographical approach during the interviews have presupposed 'self-narration' by the participants, the biographical pattern was evident at the seminars, retreats, and conference where participant observation was conducted.

2014; Hickey 2019; Kucinskas 2019; Pagis 2019), except Pagis (2019) who also conducted her fieldwork in Israel; a few in the UK context (Cook 2016; Wheater 2017; Drage 2018a; 2018b) or about internationally re-known Buddhist figures such as Thich Nhat Hanh (Sullivan and Arat 2018).[179] While these studies are useful in providing insights regarding important aspects of those who have either become teachers developing 'mindfulness' interventions or entered to the area of 'mindfulness' as Buddhist practitioners, these studies document experiences and histories from the "Global North". As Stanley and Kortelainen (2020) assert based on their review of the academic literature, "self-identities of mindfulness teachers, are socially produced in complex and contradictory ways, which are contextually specific" (p. 23). Thus, scholarship regarding unexplored geographical areas such as Mexico is important for different reasons: the understanding of the pathways that Mexican advocates of 'mindfulness' might have followed (i.e. including the ones who are also embedded in local cultures beyond the scientific and the Buddhist domains), the multiple approaches being taught, and the tensions that emerge due to participants' social identities and the socio-cultural specificity of the Mexican setting.

The biographical theme is addressed in two ways. The first one, described in turn, relates to describing the 'common' trajectories that interviewees reported following throughout their professional biographies and their encounter with meditative practices.[180]

6.2.1. Participants' trajectories: A 'common path' with two paths

During the data analysis, I noted that participants' biographies - and particularly their encounter with meditative practices - marked their professional trajectories as well as their present area of activities where they disseminate and teach these practices in Mexico. Following a thematic analysis of the interview data, I identified a 'common path' which holds the participants' biographies together: their encounter with a form of meditation practice at some point in their lives. Interestingly, however, in relation to this 'common path' of

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[179] It is important to mention that recent PhD thesis (Wheater 2017; Drage 2018a; Karelse 2019; Hailwood 2020; Lilley 2020) remain inaccessible to date. Also, the findings of the UK-based research project "Beyond Personal Wellbeing: Mapping the Social Production of Mindfulness in England and Wales" by Stanley et al. will be published later in 2021 and 2022.

[180] Beyond interviewees' individual idiosyncrasies in their biographical accounts, I identified some 'common' patterns regarding interviewees' disciplinary backgrounds and the type trajectories they followed upon encountering meditative practices. The second direction in which I will analyse this biographical theme in the present chapter is the significance of interviewees' professional backgrounds including the intersection of their different social identities (i.e. positioning themselves as Buddhist practitioners, 'mindfulness' practitioners and/or 'mindfulness' teachers) with their current areas of activity (e.g. research, psychotherapy, education, etc.); and the tensions arising from the approaches they have taken for teaching 'mindfulness'. I will return to this later in this chapter.

interviewees' personal practice, I identified a pattern; that is, a bifurcation of the pathway where scientists entered the field of Buddhism and a second path where Buddhist practitioners gravitated towards the area of contemporary and scientific 'mindfulness'. In the first path or trajectory, I found that interviewees whose professional background was a scientific one (involving disciplines such as physics, biology, chemistry, and psy-disciplines) became meditation practitioners themselves with varying degrees of experience after encountering meditation for various reasons. Several of my interviewees reported that they began to be interested in Buddhist philosophy and practice so that, regardless of their scientific background, they eventually became committed to Buddhist meditation practice or becoming Buddhist themselves.[181] Then, over time, interviewees found ways of integrating aspects of Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice in their professional activity areas.

As for the second trajectory, I identified some interviewees who, as Buddhist practitioners, arrived at the terrain of contemporary 'mindfulness' practice and teaching, where some started to be trained in modern 'secular mindfulness' certifications and others started delivering courses under the umbrella term of 'mindfulness'. Yet in some cases, as participants conveyed in the interviews, their teaching has been highly underpinned by Buddhist philosophy. The popularity of contemporary 'mindfulness' has served as a platform to move outside the confines of Buddhist centres in Mexico. As expressed explicitly by one female interviewee "basically the practice of meditation was something that happened in the Sanghas, in the communities of practice of the Buddhist traditions" (Clara). During the past few years, the boundaries between the settings where Buddhist meditation practice and contemporary 'mindfulness' are taught have blurred, as 'mindfulness' has been also inside Buddhist centres as well as into the public sphere in Mexico.[182]

I was particularly interested in the pattern of this 'common path' with two pathways since, on the one hand, it showed how strongly the topic of Buddhism was discussed by my interviewees in the biographical interview and the great influence it also appeared to have on interviewees' personal encounter with meditative practices as they mentioned Buddhism specifically as the root for knowing meditative practices (e.g. either at Buddhist centres or in association with Buddhist ideas in fields such as psychoanalysis and psychotherapy). Consider for instance, that Catholicism remains one of the main religions for most of the population in Mexico which contrasts with Buddhism being a minority of religions in the country (May May 2015b; De la

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[181] In Chapter 4, I mentioned that for participants in the study sample there was an important difference between having first-person experience of Buddhist meditation (i.e. being a "Buddhist meditation practitioner") versus participants' self-identification or affiliation to Buddhism (i.e. being a "Buddhist practitioner").
[182] I present a case study documenting this tension in Chapter 7.

Torre et al. 2017). A female, middle-aged Buddhist practitioner and medical doctor, Clara, argued that historical events such as the presence of Fromm and Ejo Takata in Mexico "were very little things [considering the scale of Mexican territory] and limited to a very small group of people who, by definition, were not Catholic". The study of Buddhist philosophy and practice has been highly associated with educated and middle- and upper- class groups in urban areas of Mexico (May May 2015b) which partly accounts for this finding in my sample.[183] Yet, there were very few interviewees who encountered Anglo-American MBIs (the so-called 'secular, scientific interventions') without necessarily being either linked to Buddhist meditation or in the context of a Buddhist centre.

Interestingly, this finding dovetails with the generational pattern I discuss in the next section. I found the youngest generation (below 40 years) of practitioners, teachers, and researchers reported to have encountered 'mindfulness' in some form of Anglo-American 'secular, scientific intervention', whereas the older generations (above 40 years) reported having been in contact with Buddhism in their professional trajectories. Similarly, this biographical pattern of practising meditation at a personal level, aligns with the historical development routes of meditative practices in Mexico identified in Chapter 5; namely, via different Buddhist traditions (i.e. Zen, Vipassana and Tibetan, see also Chapter 3) and their entanglement within psy-disciplines such as psychoanalysis and transpersonal psychology.[184] Still, these historical milestones were peripheral or marginal in the development of the psy-disciplines in Mexico; because there was an important resistance within other areas of psychology as illustrated in the case of Grinberg-Zylberbaum and *atención plena* in educational settings as I narrated earlier (Chapters 1 and 5).

While the two trajectories discussed above represent a visible pattern across most interviewees' professional biographies in my study, some interviewees also reported coming from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (see Chapter 4). Antonio, a male, middle-aged MBI teacher expressed "I think those who teach mindfulness in Mexico come from many areas of professional interest", which based on my analysis, holds true for the array of individual

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[183] Nonetheless, the spread of meditative practices in rural areas including at Indigenous communities highlights the changing patterns of such demographics, which itself overlaps with a wider trend of inter-religious diversity in the country (De la Torre et al. 2017). I provide further evidence on this in Chapter 8.

[184] One psychologist mentioned his training with transpersonal psychology as a gateway to meditation and the topic of spirituality. Although it was a less dominant pattern among interviewees, in the documentary analysis I also found texts such as LeShan's (1974) bestseller "*How to Meditate: A Auide to Self-Discovery*" and "*Psicología Transpersonal: Conciencia y Meditación"* ["Transpersonal Psychology: Awareness and Meditation"] by Eduardo Pintos Villariño (1996) as textbooks informing some Mexican psychology degrees.

biographies and trajectories encountered. Besides interviewees' disciplinary backgrounds just described, examining interviewees' biographies in matrices, provided insight into more specific trends (i.e. generational patterns and meditative practices' lineages) as I shall discuss in the next sections.[185]

The clusters and matrices I built for this analysis included different aspects: a) the places where interviewees encountered meditation (geographical location and the nature of the setting); b) their more salient social identity which encompassed, for instance, being Buddhist meditation practitioners, 'mindfulness' teachers and/or researchers and in some cases being Buddhist practitioners; c) interviewees' main professional background and area of activity, as well as d) the type of 'mindfulness' certifications or programmes in which they have been trained if so. Table 4 shows an example of these matrices, which has been simplified and some details have blanked out to avoid compromising interviewees' anonymity and confidentiality.

Table 4 Matrix Showing the Analysis of Participants' Professional Backgrounds and Trajectories Including both Buddhist Lineages and Foreign Influences

Foreign influence	Buddhist traditions		Foreign influence
	Triratna Buddhism (Having been ordained as 'Buddhist')	Tibetan Buddhism ('Buddhist meditation practitioners')	
UK and Europe	1	6	US 'mindfulness' certification
	2	7	
	3	8	
	4		
	5		
		9	US meditation practices other than MBI
		10	
		11	
		12	Asia
		13	Canada
		14	
		15	Asia

Note With regards to the foreign influences, interviewees reported to have trained in both scenarios, either abroad or in Mexico, as some teacher training programmes have been imported to the country. Some interviewees also described having a Buddhist meditation training in Asia as well as in some Asian languages. These were key elements differentiating the Mexican generations of meditative practices teachers, practitioners, and researchers. The disciplinary background would have been described underneath participants' pseudonyms (which have been replaced by random numbers in the table).

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[185] I created these forms of representation inductively to arrange interviewees' backgrounds information and to unpick patterns across their trajectories and ties among them (Mamas 2018).

6.2.2. Generational pattern

I identified the generational pattern across interviewees' biographies during the analysis of when and where they encountered any form of meditative practice; their professional journeys which involved training in one or several meditative practices; as well as their association with a Buddhist tradition or organisation. There were three important aspects associated with this generational pattern. The first is what interviewees routinely referred to as either the "preceding teachers" who introduced them to meditation or the notion that there have been people teaching "before them" (i.e. 'lineages'). Interviewees expressed a sense of continuation of the work of these preceding 'lineages' from the past to the present (see, for example, Shonin and Van Gordon 2015). As a female, middle-aged Buddhist practitioner and teacher described "we are developing our work on the shoulders of others" (Cecilia).[186]

The second aspect corresponds to interviewees' accounts about the acceptability of meditative practices among their peers when they first introduced these practices in their areas of activity. Stories about disapproval and difficulties reflected an important shift. Participants belonging to former generations might have "kept in secret" their engagement with meditation (see Chapter 5) and might have also had to fight against certain structures (e.g. dominant scientific paradigms, scepticism, and critique from colleagues). Whereas the trajectories of younger generations have been somewhat eased and open up; partly by the work of former generations building their 'lineages' but also because of the introduction of Anglo-American MBIs in the mainstream at a global scale.[187]

Furthermore, I found that there was a chronological progression in interviewees' biographical narratives, between their personal meditation practice, and later in their careers, encountering either the possibility of bringing this to their main area of activity or shifting to a trajectory where the provision of meditative practices has become their current 'profession'. Nonetheless, this was entangled with the growth in the acceptability and popularity of the practices (see Chapter

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[186] As I shall explore further in this chapter, admitting the work of former Buddhist teachers explains why, in some cases, interviewees resisted self-identified to the position of being a 'pioneer'. In fact, many interviewees expressed a sense of continuation of that work with a special connotation since they framed it as "sharing" the teachings, not necessarily as providing a type of 'service' whether this was a psychological, medical, or educational in a specific sector. Interviewees employed the word "transmission" to convey this meaning too.

[187] This is not to say that there is full acceptability of meditative practices across Mexican settings nowadays. Importantly, the aspect of the generational pattern emerged as a significant element in determining organically the criteria of research participants' "membership" to the social 'mindfulness' organisation I studied. This criterion reveals a distinction between the older and younger generations who have witnessed and drove the historical development of meditative practices and their transition to the larger Mexican public context versus the very recent younger generation who have then entered a scene of the popularisation of 'mindfulness' in the media and the wider culture.

5) and other contextual circumstances. For instance, one female participant narrated how her academic position and research interests coincided, allowing her to bring this topic into an area of psychology; while for another male MBI teacher, the fact that the university where he works became interested in incorporating 'mindfulness' as a daily practice inviting 'mindfulness' experts to the campus, has really influenced him to pursue this path even though he had read some of Kabat-Zinn's work years earlier.

Although some interviewees encountered meditation due to their personal life experiences, what inspired them to teach these practices to the Mexican population, as they conveyed, was the situatedness of the context where they were working (i.e. the 'need' that arose in those settings). For example, interviewees mentioned: that "it was required at the Buddhist centre"; their own motivation to benefit others such as children facing bullying and violent situations at school; as a proposal of a new psychological paradigm. With regards to particular socio-cultural and political conditions in Mexico, I found that even the request from a national institution to develop programmes aligned with an international framework being brought to Mexican sectors (i.e. the promotion of "secular ethics" in education, see Chapter 3) was among the circumstances influencing the dissemination of meditative practices. For a few others, teaching meditation represented almost a 'moral duty' – for being 'pushed' to teach since they have the knowledge and experience as practitioners; and considering that the practices themselves generated positive impact in people. In line with the psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001) underpinning this study, the above demonstrates the inextricable relationship between people's subjectivity – in this sense, interviewees' biographies, and trajectories – and the socio-cultural and political context where the dissemination of meditative practices has been taking place in Mexico. The entanglement between interviewees' trajectories and the generational pattern identified can be furthered explored in meditative practices 'lineages'.

6.2.3. Tracing Mexican meditative practices 'lineages'

In tracing meditative practices 'lineages' within my Mexican sample, I found a trend of older generations of interviewees with a longer trajectory of personal practice, being associated more with their first encounter with Buddhist meditation or their involvement with Buddhism (as Buddhist practitioners or working at Buddhist centres). This revealed the 'lineages' coming from certain Buddhist schools: Triratna (formerly FWBO), Tibetan, Theravada and Zen. Interestingly, many of these Buddhist 'lineages' in turn, were also linked to certain types of foreign 'mindfulness' interventions and training programmes that interviewees gradually incorporated in their professional trajectories, such as Anglo-American MBIs as well as

programmes translated into Spanish. In contrast, the trajectories of younger generations were less associated with firstly encountering Buddhist meditation, reporting instead knowing the Anglo-American MBIs in the first place. It would be misleading to say there was a clear boundary between the "Buddhist-inspired lineages" versus "secular and scientific lineages" based on the Anglo-American MBIs. As Antonio remarked, even if it is a secular current "it is still a lineage"; plus, the degree to which each of the 'lineages' used Buddhist philosophy and/or scientific discourse varied, but always appeared in an entwined and multifaceted way across the interview accounts.[188]

At some point during my fieldwork, I questioned why I was finding a such a prevalent presence of Buddhism as a topic, and Buddhist practitioners within my sample; since to a large degree my research originated from the interest of studying *atención plena* as I encountered this practice within a secular setting (Chapter 1). As mentioned earlier, few participants' trajectories involved starting from the 'secular, scientific mindfulness' without having had an early connection to Buddhism.[189] I pondered if this was a manifestation of a more recent trend in the spread of some of the meditative practices in Mexico, since I noticed the rapid proliferation of new organisations and entrepreneurs disseminating 'mindfulness' in the time-lapse between my fieldwork (mid-January and July 2019) and the analysis of my data (August 2019 to June 2020) and writing up (July 2020 to March 2021). Though my analysis became clear this shift was precisely linked to the generational pattern observed.

6.2.4. The 'hidden path': Lineages rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and practices

In analysing the Mexican meditative practices 'lineages' further, I uncovered a pathway beyond the twofold pathway trajectories (i.e. based on Buddhist and scientific epistemologies and backgrounds) discussed above. This 'hidden path' concerns the trajectories grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and their cultural practices in the context of Mexico, which appears to be the "elephant in the room" (Zerubavel 2006) within the larger field of "contemplative

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[188] Examples of these lineages are articulated in the case studies presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

[189] Questions concerning the professionalisation of 'mindfulness' in Mexico were not originally among the topics to be addressed in this study. However, during the analysis it appeared that being certified in MBIs abroad, and seldomly being trained in protocols locally, have been characterising the different generations I traced. Interestingly, some interviewees reported to be "resisting" the foreign and dominant 'mindfulness' programmes. Even though they have been certified, they reported not to be teaching those protocols. Instead, adapting the practice for the Mexican context and developing new approaches. I thought of this finding as a theme of 'pioneering' (later re-conceptualised as 'innovation'), due to the different 'mindfulness' repertoires (Chapter 5) and the heterogeneity of the 'mindfulness' provision as this chapter will demonstrate.

studies".[190] With the accounts of some of my interviewees who had an Indigenous background and who have engaged with the practice of *plena consciencia* (also referred to as "engaged Buddhism"), I learned an important lesson. Specifically, how local knowledge and practices rooted in Indigenous epistemologies have been largely undervalued 'lineages' in the field of contemplative studies as well as in the dissemination and application of mainstream 'mindfulness' as a 'scientifically proven Buddhist-derived practice'. The contemplative culture, as Kucinskas' (2019) documented in her empirical research in the US, can be conceptualised as "a secularized cultural amalgam of the values, ideology, and meditation practices from multiple Buddhist lineages, including Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen traditions, as well as humanistic American intellectual and spiritual traditions" (pp. 3-4). This mirrors some of the patterns I have found, but with the addition of Indigenous lineages.

Sherman (2014) contends that the field of contemplative studies since its first US academic conference, the *International Symposia for Contemplative Studies* in 2012, has focused "almost exclusively on the study of Eastern contemplative traditions and practices, on the one hand, and Western sciences, on the other" (p. 208). This wider inequitable context reflects the emphasis that is given in the academic literature on the investigation and dissemination of the two dominant pathways documented above (i.e. the Buddhist and the scientific one) over 'lineages' connected with Indigenous knowledge and practices. My study contributes to making visible a "conspiracy of silence" (Zerubavel 2006) connected with the 'hidden path' documented here. Simultaneously, contending not only its relevance in understanding the emergence and evolution of 'mindfulness' within the Mexican intercultural context (Dietz 2018) but its importance in being studied in its own right.[191]

To introduce the next level of analysis which includes the organisations and provision of meditative practices across sectors (level 2) the study sample is described in turn.

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[190] As I will argue, this field has been mostly concerned with the study of meditative practices derived from Buddhism; and more occasionally has also included the study of Christian meditative practices (e.g. Wilhoit 2019). Yet other forms of knowledges and practices have been "denied" and "ignored". As Zerubavel (2006) argues "The "elephant in the room" is thus evocative of any object or matter of which everyone is definitely aware yet no one is willing to publicly acknowledge" (p. 11), and this 'hidden path' represents, those 'lineages' that have been ignored.

[191] This seems to be a growing area of academic interest. During the write up period of my thesis, I found Yuria Celidwen's work. She is a scholar of Indigenous Nahua and Maya descent from the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, who has recently called for bringing Indigenous 'science and contemplative practice' in the larger field of contemplative studies (Celidwen 2020).

6.3. Description of the study sample

The study sample forms a transnational (Nehring et al. 2014) social organisation due to the mobility of some of the members and the configuration of their organisations delivering meditative practices outside the Mexican territory or to the Mexican population but remotely. From the total sample (N = 42), most participants were born in Mexico (n = 37).[192] While I did not use nationality (i.e. 'being Mexican') as an inclusion criterion for my sample (see Chapter 4) but only teaching of 'mindfulness' in Mexico, the sense of belonging and connection to Mexican culture as well as being self-identified as Mexican or Indigenous, emerged as an important theme in the data analysis.

The interviewees' geographical locations in terms of where they live and deliver meditative practices in relationship with the exploration of issues around identity, provided a valuable understanding of the specificity of this Mexican sample. I have addressed these emerging themes in relation to the framework of *Mexicanidad* or sense of Mexicanity to account for the sense of connection or affective bond with Mexican culture as well as for residing and working there (i.e. the affective turn as one of the aspects defining *Mexicanidad* as I have argued in the Epilogue). This appeared of great importance when researching in the Mexican intercultural context; because two of my research participants identified themselves as Indigenous, and other participants emphasised their sense of Mexican identity during the interview. For instance, one opened his narrative by stating "I am Mexican"; while for others it was important to point out regional differences like "I'm northern" or *"Soy chilanga"* [I am chilanga]; which implied particular idiosyncrasies within Mexico. For example, the widespread assumptions that Mexican Northern people tend to be more direct and with a stronger voice pitch, whereas the demonym *chilanga* is not only used in the Mexican slang to refer to people living in Mexico City, but it also connotes a sense of snobbery to differentiate people living in the country's capital from those living in the provinces.[193] Interestingly, one interviewee argued about the Buddhist notion of not-self "having no attachment to a specific identity". The above indicated how important social identity was for interviewees and its specificity to the Mexican context, occasionally, influenced by participants' Buddhist identity.

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[192] Five participants were born in other countries in Latin America (n = 2) and Europe (n = 3). No further analysis was conducted of interviewees' biographies about how they moved from their home country to Mexico since the focus of the study remained on the present-day provision of meditative practices in Mexican settings.
[193] Here the provinces refer to any of the other 31 states in Mexico.

Finally, out of the 42 interviewees, most of the participants (n = 38) live and work within the Mexican territory. Twenty-three of them are based in the capital of the country, Mexico City, while 15 of the participants cover the provision of meditative practices across seven states in Mexico (see Table 5).[194] Based on the study sample, a significant trend is that of the majority of meditative practices provision is centralised in Mexico City versus the lower numbers distributed in other Mexican states. Except for one participant who has always lived outside Mexico, the remaining three are participants originally born in Mexico who moved to Anglo-American countries for different reasons, who have had and continue to have a fundamental input in the dissemination and teaching of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. I refer to this geographical distribution of the sample as the transnational feature (Nehring et al. 2014); which can be understood in relation to the importation of some of the Anglo-American MBIs in Mexico as described in Chapter 5. Likewise, this characteristic also highlights the influx from Mexico to those Anglophone nations and then again, the foreign influence traveling back to inter-cultural Mexico.

Table 5 Geographical Distribution of the Study Sample

		Region	Total (Interviewees)	%
Geographical location where participants currently live and deliver meditative practices	Mexico	Capital — Centralised in Mexico City	23	55
		Provinces — Spread across other seven states	15	36
	Abroad	Scattered provision	4	10
		Grand Total	42	100

Note. I employ the general term 'provinces' to differentiate the distribution between the 31 states and Mexico City as the capital of the country. Nevertheless, locations in province do not entail rural areas only. I decided to disguise the latter and the urban areas also found in province following the ethical considerations discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, the WhatsApp group of which some Mexican meditative practices' practitioners, teachers and researchers are members, was an important criterion in the sampling of research participants (Chapter 4). This virtual group was an indicator of some degree of online communication between the members facilitating the 'connection' between the organisations

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[194] I will provide examples of fascinating tensions that arise in the provision of meditative practices in relation to the specificity of socio-cultural and geographical locations in Mexico in Chapters 7 and 8.

they represent. In the following sections, I examine the Mexican organisations mapped through the study sample, describing how are they distributed in relation to the different sectors where they deliver meditative practices.

6.4. Configuration of meditative practices by sector (level 2)

Using a bricolage approach to collate data, I examined each case, interviewees (people) and their organisations/institutions, in relation to the classification by sectors (i.e. public, private, and civil society) and the areas of activity in which they are active in the teaching of meditative practices. Although the interviews were informed by the biographical approach I took, I explored with participants the sectors where their activities or their organisations fall. Many interviewees dedicated part of their narratives to explain the history of their organisations, commenting also about the 'mission' and motivations guiding their work. Thus interviewees indirectly signalled the nature of their organisations and the sector where their areas of activity were located, which during the analysis I contrasted with the public images articulated through online publicity and looking at the content of the organisations' public web pages, also integrating the analysis of field notes taken in the ethnographic observations.

Broadly speaking the categories of public and private sectors do not present a major difference with the common definitions employed. Yet, the demarcation of the social sector or 'civil society' in Mexico is controversial at both theoretical and practical levels according to the literature reviewed (see Appendix O for the definitions guiding this analysis).[195] The eclectic theoretical approach taken to conceptualising Mexican civil society constitutes not only an attempt to bridge the distinct theoretical perspectives on the matter but for addressing what appears to be a core aspect of the delivery of meditative practices in Mexico: a) the intertwined co-operation between different types of organisations within the social sector and the often-blurry boundaries between the private organisations and civil society; and b) the tensions that arise due to the ethos of each sector. This core finding aspect is anticipated very clearly by Landim and Thompson (1996) in their overview of the social sector in Latin American countries:

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[195] The concept of civil society is surrounded by debates within the social sciences in general (see Edwards 2011); however, the discussion of such debates is beyond the scope of this study. I do not use the term 'third sector' (*tercer sector* in Spanish) based on my review of the literature (Landim and Thompson 1996; Verduzco Igartúa 2003) and considering that some organisations identified their activities with Mexican 'civil society' rather than 'third sector'. Olvera (2019) contends that 'third sector' is a concept that was popularised by American and European international academic networks and institutions in Latin America in the 1990s, which nevertheless, fails to explain the heterogeneous composition of the social sector in Mexico. For a comprehensive delineation of some of the debates as well as discussion of the meanings of civil society according to historical, social, and political contexts in the "Global South", see Kamruzzaman (2019).

What can be called a "nonprofit sector" goes beyond the NGOs phenomenon. It comprises a vast universe of associations and organizations, with varying degrees of legal formality and with multiple, and not always clear, functions. If there is a common feature to all the countries studied [including Mexico] that is that the different historical conglomerates of nonprofit organizations played differential roles and established changing relationships to social movements, economic and political interests, and power elites. Their frequent ambiguous position between the public and the private, the religious and the secular, the autonomy and the co-optation is perhaps the most defying challenge to understand (p. 12).

With this eclectic theoretical approach in mind and considering that the theme around public/private and civil society emerged as relevant in my data, I guided my analysis based on the empirical investigation of the Mexican meditative practice organisations.[196] For practical purposes and clarity in describing my findings, I present two tables in the following sections. I commence by showing the classification by sectors employing interviewees as the unit of analysis, and then display the analysis by sector based on the provision covered by the Mexican organisations and institutions.

6.4.1. Provision of meditative practices across sectors by interviewees

The categorisation based on interviewees' areas of activity revealed that the provision of meditative practices is organised around eight different sectors (see Table 6). Three of these correspond to health, psychotherapy services and education which are distinguished by the subcategories "public" and "private" to differentiate the public sphere is being associated with government institutions specifically. Coaching became an independent category since this type of activity is significant in accounting for the introduction of 'mindfulness' in one-to-one situations but which does not fall neatly into either health or psychotherapy services. Then, the label civil society encompasses three main areas found among interviewees' activities: work developed with Indigenous communities, vulnerable groups, and human rights activists. The remaining three categories concern the delivery of meditative practices at corporations (including businesses and companies), and Buddhist centres of all traditions, and even another religious group.

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[196] In analysing closely this theme, I considered the following elements to organise the data: 1) interviewees and organisations' main areas of activity; 2) the way of working (i.e. as self-employed, entrepreneurial or as an organisation/association corresponding across the different sectors); 3) the kinds of meditative practices programmes and courses delivered and their "ethos" (i.e. views underpinning those programmes); 4) the type of population their provision was tailored to; and 5) the financial aspect of the organisations as portrayed in the public advertising or revealed in the interviewees' accounts.

Organising interviewees in relation to these eight categories, reveals that interviewees operate across multiple sectors with rare cases falling within just one category. A major trend observed is 'mindfulness' provision in the sector of education, followed by the health sector and psychotherapy (which implications I address in further detail later in this section). It is important to note an evident overlap between sectors, since some people are active not only in disseminating meditative practices within the corporate world or the public health and educational settings, but they also teach in the context of most Buddhist centres. The 'secular' versus 'Buddhist' tension arises because the Mexican constitution dictates secularity in the public sphere. This contrasts with the spiritual or religious ethos of Buddhist Centres. Finally, in relation to these blurred boundaries between the 'secular' and the 'religious' and given the increasing inter-religious diversity in Mexico (De la Torre et al. 2017), it was fascinating to also find that a 'secular' approach to *atención plena* has been brought to one Mexican non-Christian religious.[197]

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[197] Although I do not expand on this case due to space constraints in the thesis, the discussion of a 'secular' approach to *atención plena* introduced to a non-Christian religious setting is worth exploring further in future research.

Table 6 Configuration of Mexican Interviewees who Disseminate and Teach Meditative Practices by Sector and Areas of Activity

	Sectors										
	Health		Psychotherapy services		Coaching	Education		Civil Society	Corporations	Buddhist Centres	Religious group
Interviewee	Public Hospitals and health institutes	Private Medical consultations and wellbeing	Public Civil associations	Private practice		Public	Private	Indigenous communities, vulnerable groups, and human rights activism			
1.								*			
2.						*		*			
3.								*			
4.		*						*		*	
5.						*	*	*		*	
6.						*	*				
7.						*					
8.						*	*				
9								*			
10.	*					*	*		*		
11.	*										
12.	*	*	*								
13.		*					*		*		
14.	*	*					*				*
15.		*			*						
16.		*									
17.	*	*									
18.				*		*	*				
19.				*							
20.				*		*					

Note. In this analysis 'coaching' is defined in relation to the introduction of 'mindfulness' in one-to-one sessions and the consideration that some interviewees might have also trained as a Mindful Coach or Life Coach (see e.g. Pagis 2016). Meanwhile, the category of 'religious group' refers to a non-Christian group.

Table 6 Continued

Interviewee	Health		Psychotherapy services		Coaching	Education		Civil Society	Corporations	Buddhist Centres	Religious group
	Public Hospitals and health institutes	Private Medical consultations and wellbeing	Public Civil associations	Private practice		Public	Private	Indigenous communities, vulnerable groups, and human rights activism			
21.				*	*	*				*	
22.				*		*					
23.			*								
24.	*					*					
25.				*		*					
26.	*					*					
27.	*										
28.	*			*							
29.						*					
30.			*	*		*					
31.				*	*	*	*	*			
32.						*					
33.	*			*		*					
34.		*				*	*				
35.						*	*				
36.					*			*	*		*
37.					*	*	*		*		
38.						*	*		*	*	
39.						*	*		*	*	
40.						*	*		*	*	
41.						*	*			*	
42.						*	*		*	*	
Total	10	8	2	11	5	24	18	7	8	9	1

Another interesting trend found was that some interviewees have brought meditative practices into areas relevant due to the specificity of the Mexican context. For instance: a socially-engaged 'mindfulness' programme promotes self-regulation strategies in vulnerable groups such as young adolescents who have had conflicts with the law due to violent situations. There is also work conducted with groups of human rights activists; as well as different workshops on reproductive rights, gender perspective, and meditative practices taught with Indigenous communities; all which, nonetheless, have not been addressed before in scientific literature on 'mindfulness'. These findings are important since they signpost some of the non-Anglophone scenarios where meditative practices are being delivered but which have remained understudied.[198]

As discussed in the next section, further understanding about the way in which meditative practices are delivered in Mexican settings was obtained by grouping interviewees and the organisations where they work together.

6.4.2. Provision of meditative practices across sectors by organisations

Similar to the configuration by interviewees discussed above, I found a multisectoral distribution of the total of 26 associations examined and tracked them via the sampling of my study. Following a thorough analysis of this arrangement, I realised that the complexity in identifying and delimiting the different sectors in which the organisations are active reflected not only the current debates in the academic literature concerning the conceptualisation of civil society (Olvera 2019), but also the intricacies of 'mindfulness' provision itself mentioned earlier. The 26 organisations listed in Table 7 represent almost the total of participants interviewed (N = 42), except seven of them. This is because these interviewees have introduced meditative practices as part of either being working in larger institutions such as in further and higher education (4 participants), within their private practice as psychotherapists (2 participants) or in an NGO where they belong (1 participant). Instead of being constituted as a separate association purely committed to the dissemination and delivery of meditative practices. The rest of the interviewees (n = 35) were representatives of the 26 organisations grouped in three different types: group 1 'collective organisations', group 2 'entrepreneurial style', and group 3 'association style with no self-branding orientation'.[199]

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[198] An exception is the study of 'mindfulness' and activism (Gorski 2015; Schmid and Taylor Aiken 2020), though these studies have been conducted in the US and UK contexts, respectively.
[199] At least six organisations offer Teacher Training programmes on meditative practices in Mexico.

As shown in Table 7, seven organisations were categorised in group 1 'collective organisations' since their structure entailed various members.[200] The other 13 correspond group 2 'entrepreneurial style'. Two elements of this 'entrepreneurial style' are the salient visibility of people's public image and a self-branding strategy adopted (Pagis and Ailon 2017). Although these two elements varied across the 13 cases, it is crucial to highlight the relevance of this theme. I was shocked by realising that women (n = 3) were outnumbered in this 'entrepreneurial' style by men (n = 11). At least two of these associations named and configured themselves as "institutes", therefore having more members involved in the organisation, yet had the male director figure as the representative public figure. Finally, the remaining six associations did not fall precisely in the previous distinctive patterns. Therefore, categorised in group 3 'association style with no self-branding orientation'.[201] All interviewees except one[202] were positioned as the directors or leaders of the organisations whose public image was conveyed as an 'association' and not in an 'entrepreneurial' style. Again, the dominant pattern of gender was identified: only two women represented these associations versus four men. Interestingly, the first group of 'collective organisations' revealed that in general, the presence of women versus male members in the same organisation was more prominent. As I present next, insights about the tensions across sectors and their implication in the wider milieu of meditative practices provision were gained.

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[200] The decision to interview different members of the 'collective organisations' was informed by my sample strategies (Chapter 4) and by the constitution of the organisations themselves since members were co-directors, shared the 'leadership role' and because their collective public image.

[201] This category for group 3 was a bit loose since in the complexity of the data and the organisations mapped, I identified yet another subdivision in this group; mainly, three cases of 'self-employed' interviewees.

[202] In this sole case, the main leader of the organisation did not accept to participate herself in the study but suggested to contact another member, as explained in Chapter 4.

Table 7 Configuration of Mexican Organisations and Institutions Disseminating Meditative Practices by Sector

		Sectors									
Organisation	Health		Psychotherapy services		Coaching	Education		Civil Society	Corporations	Buddhist Centres	Religious group
	Public	Private	Public	Private		Public	Private				
Group 1 A (4)		*		*		*					
B (3)		*				*	*		*		
C (3)						*		*			
D (2)						*	*	*			
E (2)		*				*	*				
F (1)	*	*				*				*	
G (1)	*	*		*		*			*		
Group 2 H	*					*	*	*	*		
I						*	*				
J		*				*			*		
K		*		*	*						
L		*					*				
M	*	*				*			*		
N	*	*		*	*	*				*	
O				*		*					
P	*				*	*	*				
Q					*					*	*
R					*	*	*		*		
S						*			*	*	
T							*			*	

Note. In Group 1 'collective organisations', the number of members interviewed belonging to each organisation is written in brackets. It was the case that I interviewed the directors or main leaders of the organisation and institutions except in case 'G' as explained in Chapter 4. The category 'civil society' is defined in relation to the areas of activities which the organisations of my study sample work with including the application of meditative practices: Indigenous communities, vulnerable groups, and human rights activism.

Table 7 Continued

Group 3	Organisation	Sectors										
		Health		Psychotherapy services		Coaching	Education		Civil Society	Corporations	Buddhist Centres	Religious group
		Public	Private	Public	Private		Public	Private				
	U		*						*		*	
	V	*						*			*	
	W						*	*				
	X				*		*	*				
	Y	*						*				
	Z		*	*	*		*					
	Total	8	12	1	7	1	14	18	4	7	7	1

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6.4.3. Meditative practices provision across sectors: Insights about the Mexican context

The heterogeneous social configuration of people and organisations driving the provision of Mexican meditative practices across sectors has key implications summarised in the following four points.

Firstly, the dissemination and delivery of meditative practices by Mexican practitioners, teachers, researchers, and their organisations distributed in a multisectoral fashion reveal that regardless of the ethos of the organisation or individual and their approach, the dissemination of meditative practices appears not being limited to a single sector. The multiplicity of settings found coincides with the study sample, specifically, interviewees' heterogeneous professional backgrounds. Yet, as I describe later in this chapter, the way in which interviewees and their organisations cross over certain sectors, becomes a political matter, regarding the 'authority' on who can teach (or not) meditative practices and where, and the reasons behind these positions. It also sheds light on how "institutionalised" 'mindfulness' is in Mexico.

Secondly, the different approaches to conceptualising meditative practices also emerges as a significant element in the type of tensions that occur in the ground when these practices are taught, not only between opposing sectors but also according to geographical and socio-cultural differences in Mexico (see Chapters 7 and 8). Thirdly, it seems that a bottom-up (or "from within") strategy has been employed in the introduction of meditative practices in the Mexican public sector (including health and educational settings).[203] In relation to the health sector, evidence (i.e. interviewees' accounts and analysis of some Mexican public institutions' online documents) indicates that the institutional endorsement has been articulated "from within"; that is, based on the active role by members working there or being invited through professional links. I was struck by how most of the organisations and individuals disseminating meditative practices seemed to be "detached" from, for example, health public institutions since their profile in the social media, their areas of activities, and the establishment of their associations seemed to fall within the private sector and civil society. Still, interviewees reported their active participation in programmes and courses developed in various public

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[203] A similar process has been documented in relation to the Mexican public education institutions. Even though education is a significant sector as a common area of activity for participants and organisations to deliver meditative practices (as shown in Tables 6 and 7), I decided not to review this sector in full because of the following reasons: a) the introduction of practices informed by Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice in the public 'secular' education sphere was considered very sensitive, and b) the set of empirical cases related to public and private health sector presented in Chapter 7, made a stronger case for exemplifying the complexity of 'mindfulness' delivery in the Mexican context.

health organisations, revealing the dissemination of meditative practices in the public institutions, something difficult to track otherwise.[204]

The last point I want to make relates to the insights gained with regards to the specificity of Mexican meditative practices. Certainly, 'mindfulness' in the form of MBSR is taught, and I found some accounts about "stress reduction" being one of the benefits obtained through these practices. However, as I already argued in Chapter 5 on the different conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' found in my study sample, the "stress-reduction" and the "improvement of wellbeing" on an individual level are not the only approaches. Among the Mexican individuals and organisations there are approaches seeking to tackle collective problems and social issues that are situated in the Mexican context.[205] So defining what these meditative practices mean in the wider socio-cultural, political, and economic scenario in Mexico has no single answer. The overall thesis finding concerning the heterogeneous social configuration of interviewees and organisations teaching meditative practices in Mexico appeared contradictory with the thesis that there is a Mexican 'mindfulness field' or a 'mindfulness movement' in Mexico. Yet mapping the connections between interviewees' professional journeys, the configuration and associations and people (self-employed or entrepreneurs) delivering meditative practices in Mexican sectors produced an important insight about the social group I studied, which I elaborate on the meta-analysis now.

6.5. Meta-analysis: The Mexican 'mindfulness' network (level 3)

I first envisaged the network structure as a genealogy tree, which resonated with one participant's explicit expression of the potential significance of charting the "Mexican lineages". Relationships between participants and the generational pattern observed during the fieldwork and the data analysis were also meaningful to the participants. On several occasions, interviewees were keen to propose potential research participants for my study, and in many of the cases their suggestions coincided with my sampling (Chapter 4). Yet, interviewees also remarked on how "diverse" and "dispersed" individuals and organisations were. Hence,

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[204] For instance, it was rare to find advertisement of 'mindfulness' or any other related terms on the websites of public health institutions. The few occasions when I found something, these were about dissimilar kinds of courses (e.g. a course on "*Curso Terapia Cognitivo Conductual y Mindfulness. Herramientas para el Personal de Salud*" ["Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Mindfulness: Tools for Health Personnel"] at a mental health institution or a short introductory session "Mindfulness (Atención Plena)" for personnel at a specialised hospital.

[205] I briefly outline some examples of these approaches: a) framing meditation as "revolution" addressing themes such as meditation practice only for men; b) politicizing *atención plena* and bringing compassion in activism and specifically with empowering women who have suffered violence; c) the empowerment of Indigenous youths; and d) challenging standard, foreign protocols, and ways of understanding violence by creating socially engaged models.

informing my analysis using Social Network Analysis (SNA) scientific literature, appeared more appropriate than the genealogy tree because this helped to better account for the heterogeneity pattern (e.g. Tan et al. 2019) and the ties between the members (e.g. Borgatti et al. 2009) I was noting.[206]

In Figure 6, the heterogeneous network of interviewees and the hybrid configuration of organisations they formed is presented. The network-like shape makes visible that, instead of vertical hierarchies as it would be in a genealogy tree, the nodes (interviewees and organisations) are accommodated in a complex pattern which posits the nodes at different "power positions" (varying based on the size of the organisations and the number of connections).[207] While it seems to be an open network, since some nodes are not completely linked to other nodes, the various ties at different levels (interviewees, organisations, and even Buddhist centres) show considerable connectedness in the network. This dovetails with the generational pattern demonstrating visually the Mexican 'lineages' mapped. Likewise, the network shows the historical figures influencing this arrangement pointing out other sources of influences.[208]

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[206] Although I attempted to use Gephi, an open-source software for network visualisation, it was time consuming to engage with a tool I have never used before and for which I did not have specialised training. Therefore, I decided to only use a programme to produce by hand a visual representation of the network diagram produced following the data analysis.

[207] The power dynamics emerging from these positions, interviewees and interviewer's social identities will be better illustrated in the next section.

[208] Due to my 'insider' position in the network, I included myself among the categories of 'people' in the network. However, in an effort to maintain the research participants' confidentiality and anonymity, letters and numbers in the network diagram were assigned randomly, and both influences, and historical figures were blanked out too.

Figure 6 Visual Representation of the Mexican 'Mindfulness' Network
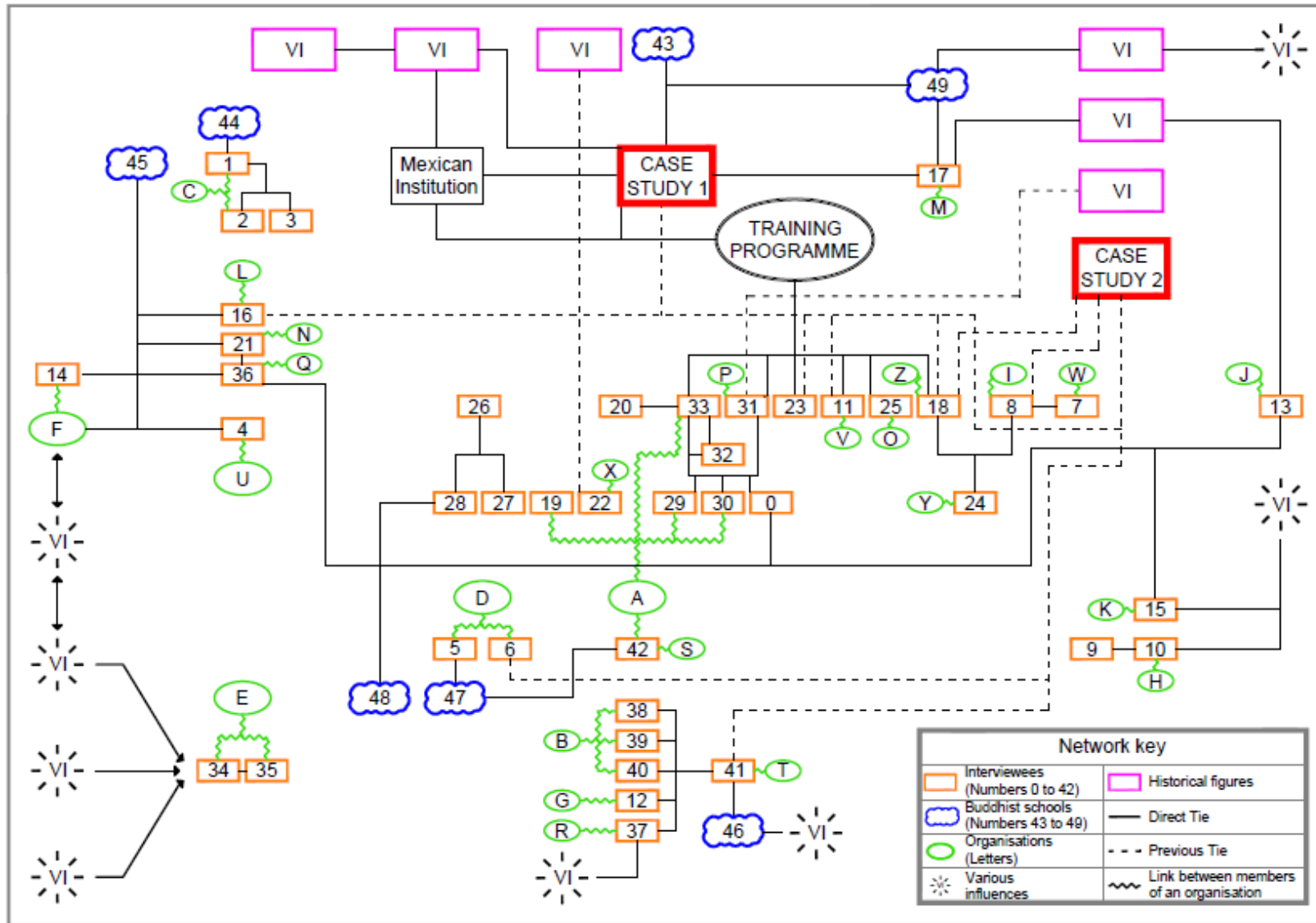
6.5.1. Strong feelings and emotions: Uncovering embedded micropolitics

Through my embodiment experiencing strong, difficult feelings during my fieldwork and analysis, and the power dynamics arising during the interview encounters (e.g. defensiveness and expression of 'competitiveness'), micropolitics and high emotionality in the Mexican 'mindfulness' network were exposed. While this was an unforeseen finding, it shed light on the specificity of Mexican meditative practices, underscoring important implications regarding its 'institutionalisation' and 'professionalisation'. These findings became evident through my working thesis of 'pioneers' and the overlapping of participants' social identities during the interview encounters as explained in turn.

6.5.2. Innovating in the Mexican milieu of meditative practices

I first used the term 'pioneers' after conducting my pilot study where I realised the variety of approaches to 'mindfulness', and not a homogenous 'mindfulness movement' (Wilson 2014). Thus, the great diversity of approaches, the settings where the programmes have been applied, as well as the contrasting conceptualisations of meditative practices discussed by the interviewees, made me consider their work as original and innovative hence: 'pioneering contributions on mindfulness'. I conceived 'being a pioneer' to theorise research participants' novel approaches in light of a rather undocumented and unrecognised phenomenon happening in the "Global South" and which contrasted with the "Global North" hegemonic histories by the 'founding fathers' of the Anglo-American MBIs (i.e. MBSR by Jon Kabat-Zinn and the MBCT by Mark Williams, Zindel Segal and John Teasdale).

Analysing the data and considering my findings in relation to a decolonial framework (Chapter 2), I encountered the "politics of naming" (Walsh 2018, p. 22). I found that the naming 'pioneer' could denote a 'colonial' implication while studying the Mexican 'mindfulness' network. During the data analysis I found an association of the word 'pioneer' with ideas of "explorers"; while some interviewees showed strong reactions to the concept.[209] Then, what made my decision of abandoning the concept of 'pioneer' a final one, was the realisation that such

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[209] Furthermore, according to the Cambridge Dictionary online (2020) the word 'pioneer' does not only mean "a person who is one of the first people to do something" or "the first person or organization to start work in a new area, introduce a new idea, etc.", it also signifies "a person who is among the first to enter and live in an area, esp. European Americans in the western US". Besides, the Google search for synonyms of this English word showed "colonist", "settler", and "coloniser", which made me eschew the employment of the term 'pioneer'. In other words, I made this decision based on the realisation of how colonialism can also be enacted via the means of language. A similar connotation would have been to use only the English word 'mindfulness' to characterise the meditation practices and *emic* conceptualisation found among my Mexican sample.

conceptualisation would promote the sense of 'competitiveness' found among interviewees, generating further hierarchies between them. Alternatively, I have decided to use the term 'innovators' to refer to my interviewees who have been "introducing changes and new ideas" (Cambridge Dictionary 2020), adapting, developing or building on earlier work in their provision of meditative practices in Mexican settings. Finally, I contend that some of the innovating aspects of Mexican's contributions in the meditative practices milieu might be seen as a form of resistance to the Anglo-American mindfulness movement and industry, in their interest of adapting and making the practices relevant to the socio-cultural and linguistic context of Mexico.[210]

Occasionally, the topic of 'being a pioneer' was brought by interviewees themselves, when mentioning the people they knew, who have been active in the meditative practices' milieu and who according to them, should (or should not) been considered as part of my research. What was more striking is that interviewees continuously referred to Buddhist teachers as the 'pioneers'. As one said, "there have been people before me", indicating they respected the 'spiritual authority' of Buddhism over meditative practices; as Laura, a middle-aged Buddhist practitioner and psychologist, puts it "first the Buddha, right? We are the followers, nothing else". In alignment with Buddhist modernism (Lopez 2008; McMahan 2008), interviewees also implicitly compared Buddha's position as a scientist; conceptualised Buddhist meditation as a 'spiritual' practice (not as 'religious') which was "systematised" by Buddha (2 participants) and therefore claimed its similarity to the scientific method (5 participants). In her work about the reconfiguration of boundaries between science and meditation Wiles (2018) demonstrates how "embodied practitioner knowledge" or the claim of practitioner's first-person experience of meditation is used by scientists to "cross the boundaries" and to "strengthen authoritative claims for objective knowledge" (p. 1).[211] Many interviewees articulated mixed arguments about these seemingly 'opposite' but 'related' domains, to justify *their* crossing between the boundaries; and simultaneously arguing about the 'authority' over teaching meditative practices.

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[210] Yet, I also document that, in such adaptation and innovation processes, there is also a continuation of the Anglo-American mindfulness movement, which pose important implications such as linguistic and cultural imperialism that cannot be overlooked. I explore similar issues in Chapter 8.

[211] Wiles (2018) explains that "individuals who occupy liminal spaces between groups use their own bodies to support the crossing of boundaries" (p. 4) which in the case of many participants in my sample, served to justify and promote personal meditation practice and its inclusion within the domain of the 'scientific'. Yet, as I understood later, it was not only the domains of 'science' and 'Buddhist meditation' that explained the micropolitics and difficult feelings embodied. It was the intersection of these domains and interviewees' positions (e.g. being researchers, practitioners, and teachers coming from different disciplinary backgrounds) as well as their social identities.

In what follows, I describe how the initial conceptualisation of 'pioneers' appeared as a "political issue" (male, middle-aged PhD researcher) revealing power dynamics in place and the micropolitics embedded in the network.

6.5.3. *"You are preparing a stony path"*

This was a statement that I received in one of my first fieldwork interviews; a sort of cautionary advice of the political implications I would find when using the conceptualisation of 'pioneer' in my research. During the close analysis of this and other interviews, the specificity and nature of the political issues became clearer: it referred to the tensions arising from indeed being *seen* and *recognised* as a 'pioneer' within the Mexican 'mindfulness' network as well as questioning the 'authority' to include other people within the category of 'pioneer'. I gained these insights when I realised the degree of challenge the interview mentioned above represented to me when I was first asked (at a rather early stage) about the envisaged output of my research. I encountered myself explaining and almost defending what I thought my study was about – the study of 'Mexican pioneers' I said, "in the sense that they have been among the first to introduce these programmes; [and] have been the first to create or adapt some of these practices in different sectors". Such politics around 'being a pioneer' became evident when I understood that difficult emotions like defensiveness arose in relation to the power dynamics during interview interaction.

On the one hand, a male, middle-aged interviewee contested the term 'pioneers' because "the pioneers are the first, they are the scouts, the explorers. But in Mexico there have been many explorers already" which to the interviewee meant that Buddhist teachers should have considered the first to have had introduced meditative practices in the country.[212] Yet, after recognising his own contribution in "systematising" some of the applications of *atención plena* and articulating a scientific rationale defending this position, I experienced a sense of being threatened by interviewee's further opposition to the working thesis of 'pioneers'. Nevertheless, giving our own histories and similar professional biographies as practitioners and teachers of 'mindfulness'. This represented a challenge of authority for 'naming pioneers'. Thus its political implications, since 'being a pioneer' was problematic when this conceptualisation appeared in relation to other potential members of the milieu of meditative practices, rather than when interviewees discussed their views on 'being a pioneer' themselves. For instance, other interviewees expressed being a 'pioneer' in "bringing a new

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[212] Earlier in this chapter I mentioned how many interviewees 'resisted' the term of 'pioneer' because they acknowledged the authority of Buddhism.

programme to Mexico" or "within a certain vision of mindfulness … from psychology's point of view", "introducing a new perspective".

Due to power dynamics arising from the overlapping positions of the senior male interviewee and myself as the interviewer, I was left with a feeling of the "inexperienced postgraduate student" being advised what to do research-wise. The interviewee argued that "identifying in some way, few people as outstanding while implicitly leaving others out as not prominent" seemed problematic "unless you interview absolutely everyone, which would be impossible" he added. This did not relate to the practical implications of the research but rather that "it would not be very advisable to interview everyone either", the interviewee argued. The locus of 'authority' for defining who would be considered a 'pioneer' to be interviewed was shifted, simultaneously warning me of the danger of including certain people within the sample. The interviewee used the expression of "human politics as within any other area" to refer to an almost reciprocal dislike between members of the milieu. Still, although other interviewees did not question the term 'pioneer' or my authority over this working thesis, many frequently asked about the other participants, revealing their curiosity and anxiety in knowing people's identities.[213]

I also found another micropolitical issue related to people's 'credentials' to teach meditative practices in different settings. While at first, this appeared to be chiefly the defensiveness of psychology's authority over the topic of having a scientific background within this discipline, it turned out that the criticism around this 'authority' was also deeply linked to a Buddhist's ethical view about practitioners' motivations to teach these practices (either within or outside psychological settings). So, all this together is a finding that exposes how the Mexican 'mindfulness' is a contested milieu with a lot of strong emotions, intersecting positions, and insecurities (as the claim to 'authority' reveals). I delve into this overlapping positioning (Henwood et al. 1998) with the next example.

6.5.4. 'Sitting still': Feeling paralysed by strong emotions

This section encompasses one of the most challenging accounts to write up regarding the reflexive process that accompanied the data production and analysis in my thesis; specifically, when thoroughly considering the ethical dilemmas around anonymity and confidentiality when generating a detailed description of my fieldwork (Chapter 4). However, referring to my bodily

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[213] Interestingly, one of the reasons why some of the interviewees mentioned their interest to be named in the research was because they recognised themselves as 'pioneers'.

sensations of 'sitting still' and feeling paralysed to describe the difficult emotions that emerged during my fieldwork is important for two reasons. Firstly, to exemplify how I used the psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001). That is, the analysis of my subjectivity as a researcher feeling uncomfortable and experiencing strong emotions while producing data with interviewees. This helped me to understand how the difficult feelings were linked to the complex way in which interviewees' perspectives overlapped with mine, or the views of other members of the milieu, given our various positionalities as practitioners, teachers, and researchers of 'mindfulness'. Secondly, as I argue in this chapter, the embedded micropolitics is a significant finding which itself reveals the intricacies of the small Mexican milieu of meditative practices.

Instead of elaborating on my field notes from my interviews' encounters, I use Lazard and McAvoy's (2017) limited disclosure strategy (Chapter 4) to evidence the way that difficult feelings arose and how these were complicated further due to power dynamics during the fieldwork. I then discuss some of the contradictory arguments constructed based on interviewees' positionalities and backgrounds.

There were occasions, regularly towards the end of the interview, in which participants made helpful suggestions about people I could interview for my study. However, I also received an additional demand to explicitly avoid interviewing others, this time upon the interviewee's conditional participation in the research. On the one hand, the attempt of having control over the sampling was intimidating for me, as it left me in a lecturer-student situation where my experience as a young researcher was undermined by the status of a more senior 'mindfulness' practitioner and researcher. Indeed, my current position as PhD researcher coming from a foreign university was overshadowed by my professional biography and trajectory as a 'former' practitioner and teacher of *atención plena* in the Mexican context. For example, I was introduced based on my training history and the lineages associated with my trajectory, and not in relation to my current research. It was also emphasised that I had not developed my research career with a particular group of outstanding Mexican researchers. So, my 'credential' as an insider was relevant for understanding the milieu but simultaneously critiqued because of the contrasting perspectives on 'mindfulness' I have engaged with and for taking the risk of including distinct approaches of other network members in the thesis. Feeling paralysed by the intense emotions meant that I was facing unexpected ethical dilemmas: mindfully listening and feeling compelled to respond to the interviewee's strong

demand, which, nonetheless, made me feel cornered about taking what seemed an inequitable position for not including people in the sample of my research.[214]

I realised that the defensive reaction I encountered when such a request was made was evidence that the difficult emotions were socially shared among the network members. While my insider position facilitated access for conducting my research, my professional trajectory and knowledge of the network prompted specific responses and strong reactions like forcefully demonstrating the interviewee's disagreement with other perspectives and peoples' backgrounds (I return to discussing these contradictory arguments below). Another layer of complexity was interviewees' positions as leaders and directors in the meditative practices organisations or institutions where they worked. This was an unexpected challenge that, nevertheless, added to the power dynamics I encountered. For instance, I felt that my work and time were not valued on some occasions, as I was left waiting beyond the agreed time for the interview, plus having constant interruptions throughout the interview encounter.[215]

During the data analysis, I understood that the strong emotions of the milieu, specifically those reflecting a defensive reaction due to the overlapping positions of the interviewees and myself as the interviewer (Henwood et al. 1998) mirror the intense debates within social scientific, Buddhist studies and psychological literature reviewed in Chapter 3. On the one hand, I was struck by the articulation of contradictory arguments involving the promotion of scientific methodology in the teaching of meditative practices protocols intertwined with a claim of using a "correct motivation" grounded in one's ethical principles as a Buddhist practitioner to deliver these practices. On the other hand, there was an intense contestation of the 'authority' of non-psychologists for teaching these practices (even if they had a Buddhist background). This critique regarding the 'authority' and 'credentials' of practitioners, teachers, and researchers to disseminate and teach meditative practices was complex and had at least three nuanced arguments (some of which appeared in relation to the strong emotions analysed earlier).

The first argument encompasses what was referred to as "McMindfulness". Although this English term was used to criticise the 'mindfulness' approaches which focused on marketing

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[214] Reflecting on these fieldwork experiences, and accounting for the methodological challenges of my three-fold positionality as practitioner, teacher, and researcher, I discuss the ethical considerations and their impact in data generation and representation in Chapter 9.

[215] During my fieldwork, I found that the waiting times for a participant to arrive or having to re-schedule an interview appointment because the interviewee reported having forgotten the pre-arranged meeting happened on a couple of other occasions. These features resembled elite interviewing (Empson 2018). Thus, I was surprised to notice how the common assumption of meditation practitioners and teachers' "embodying" the qualities of the practice (e.g. those expectations of someone who is calm, gentle, compassionate, etc., see for instance Kucinskas 2020), seemed to be at odds during the interview encounters, possibly because of interviewees' positions as leaders in their organisations.

and the profitability of the courses offered to the public, and to argue against the courses which are "totally incorrect and separated from the understandings of Buddhist philosophy" (1 participant), the work of cultural critics (i.e. Purser 2019) was not explicitly related with this critique. The situated meaning of this "McMindfulness" critique was defending the approaches which adapt *atención plena* in Mexican populations over the importation of foreign protocols. Yet, it also implied the legitimisation of scientific methodology for the introduction of a Buddhist-inspired practice within psychology and other settings, while questioning the 'authority' of the practitioners and teachers who have distinct professional backgrounds. Paradoxically, I felt that such consideration lacked a critical evaluation of the use of 'scientific discourse' to legitimise the introduction of a practice informed by Buddhist philosophy, given the 'secular' nature of clinical psychological interventions. This 'blind spot' was explained by the participant's claim of "correct motivation as Buddhist practitioner" to develop and teach *atención plena*, which has further implications, as I explain later in this section.

The second argument was articulated with reference to a widespread critique among Mexican psychologists, which is also known with the English word "coaching". The term "coaching" has a pejorative connotation since it denotes the practices which happen within the areas of activity of psychologists (e.g. psychotherapy, mental health, human resources, and 'mindfulness' itself when it comes to teaching one-on-one sessions), but which are not performed by psychologists. Both terms "coaching" and "coaches" (people trained under coaching programmes and certifications) are Anglicisms commonly used in the Spanish language. Kabat-Zinn, the creator of MBSR, is a PhD in molecular biology from MIT, whose programme has been 'standardised' and applied worldwide based on the scientific legitimation of its effects on mental and physical health; and within which over 1,000 people have been certified. And it is the "mindfulness ownership" (Valerio 2016) in the sense of being a facilitator or instructor versus having a "true motivation to benefit others as a Buddhist practitioner" and/or a background in a specific discipline that appears to be highly disputed in the milieu.

I felt that sentiments of anger were clearly exposed justified by the "crossing of boundaries" (Wiles 2018) by people from some backgrounds into the terrain of psychology. Yet, I perceived that a feeling of 'competitiveness' was indirectly conveyed since there was this comparison between peoples' approaches and positions, whether it was the "McMindfulness" or the "coaching" critique. Nonetheless, the third nuanced argument found was that interviewees (7 participants) expressed a real concern with regards to the adverse effects and possible harm which could be inflicted via the application of meditative practices in some settings, and the need for a specialised professional background to attend to this potential side effects. This is a case in point in recent research where adverse effects and varieties of contemplative

experience have been brought to attention (Lindahl et al. 2017; Schlosser et al. 2019), since they have been less studied aspects in contrast with the "hype" on positive outcomes of 'mindfulness' interventions (Chapter 3).

Finally, the claim about having the "correct motivation to teach" coming from the commitment to Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice had further implications in the milieu, which sometimes go unnoticed due to the discourse of Buddhist modernism (Chapter 3) and its analogy to the scientific method. This is the moral-ethical framework that sometimes is envisaged for teaching meditative practices, that is, for practitioners and teachers to constantly ask themselves, "What is my motivation for teaching? Does my motivation is to do things right? versus "Is my motivation to have a company?" - or "a career within a specific area?". For instance, it was emphasised that an "ethically correct motivation as a [Buddhist] practitioner" is the foundation for teaching (1 participant).

The controversy around the Buddhist affiliation and practitioner's motivation informing the teaching of 'mindfulness' was initially difficult to grasp. The argument elaborated include a mix of claims around having a "genuine motivation as a Buddhist practitioner to help others". This can be contentious due to its "religious/spiritual" appeal, considering the supposed neutrality and secularity of some scientific domains or areas of activity like psychology itself. Lindahl's (2015) commentary on "right mindfulness" points to this introduction of "Buddhist ethical and normative frameworks" (p. 59) into contemporary 'mindfulness' underscoring the tension I found in the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu. This controversy was entangled with the more evident defence or 'authority' and 'credentials' over teaching meditative practices mentioned earlier. Thus, the crossing of boundaries (Wiles 2018) between 'science' and 'meditation' in the complex arguments exposed above is evident.

Interestingly, however, not only participants' particular disciplinary backgrounds were a relevant feature for claiming "mindfulness ownership" (Valerio 2016) or 'authority over it', but the Buddhist-practitioner inner, ethically-based motivation was also used as a principle to guide the proper and 'scientific' application of these practices. In this sense, the implications of the latter rather 'subjective' element of the meditation were not questioned considering 'scientific objectivity' and 'neutrality' of the scientific domains at stake. Therefore, these boundaries were reconfigured (Wiles 2018). Nevertheless, what illuminated the complexity of claims used and the understanding of the strong emotional reactions and power dynamics

emerging was the intersectional lenses to see social relations as simultaneously positioned being also fluid and changing (Phoenix 2006).[216]

6.5.5. On 'competitiveness' and future directions

In addition to the feelings of rivalry and 'competitiveness' mentioned earlier, I found further reference to this emotionality as a distinctive feature of the network with other interviewees' accounts.[217] For instance, a female young 'mindfulness' teacher stated that "reducing professional jealousy" would be fundamental for continuing developing and researching meditative practices programmes that are socially relevant for Mexicans. Luisa emphasised that "reducing it a little bit would be enough", something I agreed with, since we both chuckled at the mutual understanding that such tensions are felt within the milieu:

> And I include myself in this too, right? Not only loosening professional jealousy but actively seeking to connect, to generate networks. And not for creating an "incredible scientific association" [she said mocking]; I mean, not for prestige and not because of money. But because it is necessary. Because among the *saberes* [plurality of knowledge] that already exists, a lot of things can be done, but we are not articulated at all (emphasis added).

While openly revealing its feelings of "professional jealousy", Luisa simultaneously called for a critical reflection about the importance of overcoming these tensions, being appreciative of the variety of approaches to meditative practices.[218] The use of the term *saberes* was quite striking discursively. In experimental psychological research, an object of study must be clearly defined; and so it is in this line of 'scientific operationalisation' that both research and application of 'mindfulness' have been understood in mainstream studies. Yet, Luisa pointed

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[216] The intersectional analysis of interviewees' positions with mine as the interviewer, including commonalities and differences of our professional trajectories, gender, status, Buddhist affiliation and conceptualisation of 'mindfulness', along with the power dynamics and strong emotions that arose during the interview encounters, provided insightful understanding of the Mexican 'mindfulness' network. These insights include that the complex claims and arguments articulating to 'defend' or 'argue against' the way 'mindfulness' is taught, including the "mindfulness ownership" debate (Valerio 2016), and realising that the Mexican meditative practices is a highly contested milieu.

[217] During the analysis of this theme, I realised the link between the high emotionality and power dynamics embedded in the 'mindfulness' network as significant finding, and the ambivalent feelings I experienced which initially motivated me to conduct this research following a 'mindful inquiry' approach (Chapter 1). It is important to emphasise the relational aspect of it, following the intersectional analyses of interviewees social identities and positions with mines, as the interviewer.

[218] This was implied by this interviewee in the use of the Spanish word *saberes* [plurality of knowledge] in the quote presented above. The English word 'wisdom' gets closer to the meaning of the Spanish word *saber* in the context of the interview extract. However, there is not a translation to English which denotes the "plurality of knowledge" that *saberes* implies. The interviewee used the plural of the Spanish word, i.e. *saberes,* which renders the variety and "non-competing" knowledge, since they are considered horizontally not in a hierarchical order, found among the members.

out that the multiplicity of understandings can be brought together by developing networks, implying a bigger potential for benefiting the Mexican network. Still, an important tension arises in the framing of the "professional jealousy" and the assumptions attached to the word *saberes,* since, although all interviewees have a professional background, not everyone uses the 'scientific discourse' or moves towards the 'scientific legitimation' of the practices in a 'professionalised' sense. Some develop collective work also rooted in local knowledge and practices linked to the Indigenous communities.[219]

Echoing the previous participant's experience of 'competitivity', another commented "there is too much humanity", meaning human's susceptibility to express feelings and emotional reactions, conveying their recognition of these difficult feelings in the network. Some of these difficult feelings were experienced when some practitioners, teachers and researchers gather together to organise and create a professional association to regulate 'mindfulness' provision in Mexico. The male middle-aged Buddhist meditation practitioner envisaged that the professional association could bring the "trainers of trainers" together including their different perspectives, to offer a more regulated framework for new people interested in being trained. One of the concerns revealed by interviewees was about the increase of people's interest in 'mindfulness' as well as in becoming teachers, yet the main difficulty is finding a not very articulated "professional regulation".[220] Ernesto explained:

> Opening a place, a space where people can come and learn more and deepen [in their training], it's a very important thing to me. And that's why I said to them that, if we, the ones who are dedicating fully our careers to this – I don't have a school, but some of the others do have one – if we don't manage to agree, to make a kind of synergy, then all of this is going to be against what we are doing. Because a lot of people will come in, ... some who might want to train and many who might not really want to train, right?
>
> Though, I think most of the people want to train themselves, but they can't find the way [due to the high cost of training programmes], and they can't find with whom.
>
> So then, if we make an association, if we get the way for people to find them, that is, the trainers of trainers like [organisation], [organisation], – what is their name? – [organisation], and so on…, [organisation]. Well, then people will have more

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[219] This is noteworthy given the tension between the legitimation of scientific knowledge as *the* universal knowledge versus *saberes* which are understood as Indigenous "popular and ancestral knowledge" (Utrilla López 2020, p. 439).

[220] It is important to mention that this seemingly lack of regulation is not necessarily inherently of the Mexican scenario. Diana Winston, director of Mindfulness Education at Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC), University of California, Los Angeles characterises this unregulated aspect of "anybody with even minimal training and practice thinks they can be teacher" in the US scene as "the wild, wild West of mindfulness" (cited in Street 2014). The use of the expression "wild" is problematic given the colonial connotations it conveyed. One might ask, to what extend the regulatory guidance and institutions as well as good practices that have been created so far, represent a hegemonic view based on Anglo-American values and perspectives which are not necessarily and equally relevant nor representative of situations different to the Anglo-American contexts.

opportunities to, little by little, go deeper, right? It is uncontrollable. We can't control it, but we can help to make it better. Although if we don't organise ourselves, I think [mindfulness teaching] is going to be distorted.

And that's how I see it, my vision of doing it … then I realised there is too much humanity … Some like each other while other members don't like others very much [chuckles] One is willing to do it but another one is not very certain about it. So well, I think that, as we mature ourselves as facilitators, then we will achieve it at some point.

This extract above summarises the contrasting views pondered by other interviewees regarding the creation of a regulatory body overseeing the framework of both teachers training and 'mindfulness' delivery, which adds to the 'mindfulness' "institutionalisation" and "professionalization" trend mentioned earlier.[221] Besides, the quote also reveals the extent to which 'mindfulness' is also seen as a livelihood particularly for people who are self-employed and who do not have a concurrent professional activity (e.g. psychotherapist, educators).

The unexpected findings about strong emotions and claims of 'authority' over 'mindfulness' in the Mexican network have important implications. On the one hand, it is expected that qualities like equanimity and kindness would be embodied by practitioners and teachers who have trained themselves in those meditative practices. For instance, in one of my interviews, a male, middle-aged MBI teacher and researcher reported having had a conversation with someone "who was totally outside the mindfulness world"; who noted that in contrast with people from other professions she has known, "the mindfulness people are the ones who defend their ideas and their topic more than anyone else". The interviewee recalled having laughed at that person's commentary arguing "that it is exactly what we try to avoid through the practice; to hang on to our inner discourse … like this attachment to the perspectives that we may have". Yet, my research documents that important issues appear to be at stake, which, have not been addressed in scientific studies before.

So far, I noted that some of the sources of the high emotionality paradox found come from the positions that participants occupied (e.g. being a Buddhist practitioner, psychologist, researcher and/or teacher, etc.), or having been trained in other disciplinary backgrounds while simultaneously having an interest in delivering 'mindfulness'. Also, legitimation based

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[221] Although I cannot go into further detail due to space limitations, there were two key points discussed by interviewees 1) that the creation of a regulatory body would be a challenge due to the pluralistic conceptualisations and programmes of meditative practices offered in Mexico, which interviewees argued, could not be contained in the creation of such institution, and 2) that concurrently, the 'exportation' and translation of Anglo-American and European frameworks for both teacher training programmes on 'mindfulness' and assessing their competences under such criteria (i.e. the Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria or MBI: TAC, see Crane et al. 2013; Crane et al. 2016; Noel Anchorena et al. 2017; Crane and Hecht 2018).

on the scientific discourse and method and psychologists' 'credentials' were as relevant as embodied practitioner knowledge (Wiles 2018) associated with being a Buddhist practitioner. All together partly explain the micropolitics around 'being a pioneer' and thus the prospect of belonging to the Mexican 'mindfulness' network.

Still, it is also important to bring attention to participants' encouraging views about the diversity of approaches and the possibility of overcoming the 'competitiveness' experienced through collaboration, as this interviewee's rhetoric illustrates:

> It was telling you when we got here [to the site], how many [people] can you see in a year? 500, 5,000; 10,000 … everyone? And you think you can do it on your own. Neither the Buddha could, nor Jesus! Not even Muhammad could: right? Why do you think you can do it? We must work as a team (male, middle-aged Buddhist practitioner and teacher).

This quote sums up the therapeutic ethos (Madsen 2014) of 'mindfulness' while highlighting its "religious/spiritual" connotation, as religious figures are referenced. Although other interviewees also mentioned their considerations regarding "how to unite" the different people and organisations to work together (2 participants), the quote reflects once again, the blurred boundaries between the conceptualisation of meditative practices as 'secular, evidence-based interventions' and the 'religious/spiritual' and therapeutic ethos (Madsen 2014) underpinning these approaches.[222]

6.6. Conclusion

The variety of 'mindfulness' approaches found can be largely understood by the biographical investigation of interviewees' journeys and training backgrounds intertwined with the historical Mexican context discussed in Chapter 5, which demonstrated three different pathways. The first two pathways represent the more dominant ones documented so far, as participants either came from a scientific disciplinary background into Buddhist-inspired meditation practices, or vice versa, as Buddhist's practitioners and teachers, they have gravitated towards the area of contemporary and scientific 'mindfulness'. The third, so far neglected, pathway, is rooted in

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[222] Although there is no univocal definition of therapeutic culture, "the essence of the notion points to the presence of psychological mindset, a therapeutic way of thinking and speaking that is apparent outside the traditional spaces of psychology" (Madsen 2014, p. 1965). In my analysis, the therapeutic ethos points to how 'mindfulness' is characterised as a clinical intervention beyond the psychological setting, for instance, in the context of a non-Christian religious group where the interview cited above took place.

the local Indigenous peoples (seen as the "elephant in the room", Zerubavel 2006).[223] Along with the two previous pathways, these reflect some of the meditative practices' lineages articulated in the Mexican context documented in this study. Besides, it was found that the social configuration of the Mexican practitioners, teachers, researchers of 'mindfulness', and the organisations they belong to, are embedded in a complex network; where the distinctive approaches to 'mindfulness' are inserted across different sectors (i.e. the public and the private, as well as the civil society). This had shed light on the specificity of the Mexican milieu, since the diversity of approaches seeks, in part, to address specific issues of Mexican sectors (e.g. different forms of violence and gender issues), yet the overlap between the areas of activities of interviewees and the organisations appear at odds with the ethos of the sectors.

Besides, the analysis of the social organisation of the Mexican 'mindfulness' network exposed gender patterns concerning the unequal roles and less visibility of women within the Mexican organisations. I found that the exploration of issues of gender with my interviewees was another "elephant in the room" (Zerubavel 2006). On some occasions, I felt uncomfortable raising the topic given the power dynamics I was encountering. Yet, the resistance to speak about this was explicitly expressed by some interviewees. For instance one male, middle-aged MBI teacher said to me energetically and almost complaining: "what type of questions are you asking, Barbara!". It was interesting to note that interviewees would constantly explain the gender differences in relation to a higher prevalence of women than men in the 'mindfulness' courses and programmes they offer, which is a common trend found in other contexts (e.g. Upchurch and Johnson 2019). Yet, it seemed difficult for interviewees to talk about possible tensions and disparities with regards to women's roles in the organisations and as instructors in contrast with men's positions. This finding followed the gender pattern observed in the historical analysis conducted in Chapter 5.

In the network, ties are arranged in a generational pattern mirroring the Mexican intercultural context as well as the transnational exchanges and provision of 'mindfulness'. It is highly emotionally charged as it embodies strong feelings, which interestingly revealed micro-politics in place regarding the 'authority' and credentials for teaching 'mindfulness' and for the consideration of who might be or not a member of the network. Whilst this emotional reactivity uncovered is arguably at odds with a 'mindful outlook' often assumed among 'mindfulness' practitioners, and teachers, it supports the somehow 'disarticulated' nature of the Mexican milieu not conforming to a "field" or "mindfulness movement". This is suggestive, on the one

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[223] I expand on this finding of the "elephant in the room" (Zerubavel 2006) in Chapter 8, where I will discuss the ideological dilemmas found with regards to neo-colonial and internal colonialism accompanying the dissemination of meditative practices in Mexico.

hand, by the specificity of the Mexican socio-cultural context of Mexico and the way in which emotions and feelings are visibly expressed and embodied. On the other hand, power dynamics and difficult emotions faced are largely explained by the intersection of interviewees and the interviewer's social identities and positions. The micropolitics and claims of 'authority' over 'mindfulness' articulated are also influenced by both the "spiritual/religious" and therapeutic ethos (Madsen 2014) of 'mindfulness' and passion for the topic and practice of 'mindfulness' showed by practitioners, teachers, and researcher alike. As I shall illustrate in the following chapters, these tensions are also nuanced by distinctive geographical locations and populations where 'mindfulness' is being taught in Mexico.

Chapter 7: Disseminating and Teaching Meditative Practices in Mexico: Tensions and Dilemmas (I)

7.1. Introduction

The previous analytic chapters have presented the *emic* conceptualisations and historical development of meditative practices in Mexico (Chapter 5) and the social configuration of the Mexican 'mindfulness' network, including the several and distinct organisations and people currently active in the application of meditative practices programmes across sectors in Mexico (Chapter 6). In the present chapter and the following (Chapter 8), I respond to my research question *3. What are the socio-cultural aspects influencing the way meditative practices are delivered in Mexico?* and the sub-question *3.1. What are the discourses used to disseminate and teach these meditative practices in Mexican settings?* [224] In doing so, I describe the tensions and dilemmas that emerge in the delivery of some of these practices in Mexican settings as I identified in the data analysis, and which are illustrated with reference to a set of different case studies as I explain in turn.

Although the findings presented in Chapters 7 and 8 are based primarily on observational data collected in multiple sites (i.e. conferences, retreats, and courses) where 'mindfulness' was delivered, I occasionally draw on the analysis of documents (e.g. webpages and leaflets) and interview data to articulate my argument. This follows the bricolage strategy employed in my study (Chapter 4) to bring the data sets and sectors together. Also due to the practical limitations I faced (i.e. the financial aspect and the size of Mexican territory for one researcher conducting the study within a specific timeframe) which meant I was unable to conduct ethnographic observation at every single site. The data analysis is also informed by my field notes recorded during the events observed, and in some cases, the analysis is aided using photographs taken on the sites.

For analysing my data, I employed discursive devices, rhetorical/interactional as well as ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996; Goodman 2017) as analytic strategies. These strategies are appropriate for answering questions *3.* and *3.1.* since my data involved naturally occurring talk (e.g. Stanley and Crane 2016) and institutional interaction. So having

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[224] To clarify, I decided to change the initial question proposed *3.* '*How are meditative practices disseminated and taught in Mexico?*' because I did not address the pedagogical aspects, nor the interactional aspects related to learning processes of teaching these practices. I was more interested in describing the way that meditative practices such as 'mindfulness' were taught, the discourses used to disseminate them, as well as the tensions and dilemmas that emerge due to the specificity of the Mexican context.

access to the recording of the audio of the different events I observed, permitted to generate transcripts facilitating conducting this type of discursive analysis (e.g. McKinlay and McVittie 2008) to answer the research questions proposed.[225] Additionally, my interests concern the way meditative practices are disseminated in Mexican settings, which involves studying teachers' claims and argumentation around the benefits of these practices articulated in social interactions (Goodman 2017) such as retreats and conferences; as well as the justifications made, and the rhetorical strategies and discourses employed for delivering these practices.

I have used the tensions and dilemmas identified as overarching themes to guide the organisation of the data analysis in Chapters 7 and 8. I did not organise my analysis under the category of single sectors since it would have oversimplified the complexity and entanglement in which the tensions arose in the fieldwork. Using the overarching themes has allowed me to map a bigger picture across the set of case studies while focusing on particularities within each case study.[226] The selection of each case study was made inductively and in relation to the saliency of the theme in the data as well as its interconnectedness with overlapping themes. This means that, although I have tried to delineate boundaries between the case studies to illustrate specific tensions and dilemmas, these themes sometimes intersect with other overarching themes.

Three overarching themes were identified, namely: 1) the tensions between the 'religious/spiritual' and the 'secular' identified at a public conference on 'mindfulness' in the public health sector, 2) the conflict between 'modern' perspectives based on foreign 'mindful eating' programme and conventional nutritional/medical perspectives in an urban area in Mexico and its contrast with an approach encompassing the practice of 'mindful eating' and Buddhist meditation taught during a silent retreat in a rural area in Southern Mexico; and 3) the ideological dilemmas related to internal colonial discourse and practices that emerged from interview data and reflections concerning an ethnographic observation which did not happen (or "lost ethnography", Smith and Delamont 2019). Given the richness of ethnographic data and the complexity of the first overarching theme (i.e. the tensions around the

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[225] For the case studies presented, informed consent was obtained to audio record the meditation sessions that took place during the meditation retreat, while access to the conference video recording was obtained through the organisation's public website, for which I produced a transcript of the audio only. I have used pseudonyms instead of people's real names in the data analysis (see Chapter 4).
[226] The term 'case study' in Chapters 7 and 8 is loosely employed to refer to either the individual level (i.e. a single interviewee) or the organisational level (considering one or various members of a specific organisation) as the unit of analysis presented to exemplify the overarching themes. The plural form 'set of case studies' allude to the various number of both interviewees and organisations collated with the purpose of analysing the differences or similarities of the tensions identified in the overarching themes. This complex level of analysis reflects the cross-sectorial nature of 'mindfulness' delivery.

'religious/spiritual' versus the 'secular'), I dedicate the present chapter to discuss the first case study in full.[227]

In the following sections, I concentrate on analysing the first case study, which focuses on the analysis of a 'mindfulness' conference I attended. It was hosted and endorsed by a major public health institution in an urban area in Mexico and delivered by a private 'secular mindfulness' organisation. Before describing the site and the unfolding of the public conference, I introduce some of the significant findings discussed.

7.2. First Overarching Theme: Tensions around the 'religious/spiritual' and the 'secular'

One important aspect of how meditative practices are presented and disseminated in Mexican settings is the tension that emerges from using a 'scientific' discourse to legitimise the teaching of 'secular mindfulness' while implicitly conveying 'mindfulness' as a 'spiritual' or 'religious' practice associated with Buddhism. I uncovered this finding in the first case study, based upon the analysis of the conference speeches organised for the health professionals, public servants, and the public at a government health institution in an urban area. To start with, I explore how the 'messiness' (Gill 2000) of an opening speech about the complex scenario of the prevalence of mental health issues in Mexico reveals the rhetoric of adopting 'mindfulness' as a preventive intervention to address the incidence of mental health issues. As I shall demonstrate in the analysis, a scientific discourse was articulated by making claims based on a) scientific evidence; that is, the number of studies conducted that have 'demonstrated mindfulness efficacy' to change brain neural connectivity and b) scientific legitimation, since some of those studies have been published in renowned scientific journals and had used experimental designs to study the effects of 'mindfulness'.

In addition to the scientific discourse arguing for the efficacy of 'mindfulness' interventions, I also identified specific rhetorical strategies (Billig 1996) that were used to argue for the 'need' to practice 'mindfulness' at the individual, organisational and sectorial levels in Mexico. Firstly, speakers at the public conference draw upon their personal experiences in observing the positive effects of 'mindfulness' either by second-hand (i.e. as we shall see, how the speaker remarked how practising 'mindfulness' helped his wife) or based on first-hand and rather

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[227] For practical reasons, I discuss the overarching themes 2) and 3) in the following chapter. Although this might be disruptive of conventional structuring a PhD thesis, I followed the bricolage approach to analyse the data and writing the cases up, which evidence the complex and multiple levels in which the tensions and dilemmas are embedded and documented in the fieldwork.

'private' biographical accounts of the teacher's journey encountering 'mindfulness' while facing a personal situation of suffering. Secondly, another rhetorical strategy found was the allusion to a charismatic figure and creator of a MBI programme, whose life has been transformed through the practice of 'mindfulness' and compassion; and which therefore is taken as a role model in the argument for the effectiveness of these practices as well as for the justification of introducing these practices in contexts such as the health sector. These two rhetorical strategies identified represent two forms of legitimation: one grounded in self-authority (i.e. narratives about the benefits of 'mindfulness' based on personal experience), and the second one involves social authority like charismatic figures demonstrating "meditational success" (Sullivan and Arat 2018, p. 343). I discuss my findings in relation to the challenges that the tension between the 'religious/spiritual' and the 'secular' poses in the context of the public and private health provision in Mexico and the implications of introducing meditative practices in the health system, exploring the rhetorical strategies and discourses used to argue the 'need of mindfulness' as mental health situating this finding in light of therapeutic culture debates (Szasz 2001; Wright 2008; Mills 2014; Stanley and Kortelainen 2020).

7.3. Case study one: *Mindfulness para la Salud: MBSP* [Mindfulness for Health: MBSP] Conference

This conference was organised by a private 'secular mindfulness' provider in collaboration with a public health institution in an urban area in 2019. The event was held at the Congress Hall of the public health institution, a government organisation which is part of the Mexican Health System and which stands out as a major healthcare service attending more than half of the Mexican population. The conference was offered for free to an audience of 1500 people, which mostly included health professionals such as medics and nurses and administrative staff; as well as elderly people who have access to the services offered by this public health institution. The conference title as read above, included originally a mix of English and Spanish words ending with the acronym "MBSP". Considering that the targeted audience would have been novices to 'mindfulness' and most would not have had proficiency in English, both the bilingual nature of the conference title and the unexplained acronym "MBSP" are of particular interest. For an insider of the 'mindfulness' milieu like myself, the English word 'mindfulness' and the type of intervention addressed on the title (i.e. a particular type of Anglo-American and European protocol) would have drawn my attention and interest. In this sense, understanding the meaning of such a title would have implied and assumed prior knowledge from the audience. For a Spanish-speaking audience completely new to 'mindfulness', the title might have sounded rather unfamiliar. Possibly, the acronym "MBSP", would have not made sense at all - "What does 'MBSP' mean? or what it has to do with health?" attendees might have

asked themselves, possibly prompting their curiosity to find out the meaning of it. Yet, through reading the leaflets provided and the publicity displayed at the site, it was not possible to find out what MBSP stands for: one had to stay and listen to the conference.[228]

According to my search, the abbreviation MBSP stands for a particular type of 'secular mindfulness' protocol that has originally created in English informed by Kabat-Zinn's MBSR protocol. Yet, as the dissemination of Anglo-American MBIs has spread to other countries around the world, these have been translated to other languages. This is the case of the MBSP programme that has been translated to Spanish and exported to Spanish-speaking countries via Spain. The guest male speaker (Alfredo) for this "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference was a Spanish middle-aged MBSP trainer. As it will be evident, the speaker's 'credentials' played an important role since his background and experience as a PhD in health sciences and previous teaching experience at a university qualified him as an authority to disseminate 'secular mindfulness' at a public health institution. In contrast with other members of this private organisation where he belongs, who were also middle-aged MBSP trainers but had a more visible trajectory as Buddhist practitioners.[229]

This was the first public conference ever in Mexico featuring this international 'secular mindfulness' organisation. Besides, it is interesting to note that, even though there has been an addition to the organisation's name in Spanish to appeal to the Spanish-speaking audience; the translation of the acronym "MBSP" into Spanish was rather loosely done as I observed at the conference. As an 'insider' to 'mindfulness', I thought this was confusing. On the one hand, "MBSP" was being presented as an approach to use 'mindfulness' for diminishing health-related issues (e.g. pain and stress). However, as an attendee of the conference, it was unclear whether "MBSP" was being defined as a medical/psychological protocol adapted for a Spanish-speaking audience or if "MBSP" represented a brand advertised instead.

Contrary to the common practice among 'mindfulness' facilitators and researchers who generally are knowledgeable of these various acronyms (Stanley 2019b) denoting the different types of programmes based on 'mindfulness', even the term 'mindfulness' in the conference title itself might not have had meaning for many of the people attending the conference. Arguably, 'mindfulness' is an English word rarely known outside the "mindfulness subculture"

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[228] I will use the title of the conference in its translation to English throughout the analysis to ease the reading.

[229] It is noteworthy that the parent organisation of this 'secular mindfulness' association is registered as a 'non-profit association'. However, this is not the case in Mexico where the branch resembles a private sector organisation closely linked to the activities of a Buddhist centre.

in Mexico (Antonio).[230] This contrasts with the English language where the adjective "mindful" already exists in people's vocabulary (i.e. to express being careful not to forget about something or to give attention to something, for instance, "be mindful of others", Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Based on my historical research (Chapter 5), I argue that there are no variants of the English words 'mindfulness' or 'mindful' that have entered the Spanish vernacular in Mexico prior to the emergence and dissemination of Anglo-American 'mindfulness' in the country. From the decolonial framework articulated and as I have described in Chapter 5, the meanings attached to the Spanish terms (e.g. *atención plena*) have been used over the last two decades to make sense of the meditative practices taught in Mexico before the uptake and dissemination of mainstream Anglo-American MBIs like MBSR. An example of how this takes place in practice is presented in the analysis below.

Searching for similar events in the Mexican context, I only found about a conference that I attended in 2014. The conference "*Atención Plena en la Salud Mental*" ["Atención Plena in Mental Health"] was held at the National Institute of Psychiatry, a highly specialised hospital in Mexico City among other 12 public institutes overseen by the Mexican Health Ministry. At the time of the conference, the National Institute of Psychiatry was functioning as the postgraduate headquarters of the UNAM Faculty of Psychology and because of this, that conference was then hosted there. Interestingly, the Spanish term *atención plena* was used in the title, as the topic of the event related to the application of *atención plena* in the field of mental health. However, the English term 'mindfulness' did not appear at all in the conference poster disseminated, nor there was a reference to any of the "MBI acronyms" employed in the Anglo-American MBI world. Instead, it is conveyed that the talk tailored for mental health professionals including staff and students from UNAM Faculty of Psychology and the National Institute of Psychiatry, would be offered by the well-known French Buddhist monk and PhD in molecular genetics, Matthieu Ricard (see Appendix P). Although I did not find further information documenting the event apart from the conference video on a YouTube channel (Conscientia 2017) and the poster I analysed, as an attendee, I remember listening to the talk from outside due to the full capacity of the lecture theatre. As it happens with conferences organised at UNAM, this event was free of charge, which might have facilitated access for many people interested in attending.

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[230] This is a very interesting question to ask. A follow-up study could consider investigating Mexican people's knowledge of the term 'mindfulness' and the meanings they attach to this term.

Even though each of these conferences has their specific characteristics due to how meditative practices were represented, and the differing focus of each conference[231], these two events which occurred within a 5-year span share the feature of congregating a large number of attendees, again, possibly due to the free-cost nature of the events allowing people to be present. The "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference I observed for my fieldwork seemed outsized in contrast with the 2014 event mentioned above; the physical venue where the 2019 event was organised, appeared at least five times bigger, gathering over 1,000 attendees. This brings us to explain how the conference unfolded.

7.3.1. Being 'the outsider'

As I entered the Congress Hall, I had a sense of feeling tiny in the space of the conference venue and overwhelmed by the streams of attendees entering the room. I felt like an 'outsider' since I was not wearing a white coat that would identify myself as a health professional on duty nor the institution's uniform for the nurses (usually the combination of white trousers and green cardigan). Even with my three-fold positionality as a 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher, and researcher, the scale of the event in this public setting and the 'mindfulness' programme presented itself, were new to me.

On that day, I decided to wear causal fresh clothing appropriate for rather warm weather (i.e. blue jeans, a floral printed white blouse and open but chic sandals), nothing that could have been too casual since I knew I might have met Gabriel, a male, middle-age MBI teacher and director of the Mexican branch organisation who invited me to attend the conference. As a researcher I usually dressed up a bit formally. Still, in the context of the conference, this matched with people wearing casual and semi-formal clothing which most probably were either patients of the health institution or people invited by the 'mindfulness' provider and differentiate me from authorities and health professionals who were smartly dressed. It felt overwhelming to be attending the event on my own in contrast to people attending together in groups (bunches of medical students, nurses and members of the staff who knew each other and who were chatting as we waited for the conference to start). Also, for not having a sense of belonging to this large health professionals' delegation, who most likely have been asked to attend the talk either before or after their shifts. Hundreds of them were wearing their white

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[231] That is, the 2014 conference addressed the topic of mental illnesses and so professionals and trainees from psy-disciplines attended primarily the event under the framework of *atención plena* given by an authoritative Buddhist male figure, Matthieu Ricard. Meanwhile, the topic of 'health' in the 2019 conference that I attended as part of my fieldwork, was framed more broadly: not only for health professionals and students but also patients and the general public using a 'secular mindfulness' rhetoric.

coats or uniforms, carrying their backpacks and in some cases, were visibly tired and resting on their seats.

While I reflected on how unfamiliar this experience felt to me, I also thought this was a landmark moment in the context of Mexico, at least for the public health sector in the Mexican Health System, due to both the scale and the nature of the conference. As for its size, it was an unprecedented event for recruiting such a large audience. This was echoed by the comment of Miguel, a male, middle-aged civil servant, head of the Social Benefits Department and representative of the public health institution, who addressed enthusiastically the audience during his opening speech saying: "it is a gift there are such assistance and this interest!". Even though there was this previous conference on "Atención Plena in Mental Health" in 2014, this time I noticed that the event reached the 'masses'. In the sense that it did not remain 'localised' to an audience academically interested in the mental health topic and its implications for psychological treatments in a venue linked to a university postgraduate unit and where I felt as an 'insider' to 'mindfulness'. Instead, it involved the general public as well as the different levels of the public health organisation and referred to public policy.

7.3.2. Institutionalising 'secular mindfulness': Opening speech

Throughout my fieldwork, this was the second conference I have attended at an institution where they displayed an audio message about the security measures and protocol to be followed in case of an earthquake. It is not only relevant since it contrasts with the housekeeping rules given at the beginning of events in the UK. Also, after living abroad for a couple of years now, I am certainly less familiar with these civil protection measures which have been strengthened even more than they used to be due to the latest damaging earthquakes that struck Mexico in 2017. I found the announcement, which lasted about four minutes long, anxiety-provoking, and evocative of a heightened state of alert associated with feelings of fear and worry. However, I took the opportunity to practice a 'mindfulness' breathing exercise which allowed me to ground my attention in my body for a few moments and then, settle down.[232]

As an attendee observing how the conference unfolds, I become interested in the formality of the event and the 'institutionalising' aspect of it. The stage was well-equipped with

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[232] This accounted for the process of embodying a self-guided 'mindfulness' exercise during my observation at this conference (Coffey 2011). Yet, as I found later, one of the speakers at the conference would invite the audience to have a "taste" of 'mindfulness' practice. In using the analogy of 'tasting', that is, to savor food through the sense of taste, it was conveyed that 'mindfulness' is a practice that one has to experience, to 'taste' and see how it is felt in the body.

technological devices to facilitate the projection of presentations on a huge screen as well as a TV screen fitted on the floor so the content could be displayed to the speaker on the stage. Arranged in a minimalist but stylish way, two singles sofas along with side tables were set up in the middle of the stage: with a decorative vase between the sofas and two flowers' containers on the tables. To my surprise, no major interaction occurred within the spatial arrangement of the seats, apart from Miguel (the civil servant) and the speaker (Alfredo) being sat for a couple of minutes while the opening protocol took place. Using the microphone stand on the left side of the stage, a public sector female worker in her early 30s, smartly dressed up and featuring as MC, opened the conference by stating the commitment of the public health institution to "guarantee social services for individual and collective wellbeing in the Mexican population, presenting within this framework, the talk 'Mindfulness *para la Salud: MBSP'".*[233] This was an important opening statement since it underscored the social responsibility of this state institution in the health services provided through public funds. The organisational protocol continued by openly acknowledging the presence of other public sector workers occupying high-rank positions in this government health institution.

The highlight of the institutional endorsement for both the 'need of mindfulness' within the health sector and the scientific discourse about its effectiveness came when Miguel, the head of the Social Benefits Department of this public health institution, also a respectable expert in the field of health sciences in Mexico, gave his speech. Again, the acknowledgement and gratitude to senior public sector workers of the institution were evident throughout the almost nine minutes opening speech given by this male medical doctor in his late 40s, who was also formally dressed in suit and tie. The close analysis of his speech allows identifying a rather complex exposition of arguments through which the 'need of mindfulness' as a preventive measure within the public health sector and its evidence-based effectiveness discourse are articulated. In contrast with academic 'mindfulness' conferences or courses, this conference did not open with a 5-minutes 'mindfulness' practice. Although this might have been the case because Miguel was not a 'mindfulness' teacher and was rather performing an 'institutional endorsement' speech. However, he stepped in by providing his own definition of 'mindfulness' as it will become clear.

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[233] In the translation of this quote from Spanish to English, I left the title the way it was read by the female MC in Spanish during the event; that is, using the combination of both the English term 'mindfulness' and the rest of the words in Spanish. While the pronunciation for 'mindfulness' in the Spanish language would have sounded the same as in English. The acronym "MBSP" was read in Spanish (i.e. M-B-S-P-) with no clarification of its meaning. I presume this was due to the absence of such definition or explanation. I have translated the quotes presented in the analysis, from Spanish to English verbatim from the conference's speeches.

Firstly, Miguel built a framework to situate Mexico as one of the most 'stressed' nations within the international scenario, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report from 2018 about work-related stress which he cited (Organisation's website). Indeed, as I found in the latest statistical data, from the 40 countries studied by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2017, Mexico occupied second place with nearly 29% of employees working very long hours, which almost triples the OECD mean of 11%. The work-life balance of these Mexican employees is affected since they work more than 50 hours per week and because they have less time to spend (only 12.4 hours per day, on average) in basic activities such as eating and sleeping, and in other leisure activities (e.g. time with others, hobbies, television use; see OECD 2017). Besides, while Miguel emphasised the importance of the stress faced by professionals working within the Mexican health sector in his speech, his argument also included the wider Mexican population which, he claimed, mostly perceived themselves as 'stressed beings'. In this way, the speaker rhetorically invited members of the audience to relate to this experience of stress beyond their position as either health professionals or administrative staff of the public health institution. A sense of the collective experience of stress was evident when Miguel employed the first-person plural subject "us" repeatedly in his opening speech, followed by the inflection on his tone of voice and the pause made, signalling a disclosure of his subjective experience of stress by including himself in the plural "we" [the Mexicans]:

> This talk has a very peculiar relevance for *us*, especially for *our* doctors, *our* nurses who are in the hospital environment and who face very important stressful situations. *We*, the Mexicans, are among the populations that suffer most frequently from stress; we are above China, and we are above the United States. You can check the survey by the WHO that is on our page, more than 75% of us, Mexicans, suffer [pause] ... stress (emphasis added).

As the claim of the 'need for mindfulness' makes its way by the reference to first-hand and collective experience of stress (self-authority legitimation, according to Sullivan and Arat 2018), the argument Miguel develops in this opening speech turned 'messy'. Here, I refer to the 'messiness' that becomes evident when the discourse analysts examine closely speech transcribed into text (e.g. contradictions, fragmentation, repairs, pauses, changes of gear or topic); but which are aspects "that are so familiar that we often do not 'hear' them" (Gill 2000, p. 173). As evident in the following extract, Miguel moved from talking about stress in the Mexican population as quoted above, to comment about mental health incidence among the patients, causes of medical consultation and budget management at the public health

institution he represents. Finally, Miguel praised the recent public policy implementation process (the Official Mexican Standard Norm 035) in the country, and its link to the "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference:

> Behavioural disorders and mental health are the eighth cause of consultation in our [institute] family medicine units. If we check the accounts, there are almost 2.2 million consultations per year, and in the elderly, this represents the fifth cause of consultation. The data also indicate that, throughout life, 1 in 4 of us will suffer a mental illness; so we must prepare ourselves, we must have a preventive behaviour.
>
> Mental health is very, very important in terms of productivity. A recent study by the MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] revealed that anxiety and depression are the leading causes of lost productivity …[pause], anxiety and depression. Despite this, we spend less than 2% of the health budget on mental health. This small budget is also distributed equally in relation to the relevance of the disease; 1% of that 2%; that is 50% is given to combat addictions which is a very important problem. Then, of the remaining 1%, 80% is used for [treating] serious psychiatric illnesses; and in the end, the 20% left, goes for preventive measures. So we must improve that! And this [the conference] is an attempt.
>
> There is also good news! We have just approved the Official Mexican Standard [norm] 035, which has to do with psychosocial risk factors at work. That is a start, that will allow us to recognise and allocate resources to this important issue.

The discursive 'mess' becomes evident in both the unclear differentiation of the public health relevant areas presented in the speech and on the ambiguous action plan to be taken to address all these important matters. The public health areas discussed were: 1) the high prevalence of work-related stress in the general Mexican population which was related to health professionals' experience in their job (although no statistics were mentioned with regards to this particular sector); 2) the incidence of behavioural disorders and mental health issues as recurrent reasons for consultation which specifically relate to the patients of this public health institution; 3) in addition to the possibility of 1 in 4 of Mexicans being prone to suffer a mental illness throughout their lifespan.[234] The quantification rhetoric (Potter et al. 1991) articulated in the speech; that is, the statistics about mental health disorders in the Mexican population and particularly, the numbers related to the patients seen in this public health institution depict a very worrying scenario; indicating that preventive measures and other actions must be taken to tackle health issues such work-related stress and other mental illnesses in Mexican population. Nevertheless, details about the socio-cultural, economic, or

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[234] In addition to this 'messiness', it is important to mention the contradiction identified in the extracts of the opening speech analysed above. The 2018 WHO report that Miguel cited as well as the OECD (2017) statistics I investigated describe that one of the primary causes of stress among workers in Mexico is working very long-hours. Nevertheless, a tension emerges since the issue about mental health is framed later in the speech in terms of 'under productive workers' citing a study from MIT.

political aspects of the Mexican context nor the working conditions of employees were mentioned. So the solution as it is implicitly conveyed is the implementation of a preventive measure (i.e. 'mindfulness'). But as Szasz (2001) points out, "the sickness of persons and the sickness of populations represent very different problems for patients, physicians, and politicians" (p. 494). We shall see that 'mindfulness' as a preventive measure has less to do with changing working hours or workplace's conditions, at least in the present case discussed.

Investigating further the context of the norm 035 mentioned in the speech, I found that, the Mexican Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare approved a new norm in 2018: the Official Mexican Standard NOM-035-STPS-2018 "Psychosocial risk factors at work - Identification, analysis and prevention"; commonly known as NOM 035 (for its acronym in Spanish *Norma Oficial Mexicana*).[235] Its overall objective is to "establish the elements to identify, analyse and prevent psychosocial risk factors, as well as to promote a favourable organisational environment in the workplace" (Diario Oficial de la Federación 2018, p. 2). Workplaces like public institutions of the health sector have been therefore required to comply with this norm in a two-phase process.[236]

Interestingly, at the time when the conference took place, it seems that the approval of the NOM 035 has been an important condition both at the organisational and government level for bringing 'mindfulness' to the public health sector and into to private sector because "companies are more receptive to introduced meditation-based techniques to diminish work-related stress in light of the new NOM 035" (Romina, female middle-age MBI teacher). The conference I attended happened months before the first phase of norm-implementation and according to Miguel's discourse quoted above, the NOM 035 is presented as a key regulation that will allow the public health institution to assess and distribute the budget necessary to increase disease-preventing actions to tackle work-related stress and mental health disorders within the public health sector.

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[235] The Official Mexican Standards (NOM) constitute a series of mandatory standardisation norms and regulations for either Mexican or imported products, processes, services, or production methods; issued by bodies of the Mexican federal public administration (OECD 2018, p. 35; also see Secretaría de Economía 2016). The Mexican NOM has its equivalent in the British Standards Institution (BSI) in the UK context.

[236] The first phase has involved "politics; prevention measures; the identification of workers exposed to severe traumatic events, and the dissemination of information" which took place by October 2019; about four months after I conducted my fieldwork in Mexico. The second phase concentrates in the "identification and analysis of psychosocial risk factors; the evaluation of the organizational environment; control measures and actions; and the practice of medical examinations and records" due in October 2020 (Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social 2019).

It was conveyed that having the 'mindfulness' conference on that day, is part of the strategies being adopted under this 'preventive behaviour' approach, which so far, has been underfunded.[237] Nevertheless, it was not stated whether, nor how much, of the public funding might be allocated specifically for introducing and delivering 'mindfulness' for health professionals and public sector workers. As an attendee at the conference, I was left rather confused or uncertain about how 'mindfulness' would be implemented at the institutional level in consideration of the NOM 035. This might represent an example of "therapeutic state" (Szasz 2001) in Mexico.

7.3.4. Scientific discourse: The effectiveness of 'secular mindfulness'

What is 'mindfulness' in this conference? The second part of the opening speech I analysed focuses on addressing this question. It was striking to find the use of scientific discourse regarding 'the effectiveness of mindfulness' based on scientific evidence and legitimation to endorse the implementation of 'mindfulness'. Nonetheless, there was no reference to how this could be done within the Mexican public health system. Besides, the speaker also used a rhetorical strategy to account for the second-hand experience of witnessing 'how mindfulness works' as he observed the effects on his wife. He did not disclose being a practitioner but rather positioned himself as a "man of science", when looking up for the scientific studies showing 'mindfulness' efficacy, articulating a rational framing of the practice:

> Now, mindfulness … what is this *mindfulness*? The first time I knew this great technique, was through my wife, who is a persistent mindfulness practitioner. It does not mean she has lived without being stressed [audience laugh] but I have seen it, and it [mindfulness] really works [laughs continue]. So I decided to read a bit about that, as a scientist that I am, and I wondered: Is there any randomised clinical trial that demonstrates the efficacy of mindfulness? Yes, there is, and there are many [of these clinical trials]. There is strong scientific evidence [showing] that this technique, improves neural connections; that is, it does create changes in the brain circuits. This means that there is biological proof that it can help us to better connect our neural network. And this is an article that appeared in the National Academy of Science. So, it is science, …good science.
>
> … So mindfulness has to do with *positive thoughts*. It has to do with *controlling life at every moment* - I am not taking our speaker's job away - is about us *analysing the moments*. It is related to getting out of this maelstrom that we live day by day that prevents us from that inner reflection. And I have seen it on Sandra, my wife, and the truth is that it works. It´s effective. So, I am very pleased that the medical, nursing, and

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[237] While the conference was free-of-cost for the audience one might supposed that a guest speaker from abroad through the services of a private 'mindfulness' organisation might have incurred some expenses.

administrative staff as well as our, older adults, are accompanying us [today] and that they can benefit from this talk (emphasis added).

On the one hand, the rhetorical strategy employed revealed a gendered pattern: it was implicitly conveyed that 'women' might be more inclined to be a 'mindfulness' practitioner as for their proclivity towards affectivity and need for regulating feeling such as stress. Whereas 'men' are to be associated with working on science. This subtly normalises gender stereotypes in which 'men' are not expected to handle such emotional states possibly being less likely to enter the domain of practices such as 'mindfulness' and instead, be associated with the "rational man", "the man of science". On the other hand, Miguel's rhetoric had yet another function which was portraying 'mindfulness' as an 'introspective' individual practice which contrasted with the 'secular' and 'scientific mindfulness' intervention for health-related issues being also presented. This was indirectly articulated when the speaker used the disclaimer (Hewitt and Stokes 1975) "[mindfulness] certainly has its origin in a theory of Buddhist orientation, which we have been incorporating it in our own existence". The disclaimer served to dissolve the possible association of 'mindfulness' with a religious tradition such as Buddhism, as something that is 'common' to people's experience. The speaker carefully repaired such meaning by offering, in turn, his own interpretation of 'mindfulness'. The latter, meaning to him a "technique" that "has to do with positive thoughts" and "controlling life at every moment" which additionally involved "analysing every moment". This contrasted markedly with the 'mindfulness' approach being presented by the private 'secular mindfulness' organisation. I even wrote down on my field notebook my astonishment at such framing since it resonated more with positive psychology (Miller 2008) rather than with the lineage and approach associated with the "MBSP" programme.

7.3.5. The 'suffering self': A confessional speech

In Chapter 6, I noted how relevant teachers' biographies were as analytic theme for describing the Mexican meditative practices milieu. This theme recured in the ethnographic data collected concerning the actual dissemination of these practices, specifically through what Wright (2008) theorises as manifestations of the therapeutic turn in society. This encompasses bringing 'private problems' including personal pain into the public sphere but also its implications in the "destabilization of a set of traditional gendered arrangements governing public and private life" (p. 327). To exemplify it, I analyse the confessional speech that the guest speaker Alfredo, a male, MBI teacher in his 40s, gave at the "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference. It demonstrates that the therapeutic ethos (Madsen 2014) accompanying the discourse of 'secular mindfulness' practice appeared to have a double function. Firstly, the

"legitimation [of] emotional suffering through the opening up of a discursive space which has made possible the discussion of personal pain" (Wright 2008, p. 332). In this case, through a confessional style made by a male figure (as opposed to the previous gendered pattern mentioned). And second, the use of 'secular mindfulness' as a "life-changing practice". Thus, an effective therapeutic strategy to deal with such suffering as evidenced in the confession below:

> I think [this conference] is a very good opportunity for approaching a resource [mindfulness] that can change many people's lives in the health system. Because *it changed my life*, when in the introduction of the course they talked about stress … I connected with mindfulness precisely because [pause] I was really stressed out, [pause] *very stressed out*.
>
> In fact, ... uh, I experienced panic attacks because of so much anxiety that I had; which is usual in the in the complicated world we live today, isn't? I've spent a long time, ... a long time of resorting to medicine, psychology, and be taking medication; where I even experienced that if I did not take the pill I could relapse. Therefore, I used to take the medication not to say that I would have been well, but for *not being too bad*. Then, it was not working okay.
>
> But there was a moment when I said, "this is really working for me!" And it was because I encountered [Organisation's name] programmes. I started an 8-week course. At that moment, I was with my psychologist, and I had already come out of that period of difficulty, the anxiety, and crises. I wondered: is this going to work for me? [pause] Well, we are going to test what is going on, right? And the course I took - which lasted 8 weeks - was so transformative that, I believed they *had turned me inside out! … inside out!*
>
> Indeed, one month after finishing my course, my psychologist said to me "It's okay, you're done". And well, since then I have not taken Prozac again, which was given to me to treat the anxiety. So, I said, well 'this [mindfulness practice] must be doing something!' And then, little by little ... I began to practice .... (emphasis added).

Based on his first-hand and confessional biographical account regarding the experience of psychological stress and anxiety, the MBI teacher elaborated publicly a discourse on the 'suffering self' as a rhetoric strategy (Wetherell 2001) to appeal to the audience about the effectiveness of an '8-week mindfulness course' thus legitimising its use (Sullivan and Arat 2018). Firstly, the 'suffering self' discourse reveals a tension of disclosing sensitive 'private' experiences in the context of a public professional conference resembling the therapeutic culture ethos (Wright 2008). The emotional expression was evident in the inflections of Alfredo's voice as well as the pauses made in the speech. The disclosure of a profound personal transformation ("*had turned me inside out! … inside out!*") at a professional public secular conference demonstrate the blurriness between the personal ('private') and the

professional ('public') by a public speaker and 'mindfulness' teacher, intersected with his practitioner's biography and confession of suffering.

The narrative takes the listener to follow a story of struggle when it comes to finding a medical or psychological treatment that could 'be effective' to deal with the psychological suffering experienced. It is claimed that a journey of the 'suffering self' encountering the '8-week mindfulness course' turned things around for Alfredo and got him started on a personal 'mindfulness' practice. Secondly, an emotional empathy discourse (Edwards 1999) is employed to resonate primarily with health professional and public sector personnel who work at the public health institution, and who are among the most stressed people as it was mentioned throughout the conference. As demonstrated with the quote below, Alfredo's background as middle-aged MBI teacher holding a PhD in health sciences and his professional experience in the health sector are elaborated in an argumentative and rhetorical context (Billig 1991; Wetherell 2001) to relate to the health professionals who are potentially stressed out and 'suffering'. Thus conveying to them the 'need' of 'mindfulness' practice:

> I have been working within the health sector for a very long time. So I have worked at hospitals; within primary care services; community services; as well as in health services management. Thereafter I worked at the university [as a professor]. So, well, I am very familiar with the environment in which you work at the moment. … So, thank you very much for being here [at the conference]. Because this means that you all are motivated to open up to new ideas, to see that what is new that seems to work well.

What was also interesting from the 'suffering-self' discourse and the emotional connection the speaker made with the health professionals through the empathic account was the indirect link to compassion practice. According to Alfredo, compassion fatigue is one of the syndromes more prevalent among health professionals; since "the situations in which we [health professionals] are caring for people with health problems are often very emotionally charged. And this emotional burden, in the end, burns you. It ends up burning you, like as 'if your heart hardened'". And so the emphasis made was on "mindfulness as a protective factor for preventing the compassion fatigue syndrome [a medicalised diagnosis] in health professionals" rather than explaining what compassion entails or what does it means in the context of the interventions (e.g. the MBSP programme) applied in the health sector.[238]

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[238] The inclusion of compassion along with 'mindfulness' is a distinctive feature of the approach to 'mindfulness' Alfredo represents. Even though he did not mention explicitly his affiliation to a specific Buddhist tradition, it was indirectly conveyed that the arguable 'secular mindfulness' programme presented at the conference, has been informed by Buddhism. As I shall expand later in this case study.

Compassion was articulated as part of 'mindfulness'; as Alfredo said, "in the broadest sense of the word, mindfulness includes this quality of warmth and kindness, compassion towards yourself and towards others". If we analyse again the title of the conference, one might conclude that the topic of compassion was 'tangential' in the context of the "Mindfulness for health; MBSP" conference. However, the discourse articulated including the sequence of it (i.e. leaving the topic of compassion towards the end of the conference rather than presenting it at the beginning and considering the importance of compassion in their approach), made me wonder if something else was happening discursively. Consider, for instance, the distinctive conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' Alfredo was drawing on in comparison with the definition provided by Miguel in his opening speech. I hypothesise that providing an explicit definition of compassion was somehow avoided, possibly due to the connotations it could bring to audiences who are strongly influenced by Christian and Catholic beliefs. I provide further analysis of this in the following section.

7.3.6. "You don't have to be a Buddhist to practice mindfulness"

As Alfredo made a transition to start speaking about what seemed to be the core topics in his structure of the conference: 1) "what mindfulness does", i.e. the effects it has had according to scientific evidence; 2) "what mindfulness is" including an experiential practice of 'mindfulness' so that we [the audience] could "have a taste" of it; and 3) the description of the 8-week programme that the organisation offers; another disclaimer was found. The disclaimer Alfredo used in his speech was about the audiences associating 'secular mindfulness' with Buddhism or more specifically with being a 'Buddhist practitioner'. This is because his identity as Buddhist (i.e. Alfredo's real forename was a Buddhist name) revealed such meaning. As he explicitly said "the name I was given is a Buddhist name. But that does not mean that it's required to be Buddhist to be able to practice the programme we are applying. The programme we deliver is entirely secular". As I noted in my fieldnotes, I felt uncomfortable when listing to this. I wondered what the audience would think about this evident tension.

On the one hand, the scientific discourse used attempted to persuade and convince attendees of the efficacy of a 'secular mindfulness' intervention. Yet attendees were also warned that it would not be necessary for them to become Buddhist to practice 'mindfulness' or experience the health benefits of such practice. To me, the allusion to the 'spiritual/religious' aspects under the scientific discourse employed in public space seems problematic. I looked down at my notebook as a gesture of disagreement since I could not believe that was said at this

professional conference before an audience of over 1,000 attendees, almost feeling embarrassed that it happened.[239]

Although the speaker claimed the programme "is entirely secular", what happened next; that is: additional references to Buddhism including the legitimation strategy of the effectiveness of 'mindfulness' via the social authority of a charismatic figure (Sullivan and Arat 2018) accompanied with the use of Buddhist simile for closing the conference, was articulated through what Arat (2017) calls a "postsecular hack of mindfulness" (p. 174). This means that the way in which 'mindfulness' is discursively articulated in the public sphere acquires a new distinctive ontology or modality which is the "access to the transcendent" (Arat 2017 p. 174).

The audience was presented with an explanation of the exponential growth of scientific studies on 'mindfulness' during the last 30 years, examining the evidence about its positive effects in the general population (e.g. promoting quality of life), in clinical populations in diminishing stress, anxiety, chronic pain, including the impact on biological markers (e.g. cortisol, telomerase); and even as the protector factor for preventing burnt out in health professionals. Although in this way 'secular mindfulness' practice was depicted in terms of the 'scientific discourse' of its effectiveness and the standardisation of the interventions and the benefits obtained, the tension between the 'religious/spiritual' versus the 'secular' was evident again. Firstly, Alfredo mentioned once more the 'transformational' character of the practice for people's lives, just as he referred to his experience with 'mindfulness' in the confessional speech. Secondly, it is also said that the 'mindfulness' teachings come from Buddhism, "from Buddha's own investigations … because Buddha wanted to be free from suffering; and he went into a search and found something that now, is more than 2,500 years old". And as Alfredo continued speaking, he rhetorically framed this tension once again, making what supposed to be a 'secular mindfulness' medical or psychological intervention at odds with people's 'spiritual/religious' beliefs:

> So, do you mean that, if we now want to practice mindfulness, we have to become Buddhists? - Well, no - If you want to become Buddhist, that is fine, but no ... I am not going to tell you not to become Buddhist; if that is what you want, that is fine. But you don't have to be a Buddhist to practice mindfulness.

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[239] As I narrated in my professional biography (Chapter 1), at the beginning of my 'mindful journey' I found very interesting and academically stimulating to start learning about Buddhism and to even engage with Buddhist meditation practice. However, as the time passed and 'mindfulness' meditation became more popular and I experience and recognised the tensions in the milieu, I became more aware and uncomfortable about the emergent tension of "religiosity/spirituality" versus "secularity" as it arose in difference sites where I conducted my research (Epilogue).

7.3.7. Enacting the 'transmission' of 'secular mindfulness' (and compassion)

In Chapter 6, I mentioned the significance of 'transmission' for many of my interviewees as for defining the way they deliver meditative practices. With the discourse analysis of the public conference I observed, I identified how such 'transmission' was enacted. The words 'transmitting' or 'sharing' were not explicitly used. However, along with the scientific discourse of the effectiveness of 'secular mindfulness', a message of 'mindfulness' as 'spiritual/religious' practice was implicitly articulated. The rhetorical strategy of 'the suffering self' by Alfredo was supported by the allusion to Alicia's life case (the female creator of the MBSP). While inspired by Kabat-Zinn's MBSR protocol, it was through her own experience of pain and suffering due to severe injury, and the transformational experience she had through 'mindfulness' practice and her Buddhist practice – "because she is Buddhist" as Alfredo said – that she created the MBSP programme. A short video, as well as a picture of herself smiling, were screened; where the main point highlighted by Alfredo was that the chronic pain and suffering Alicia has had throughout her life did not prevent her from smiling. The "joy in her smile is expressed daily … it was not just the smile for the photo". Instead, Alfredo emphasised, it has been "her way of reacting to and working with pain [through mindfulness and her Buddhist practice] what have made her possible to be able to find beauty in life". Here, Alicia was portrayed as a charismatic figure (Sullivan and Arat 2018; Hill 2019) who has overcome health-related difficulties via the practices of 'secular mindfulness' and Buddhism, and who is also known for developing an 8-week protocol. Thus, she becomes a female role model, and her account represents a living example of the effectiveness of "MBSP" in facing and managing suffering; just as the 'suffering self' handling psychological stress and anxiety that was rhetorically articulated. Both Buddhist and MBSP practitioners and teachers themselves revealed personal transformational accounts through what is supposed to be a 'non-religious practice'.

The 'transmission' which took place in the conference was of a particular lineage, the 'mindfulness' as conceptualised from the Anglo-American MBI; and specifically, as articulated through the MBSP's central figure: Alicia. There was no reference to any conceptualisations of meditative practices in Spanish, nor there was any discussion about how the practices have been culturally relevant to Hispanic or Latin populations. The only highlight was a recent study assessing the 8-week programme in a sample of Latin American health professionals.

Yet, the discussion mainly dealt with the effectiveness of the 'mindfulness' intervention using a quasi-experimental design to compare it with a waiting-list group and a group that received only relaxation exercises as intervention. Besides, the 'transmission' uncovered in the discourse analysis conducted for this public conference concerns the understanding of

'secular mindfulness' in 'spiritual/religious' terms. This was visually and metaphorically represented by the Dove of Peace which was the last PowerPoint slide presented during the closing speech. The Dove of Peace with an olive branch itself convey some specific symbolism: it is associated with different religions such as Christianism and Judaism, etc., being also the emblem of Peace. The image presented at the conference depicts a dove extending its wings under which the words wisdom (left-wing) and compassion (right-wing) (as Buddhist metaphor or simile) were written in Spanish.[240] This contrasted with the scientific discourse on 'secular mindfulness' employed throughout the conference.

The Dove of Peace resembles a sacred representation as the sun shines vividly behind it, in a background of a blue sky and clouds on the extremes; and it takes this 'heavenly' and 'spiritual/religious' connotation as it is directly linked to Buddhist teachings and the work by Buddhist practitioners such as Alicia and the creation of the "MBSP". As Alfredo explained:

> I close this presentation with the following … Well, it comes from the Buddhist tradition. Alicia is also a Buddhist but ... it says the following 'that wisdom and compassion, are like the two wings of a bird'. And what mindfulness does is: helping to cultivate [these] wings. Certainly, when we begin to have that wisdom, that compassion; we can begin to be more conscious and create space, create sufficient space to be able to decide what we want to do. If we react or respond to the situation.[241]

While earlier in the conference the discourse of 'secular mindfulness' and its effectiveness across a range of mental and physical conditions was discussed in relation to its scientific study and the implementation of "MBSP" as a 'secular' intervention, towards the end of the conference the term compassion was coupled with wisdom as the two aspects that 'mindfulness' allows people to cultivate. Beyond reducing psychological stress, anxiety among the general population or preventing burnout or compassion fatigue syndrome in health professionals, the audience was implicitly offered a way to 'freedom', and precisely, 'freedom from suffering' as understood within a secularised Buddhist tradition. Or at least, a sense of personal transformation as it happened to Buddhist's practitioners such as Alfredo (also MBI middle-aged teacher) and Alicia (the creator of MBSP), whose personal experiences using self- and social authority strategies (Sullivan and Arat 2018) legitimised the 'need of mindfulness' to a Mexican audience.

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[240] For research on metaphors used in discourse during the teaching of 'mindfulness', see Silvestre-López (2016; 2019).

[241] The speaker also used the word "*amabilidad*" [amiability] to refer to compassion. I wonder if such translation in Spanish was used to prevent the confusion of understanding 'compassion' for 'pity' or 'shame' as it is often rendered from the Catholic point of view. Other interviewees (Laura, Luisa, Vicente, Raquel) shared that this is often what they found when they teach compassion in the Mexican settings where they work.

7.4. Conclusion

The close analysis of the "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference from a discourse perspective has provided important insights about how 'secular mindfulness' is disseminated and enacted in public health settings, and the tensions that arise. Firstly, problematising the 'messiness' of the opening speech by the civil servant, the Mexican male scientist Miguel, was important for two reasons. Due to the potential implications of adopting 'mindfulness' as a preventive intervention within the public health system in Mexico considering the public policy NOM 035 ("Psychosocial risk factors at work - Identification, analysis and prevention") and considering his personal take on 'mindfulness', which deviated from the private organisation's definition of 'mindfulness' and compassion as articulated by the guest speaker and MBSP teacher, Alfredo.

Even though the speeches articulated were in Spanish, the observation of this conference exemplifies the importation of an Anglo-American /European secularised Buddhist mindfulness intervention as demonstrated by the name of the conference and the place where the programme was originally developed. While the institutional endorsement of 'mindfulness' was articulated via a scientific discourse about the effectiveness of this practice, it was less clear which actions would have been taken institutionally. For instance, would 'mindfulness' be offered to a general Mexican population as a preventive strategy to handle work-related stress through this public health institution? Or would 'mindfulness' interventions be deployed within the government institution to help the health professionals to manage their own stress while performing their job? Alternatively, would health professionals be trained in 'mindfulness' to deliver courses to support patients' alleviate mental illness and behavioural disorders at the public health institution? As mentioned in the analysis, the rhetorical strategies used during the conference postulate 'secular mindfulness' as a preventive measure for the individual to use, rather than a systemic strategy to be implemented.

As Demarzo et al. (2015) assert in their theoretical review commentary "many questions regarding the implementation of mindfulness interventions in health systems remain unanswered" (p. 170), partly because various approaches might be needed because distinct barriers might be faced in different healthcare systems. As for the Mexican context, for example, the consideration of providing 'mindfulness' courses for health professionals would require for them having a "free" slot in their busy schedules which could be very challenging, precisely and paradoxically because of the workload health professionals already have. Another obstacle could be that some health professionals might be reluctant to shift from conventional medical, psychological, nursing treatments based on their long-established

training programmes and approaches, to the adoption of modern arguably foreign perspectives such as 'mindfulness' interventions.

It seemed to me that one of the key questions which was left out in this conference was: Is this 'secular mindfulness' programme acceptable for patients, health professionals and civil servants in the Mexican health system? If yes, how does it fit within this particular public health institution? As commented by Demarzo et al. (2015), developing a strategic plan for the implementation of 'mindfulness' requires considering the national, regional, and local levels (also see Crane and Kuyken 2012); let alone addressing the cultural relevance of such interventions.[242] I questioned how our experience in Mexico is similar or different from the situations in Europe and the UK from where this 'secular mindfulness' programme is being exported? Following Mills' (2014) analysis of the exportation of "global mental health" psychological and medical treatments, it could be argued that the dissemination of 'mindfulness' as documented in the conference site, would provide evidence about positioning 'mindfulness' as *the* 'effective, scientifically-proven' therapeutic strategy to be globally used (imposed) against mental health issues such as stress and anxiety experienced at the workplace. In my field notes, I wrote about the lack of sensitivity towards the specificities of the Mexican public health sector being discussed during the conference.

The way the "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference ended made me wonder what the participation of a private 'secular mindfulness' organisation at a health public institution meant. From the point of view of discursive analysis, the sequences of interactions and the discourses articulated tell us something important about this conference and the dissemination of 'secular mindfulness' at that particular public setting in an urban area. On the one hand, it appeared as an event seeking the 'institutionalisation', of a foreign 'medicalised' (Barker 2014) and 'spiritualised' 'mindfulness' approach as a preventive measure to tackle mental health problems in the Mexican population. Also being conceived as a 'solution' to these issues in light of the new policy to be implemented (NOM 035).

On the other hand, it seemed that the conference also played a significant marketing/recruitment tool to advertise this specific 'secular mindfulness' programme (i.e. MBSP). For instance, I found out that, while in the official website or social media channels of the government health institution there was no public record of the conference, the private organisation did advertise their presence at this important public institution on the social

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[242] For instance, one could ask if the notions of health, mental health and medical/psychological treatment in the Mexican context correspond to those established in other Spanish-speaking countries or whose 'universal' views are being used to determine such categorisation (Mills 2014).

media, commenting on the significance of the "endorsement" received by the institution and the large turnout obtained. This notice was also circulated in the organisation's newsletter which has a 'transnational' impact since it reached the other organisation's branch abroad. Considering the discourses given at the conference, where no specific public funding was allocated nor strategic plan was presented for the implementation of 'mindfulness' as a preventive intervention at the public health institution, it was suggested that the only alternative left for the audience to approach this 'secular scientifically-proven mindfulness' would have been via the private provision offered by the organisation; which evidences the tension between the public and private sectors and the type of mental health provision by the "therapeutic state" (Szasz 2001). Furthermore, the marketing/recruitment nature of the event not only appeared in conflict with the public purpose of the setting, but it seemed also at odds with the Buddhist organisation underpinning this 'secular mindfulness' branch; since according to them, Buddhists do not engage in proselytizing methods (Organisation's website).

As for the pervasiveness of the work-related stress and mental-health issues in the Mexican general population, also at different levels within the public health sector as articulated at the conference, including the working conditions among Mexican employees (OECD 2017), it seems obvious that a collective and systemic change might be needed to effectively tackle these problems. It appears that, in terms of public policy, the new NOM-035 seeks to address such issues. However, at a practical level, there are visible obstacles when it comes to considering 'secular mindfulness' interventions such as the MBSP programme as a potential preventive measure as argued at the conference. On the one hand, the public health institution's collective commitment "to guarantee social services and looking after both individual and social wellbeing in the Mexican population" as articulated at the beginning of the conference, seems in conflict with what Ecclestone (2016) calls "therapeutic entrepreneurialism". That is, the shaping of personal transformation, management of pain and suffering for improving mental health at the individual level through the individualised practice of 'mindfulness' as conveyed at the conference.

The next chapter presents the second and third overarching themes identified in the analysis. Although separated for practical reasons, the case studies elaborate on some of the points discussed in this chapter showing the intersecting nature of the themes found across sectors and different geographical locations as well as their relation to the complex Mexican context.

Chapter 8: Disseminating and Teaching Meditative Practices in Mexico: Tensions and Dilemmas (II)

8.1. Introduction

As a continuation of Chapter 7, the present chapter significantly adds to providing answers to my research question *3. What are the socio-cultural aspects influencing the way meditative practices are delivered in Mexico?* and to the sub-question *3.1. What are the discourses used to disseminate and teach these meditative practices in Mexican settings?* From the analysis of qualitative multi-modal data (i.e. ethnographic fieldnotes, audio recordings, documents, and interviews) and following a bricolage approach to the data analysis and writing up of the thesis findings (Chapter 4), three overarching themes were identified. These themes concern the tensions and dilemmas that emerge in the dissemination and teaching of meditative practices across different sectors in Mexico. While the first overarching theme i.e. the tension between 'religious/spiritual' and the 'secular' during a 'secular mindfulness' conference within a public health setting was addressed in Chapter 7, I concentrate on presenting the analysis of the two other themes now.

The second overarching theme is the tension that arises in relation to the broader frameworks and perspectives under which 'mindful eating' practices are taught in Mexico. In assembling case study two, I first examine the tensions brought by 'modern' perspectives based on a foreign 'mindful eating' programme as developed in a private health organisation and the challenge this imposes with regards to the conventional nutritional/medical perspectives still implemented within the public health sector. I also contrast the provision of 'mindful eating' advertised by this private organisation as it is located in an urban area with the experiences and meanings constructed during a 'mindful eating' and Buddhist silent meditation retreat at an ecological village in a rural area of Southern Mexico. The third overarching theme concerns the ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996) that emerged from my reflections concerning an ethnographic observation which did not happen relating to the work of a civil society organisation bringing meditative practices to Indigenous communities in a rural area of Southern Mexico (case study three).

The critical reflection on the theoretical and methodological implications about this "lost ethnography" (i.e. an ethnographic observation that did not happen, Smith and Delamont 2019, p.1) at first, and the analysis of interviewees' accounts regarding the claim of 'transculturality' of meditative practices second, led me to realise the conflicting status of

arguments and discourses being made delineating the ideologies underpinning such accounts.

Gathering these two overarching themes in Chapter 8 was pertinent because they provided an interesting contrast regarding the geographical locations in Mexico where the meditative practices documented are primarily taught, and due to the centrality of a major theme, that of neo-colonialism and internal colonialism, for the set of cases addressed. Informed by a bricolage approach (Chapter 4), it is hoped that Chapters 7 and 8 together evidence the complexity and nuances of the Mexican socio-cultural, geographical context and the entanglement of both neo-colonial and internal colonial discourses and practices involved in the dissemination and teaching of meditative practices across sectors in the country. In what follows, I introduce the second overarching theme to build on the analysis of 'mindful eating' practice.

8.2. Case study two: Conventional versus 'modern' nutritional/medical perspectives and the re-emergence of local practices

Following the thread about discussing the tensions that emerge between the public and private Mexican sectors as observed in case study one (Chapter 7), in case study two presented below, I exemplify the second overarching theme about the opposing views regarding conventional versus 'modern' (i.e. 'mindful eating') nutritional interventions and the distinctive features of such approaches as they are disseminated and delivered in different geographical locations such as an urban area in Mexico. At some point in my fieldwork, I realised how interesting it was not having conducted observations at any 8-week course such as MBSR, its Spanish version or another type of MBI. At first, I took it too seriously since I assumed that it would have been ideal to have done ethnographic work in one of the standardised 8-week MBIs. However, I soon comprehended that indeed, that was one of my most interesting findings: there were more approaches and courses in Mexico than just the MBSR standardised programme. Therefore, due to its important significance for delineating some aspects of the Mexican specificity shaping the teaching of the meditative practices, I chose to analyse 'mindful eating' practices as case study two.

The set of case studies/data sets I draw on involve two organisations: an "interdisciplinary collective" of female health professionals and coaches working within the food health (mostly) private sector based in an urban area, and a "meditation group" formed as entrepreneurial style or "therapeutic entrepreneurial" borrowing Ecclestone's (2018, p. 238) term, led by David, a male, young MBI teacher, Buddhist meditation practitioner and researcher, located in

Southern Mexico. The first organisation specialises primarily in bringing 'mindful eating' practices to the general public as well as health professionals in a broader health care paradigm, of "body respect, health-justice and an inclusive model of all bodies" (Organisation's website), which involve a combination of modern nutritional perspectives[243],different from the conventional ones, which are informed by people's size and concentrate on weight loss and diets. The second organisation has a broader scope blending Zen Buddhist meditation and 'secular mindfulness' (one of the Anglo-American protocols) offered to the general public in courses and retreats; such as the 3-day residential retreat on meditation and 'mindful eating' I attended.[244] However, due to limitations in accessing the observational site in the first organisation (see Chapter 4), I focused on conducting a thorough thematic discourse analysis of the organisation's website, taking in consideration the interview account of one of the members of this private organisation.[245] Whereas I used field notes of my participant observation during the retreat, and audio recorded data from the field, and the organisation's social media data to base my analysis for the second organisation.

8.3. From 'mindful eating' to '*alimentación conectada*' [connected eating]: The move to a decolonial perspective

The fast growth and constant change of the dissemination and teaching of meditative practices was one of the features of the network I was studying. One of these major changes appeared unexpectedly when I started to write up my case study two. Within a lapse of four months of having done my analysis, the first organisation made what seemed an abrupt shift in their public image and discourse which entailed an explicit commitment to a decolonial perspective. Although the "female interdisciplinary collective" initially advocated offering "practices and conversations to heal" people's relationship with food and their bodies "from an inclusive and

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[243] The perspectives include: Health at Every Size (HAES); Body Respect; Body Trust; Mindful Eating Conscious Living with Jan Chozen Bays and Char Wilkins; as well as Mind Body Eating Coach (Organisation's website).

[244] The background of the teacher is rather mixed, including Buddhist meditation experience in at least two Buddhist traditions and a trajectory of being a Buddhist practitioner. Yet, he is also an advocate of teaching one of the secular MBI protocols for which he has been certified. Interestingly, the profile of his "meditation group" is strongly articulated using Buddhist meditation references rather than the 'secular mindfulness' protocol, although the latter is seen as being informed by Buddhism. Besides, what distinguishes his approach is the organisation's *motto* which overall reveals its interest in tackling social and structural inequalities and the use of "[Buddhist] meditation and mindfulness" as a disrupting practice.

[245] Chapter 4 mentioned the relevance for meditative practices organisations and their leaders for having public profiles and advertising their services via webpages and social media. Hence, as Atkinson and Coffey (2011) assert, "if we wish to understand how organisations work and how people work with/in them, then we cannot afford to ignore their various activities as readers and writers" (p. 78). Besides, the documentary analysis examines "how organisations represent themselves collectively to themselves and others through the construction of documents" (p. 78).

liberating approach" incorporating different lenses such as trauma-informed, systemic and feminist perspectives and meditative practices openly based on Buddhism; they are now transitioning to a "decolonial perspective" (Organisation's website). The reason for this shift was explained in relation to the broader change within the nutritional perspectives the organisation's draws on (specifically, a US Buddhist-inspired approach as I shall explain). On the organisation's website, it is mentioned that the collective's former name which included an English term "involved complicity with a colonialist and Anglocentric culture". In a way, it could be said that the English name used aligned with such interpretation; even then when inside the website 'mindful eating' was translated to different concepts in Spanish (i.e. either as *alimentación con atención plena* or *alimentación basada en consciencia plena y compasión*).[246] Yet the organisation with a catchy English name would readily attract an audience with knowledge of English which in Mexico is associated with both middle/higher education and social class status.[247] The decolonial move, as it is possible to study from a discursive analysis perspective so far as the organisation undergoes a "deep change", includes the new organisation's name to '*Alimentación Conectada'* [Connected Eating]; which they proudly announced in their social media: "Don't you think it is prettier? And in Spanish!". According to the search I conducted, 'connected eating' is inspired on Well Now "a social action approach to food and bodies" by Lucy Aphramor, a US radical dietitian and performance poet who developed the health justice approach (Aphramor 2019; Organisation's website). As the organisation's female director underscores when promoting the seminar on Health in All Sizes at Well Now:

> I firmly believe that pursuing a specific weight is an oppressive practice and causes harm. It is a form of bodily injustice. The use of mindfulness, compassion and alimentación consciente [conscious eating] to promote weight loss/control/management distorts the practices, it betrays the ethical principles of the Dharma, and runs counter to the available scientific evidence. If you are still promoting a centred weight approach or looking for weight-related outcomes, and you are aware of their ineffectiveness and the damage they cause, or you are interested in transitioning to a weight-inclusive paradigm, you are welcome to the workshop and you may also be interested in my Seminar on Health in All Sizes at Well Now: Towards a paradigm of corporal liberation, inclusion, and justice in health.

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[246] Investigating the genealogy of these terms exceeds the purpose of this chapter. Yet, is noteworthy that the translation of 'mindful eating' into the Spanish language uses some of the variations of the Spanish words employed to translate 'mindfulness' such as *atención plena* or *consciencia plena*, which coupled with the word *alimentación* [nourishment] (e.g. *alimentación con atención plena*) would convey the practice of bringing 'mindfulness' to the act of eating – 'mindful eating'). This has important considerations for the therapeutic use of mindful-eating interventions to treat different eating disorders and as an alternative approach for weight control.

[247] Consider, for example, that, in 2013, only about 12.90% of the Mexican population were English speakers, while a lower percentage are fluent in this language (Campos and Hernández 2013).

The extract above reveals a fascinating tension within the private health sector in the Mexican scene, considering that the organisation brings a programme that it is claimed to be 'backed-up by scientific evidence', while explicitly stating the approach being articulated in their decolonial critique is made from within the ethical framework of Buddhism. This is problematic since, on the one hand, many of their activities related to this 'mindful eating' practice are advertised primarily for health professionals. Yet the association of this practice with the 'Dharma'[248] seems at odds with the secularity of nutritional/medical interventions and raises issues concerning the *emic* conceptualisations of health in Mexican settings. Besides, for a Mexican audience with a prominent background in Catholicism, the Buddhist ethical framework might appear discouraging rather than "inclusive". While a feminist stance is conveyed by the organisation's commitment to actively address "oppressive practice" and building a paradigm that favours "inclusion and justice in health" with the aim to diminish harm and inequalities in relation to body-types and sizes, this appears as a somewhat entrepreneurial discourse (as opposed to an 'inclusive feminist politics', see e.g. McLaren 2017). Since it justifies the dissemination of a new, re-conceptualised nutritional practice, under the "liberating" decolonial rhetoric, or what Rottenberg (2018) calls "neoliberal feminism" which "takes shape under the legitimating cloth of liberal feminist discourse" (p. 67).[249] This will become more evident as I continue with the analysis, but to illustrate, some of the questions that arise are: Who is being represented in the voice that rises against the "centred weight approach" or treatments "looking for weight-related outcomes"? or said differently, which values are at stake and which ones are not?

In the organisation's website, I found what seems to be a 'manifesto' in which it is stated the critical take towards 'dominant' paradigms which are claimed to be perpetuating oppression and damage:

> By (un)learning and critically questioning, we have actively demarcated our practice from the culture of diet, HAES [Health at Every Size], and intuitive eating; from an awareness of the ways in which they harm and collide with the supremacy of the white body, healthism and ableism.

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[248] 'Dharma' is understood as Buddha's teachings.

[249] I reflected on the uncomfortable position I found myself when conducting the discourse analysis in this case and the decolonial feminist framework that underpins my research (Chapter 4). On the one hand, my critique takes issue with the importation of a decolonial framework versus a bottom-up construction of a decolonising practice. In addition to what seems to be taken-for-granted epistemological stances of scientific and Buddhist knowledge and practices overlooking situated understandings of health and local knowledge and Indigenous cosmologies. For instance, the high incidence of overweight and obesity among the Mexican population (Gurría 2020) and the prevalence of associated diseases (e.g. hypertension, diabetes) were not noted as an important issue to tackle. On the other hand, I felt uneasy with the fact that such critique is develop towards the work of female advocates of meditative practices.

On the one hand, actively "(un)learning", co-constructing, and in re-evaluating these paradigms to articulate a decolonial perspective within health care and nutrition within the private sector can be seen as innovative and disrupting of established norms to work with people's bodies and the area of nourishment and eating disorders. It struck me to realise how rare this "critical questioning" and "(un)learning" has been with regards to other Anglo-American MBIs such as MBSR. I was particularly troubled about this sensitive theme emerging since my observations make me hypothesise that such important shifts have been associated with and indeed, have been driven by feminist critical work by women as well as non-binary practitioners and teachers (a pattern I also observed with some of my interviewee's work). This contrasted importantly from the undisputed "gold standard" (Purser et al. 2016) definition of 'mindfulness' popularised by Kabat-Zinn and the subsequent proliferation of the MBI protocols around the world, which nevertheless, seems to be embodying a reproduction of patriarchal representations and practices in so far as they have been articulated around male figures as their 'only' creators (for a discussion of gender politics in the 'mindfulness movement' see Drage 2019).

Still, there are other aspects that need to be problematised from the discourse analysis and decolonial approach undertaken in my study, as I elaborate next.

8.3.1. Urban and middle/upper-class bodies: Tensions between the private and public health sectors

During the analysis of the organisation's public image on the website, I identified some patterns which, in consideration with the interview data with one of the members, allow me to document a clear tension emerging from the dissemination and teaching of 'mindful eating' practices in private and public health sectors in urbanised settings; specifically, in identifying how patient's experiences are influenced by social and cultural contexts. As reported by Raquel, a female middle-aged dietitian, meditation practitioner and 'mindful eating' teacher, one of the challenges they face is that the work done in the context of private consultation under the approach of the 'modern' nutritional perspective (i.e. 'mindful eating') clashes with what patients encounter with the conventional views of other health professionals. Raquel said that she and the interdisciplinary group, including medical doctors, psychologists, coaches, dietitians, where she works, are "involved in controversy", mainly because the approach they use conflicts with the standard model, which states that:

> 'Slim bodies are healthy and large bodies are sick', right? We disagree. It is not
> because it's merely our opinion; there is already enough research on the matter; and a

whole model that focuses activities on *health* and not so much on *weight*. We adhere to this paradigm, which is very, very new in Mexico. So, we have many problems with health professionals who for instance, do not know about [this paradigm] and with whom we may refer [our patients] ... I mean, sometimes we need to refer our [female] patients to psychiatrists, or whatever: orthopaedist, gynaecologist, etc. And after all the work we do with them in consultation ..., so they get there, to be weighed and to be told they 'are fat' and then … Ah! We have to start all over again.

So, it is about changing the perspective, not just worrying about how the body looks because this idea that health is equal to 'size' is false. It is framed this way as to be politically correct manner. What we really want is 'people to be slim for aesthetic reasons', but this sounds *ugly* to say this way, therefore, we say 'it is for health'! (emphasis added).

Raquel expressed her frustration with regards to female patient's regression and lack of continuity of the work they have done outside the health services offered in their private 'mindful eating' organisation; mostly because their approach is still rarely found within Mexican health services. And because it contrasts with the conventional models where being 'healthy' is associated with having a 'slim body', also linked to beauty standards (e.g. different types of 'hungers that need feeding', Vogel 2017). Raquel did not explicitly make a contrast between the patient's referrals to health professional working private or public sector. However, in a context such as Mexico where only a minority of the population can have access to private health care services (see, for example, Gutiérrez et al. 2014) such as this one, it can be assumed that the account reported in the interview, represented circumstances dealt by females living in an urban area who have access to private health care services with the newest nutritional/medical perspectives such as the one offered by this private 'mindful eating' organisation.[250] This appears then, at odds with the decolonial discourse articulated because of three related reasons.

Firstly, it speaks of the representation of a smaller group rather than the health concerns of the large Mexican population for whom accessibility to this type of services is a challenge. Secondly, in this attempt to decolonising the 'mindful eating' approach what seems to be happening is the importation of a decolonial critique originally developed within a US "Dharma" community (i.e. Lucy Aphramor's programme Health in All Sizes at Well Now mentioned earlier). Thirdly, according to Vaittinen et al's. (2018) view, the privatization and commodification of care the latter conceived as "quantifiable goods or service products that can be priced, bought and sold at a 'market price'" (p. 381, see below), are evident to the extent to which 'mindful eating' or its new version, re-branded as *alimentación conectada* in

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[250] Later in the interview, Raquel mentioned that she and her team are conducting research at a public health research institute and she explicitly addressed the differences observed between the populations they attend.

Spanish, is provided by the private sector only. Whilst the public health sector is 'devalorized' (p.381) regarding its provision of health care such as 'modern' nutritional/medical perspectives.

I asked Raquel if there were any aspects of Mexican socio-cultural context that could be hindering the application of this 'mindful eating' perspective. She replied that "interestingly this depends on the segment of Mexican population"; which in this analysis relates to patients seen at private versus public health settings. Raquel explained that she primarily works with women who have access to social media, speak English and follow US culture; "so this group of women has a great deal of *gringo* influence, and they have the ideal of slimness very marked".[251] They also adhere to the "food dichotomy: 'good' versus 'bad' and 'healthy' versus 'junk food'; they divide it perfectly in two". In contrast, there is another sector of the population "possibly the larger sector in Mexican society" as Raquel mentioned, whose motivation to adopt different or new 'eating styles' is not the 'slimness ideal'. Raquel provided an example of an ongoing study being conducted at a public health research institute in an urbanised setting, where women reported that their concerns for not gaining weight relates to other health conditions and due to the environment of the medical doctors inflicting such pressures on them. Whereas the motivations of "the segment of the population I work with in the private practice" relates to "feeling guilty for eating or the restraint to eat" as for the beauty standards and 'slimness ideals' influenced based on.

It was also striking to know the tensions which develop due to assumptions that are made within foreign training programmes such as 'mindful eating'. On the one hand, Raquel acknowledged the "*tropicalización*" [adaptation] they have been doing[252]; that is, the adaptation of these programmes to local conditions in Mexico due to its difference to the places where the programmes have been originated and in contrast with other 'developed nations'. As Raquel commented:

> Here in Mexico, things are different. I mean, you cannot always assume that everyone has access to food. You cannot take 'having food' for granted … So they [Teacher Training programmes] assume that access to food is universal. And well, that is

[251] *Gringo* is the Spanish word used in Latin American countries to refer to people from the US, often with a pejorative connotation. It is also employed to convey the importation and integration of US culture and values.

[252] The English word 'tropicalize' (*tropicalizar*) refers to "fit or adapt for use in a tropical climate especially by measures designed to combat the effects of fungi and moisture" (Merriam-Webster 2021). As for the Spanish language, it is possible that the concept '*tropicalizar*' has arisen as an Anglicism expressing the modification of the original form of something to local conditions (Mexican Academy of the Language 2017) or meaning the process of such modification as '*tropizalización*' [tropicalization]. In Mexico, this word was often used practitioners and teachers to point to the process of adjusting and making relevant something (i.e. meditative practices) to the Mexican context.

something we cannot do here with our population. For example, in our workshops, we offer some - depending on how many people sign up - some scholarships for people who cannot cover the cost. So then, we always have a remix of mixed people, and we are aware that we can't be assuming that everyone has 'fruits and vegetables', things like that.

Besides, she also pointed out the financial burden for them as Mexican trainees who had to pay their teacher training fees in US dollars but then provide their services in Mexican pesos. This corresponds as part of the marketization issue mentioned earlier (Vaittinen et al. 2018). Foreign professionalisation and certifications abroad tend to be costly for the average Mexican practitioners. Even for a person with a higher education degree and working as a professional, the cost of the training programmes is high given the currency exchange which makes an important difference for a person earning wages in Mexican pesos rather than dollars (1 US dollar equates approx. to 20.47 Mexican pesos) and given the fact that the salary for a health professional in Mexico is not enough to fund the fees of a foreign training programme and the travel-related costs. As Raquel recalled, "female Australians and Americans are among the most popular attending these training programmes, but they do not have financial issues".

As it was also mentioned in case study one (Chapter 7), the financial aspect comes as an important obstacle in the delivery of meditative practices in the Mexican public health sector. Raquel reported that, one of the advantages of bringing these practices to an institutional level, is that "we can reach the population that would never have access to these services because they are very expensive for them". However, there is still no funding to develop these programmes "it is very new in Mexico and I feel that institutions may give money for other things, yet mindfulness does not deserve it. Hopefully, the outlook of this situation will change in some years to come". The interview data has been fundamental for exploring the challenges that happen in practice according to 'mindful eating' teacher's experiences such as Raquel, and for illustrating some of the tensions (with multiple layers and nuances) that arise when they move between health sectors in Mexico. Importantly, this analysis has also revealed that one of the key challenges related to inequality, inclusion and "justice in health" is the gap of access to medical/nutritional treatments between the health private and public sectors. Likewise, the analysis reveals the shortcomings of importing a decolonial approach not necessarily conceived from the bottom-up.

Going back to the analysis of the public image of the "collective" and the articulation of a "liberal feminist discourse" (Rottenberg 2018), further aspects are to be problematised. For instance, other members of the "collective" advertised that they provide their professional services (e.g. individual consultations and workshops) both in English and Spanish; and

although these services are offered to the general public, there is an important emphasis on courses and seminars (as continuing education programmes) targeted for health professionals. This all together assumes that the targeted audience might have a certain level of education as well as financial means to access such services (e.g. being able to afford a coaching or mentoring consultation of US$150 per session).[253] Furthermore, in the aforementioned 'manifesto', the organisation shares what underpins their approach to health-justice and inclusivity models. It is explained: "for those who are interested in knowing the epistemological roots", namely, the wide range of perspectives such as epistemologies of the South, radical Dharma, critical dietetics, trauma neurobiology, Well Now, according to the organisation's view, it is expected from the reader to understand a technical concept such as "epistemology" – arguably an academic concept which health professionals (the main targeted audience) rarely would not use in practice.

I argue that this discourse stands for and is also directed to a certain sector of the Mexican population: one that is associated with a 'liberal' stance which contrasts with more 'conservative' views (possibly associated with Christian or Catholic beliefs which might be at odds with the organisation's take on Buddhism, and possibly resistant to gender diversity and inclusivity, and 'modern' health paradigms). Finally, in the 'decolonial approach' elaborated on the organisation's website, an interculturality framework is absent. For example, throughout the website, the organisation advocates using an inclusive language perspective that adopts gender neutrality, instead of using the feminine and masculine forms of the words common in the Spanish language (e.g. see Instituto Nacional Electoral [INE] [no date]). Yet, Indigenous languages are underrepresented since they are not addressed at all. And, although in the organisation's discourse they criticise the 'supremacy of the white body' within the 'mindful eating' programmes as quoted earlier, it is rather vague how topics such as 'race' and ethnicity are addressed in relation to the specificities of the Mexican context.[254]

Following the analysis above, various poles of contradiction and tensions at different levels can be delineated. On the one hand, given the Buddhist underpinnings of the 'mindful eating'

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[253] Consider, for example, that according to a study conducted by a Mexican public health institute (i.e. Instituto Belisario Domínguez), Mexican medics earn an average of 16,146 MXN pesos (783 US dollars) per month. In contrast, nursing personnel earn even less, an average of 9,909 MXN (480.96 US dollars) per month (Arellano 2020).

[254] Although these aspects might be explored in practice during the courses and seminars offered, activities which I could not observe for this research project, the images displayed on the organisation's webpage that I analysed conveyed a message for an audience associated with high socioeconomic and educational status. It is the case that 'Whiteness' in Mexico is associated with the ideology of mestizaje and the 'mix' of Indigenous and European descendants as the *Mestiza* or *Mestizo* (see Epilogue). Mexican of Indigenous, Black, or Asian descendants were not characterised within this type of profile under the National Project and myth of mestizaje as discussed in Chapter 2.

programme, one could ask if it is culturally relevant to all the Mexican population considering that people might hold religious beliefs at odds with the Buddhist outlook. Yet, in the discourse used in the organisation's website it is presumed that people will be 'opened' to Buddhism in the 'inclusive' nutritional model proposed. This same paradox was voiced by the interviewee, Raquel, but in relation to the challenging experience that health professionals have reported when training themselves to teach this 'modern' nutritional practice while lacking a background in practising Buddhist meditation.[255]

Besides, another important dilemma appears when it comes to the type of intervention (i.e. the 'modern' versus the conventional) delivered in the private and public health sectors respectively, which imposes an obstacle for the patient's treatment progression as mentioned earlier. Linked to this tension there is a further contradiction. It could be argued that the organisation's reach as a 'collective' and their aim to address oppressive practices through their decolonial approach is limited because their hardly transcend that 'individual' sphere of the 'private practice' with the individual treatment or consultations and coaching sessions provided. Yet, in their attempt to provide more inclusive access to the 'mindful eating' practice, scholarships are offered so people who might not be able to afford the activities could attend otherwise.[256] Moreover, the lack of funding in public health (Martínez-Martínez 2012) and for conducting research in general (Guglielmi 2019) is a real issue in Mexico. This is an obstacle reported by Raquel, who also had collaborated in public organisations where 'mindfulness' and related practices are still underfunded topics.

Finally, the dilemma of colonial and internal colonialism is evident in the process of having to train abroad in a foreign programme and paying in a rather expensive currency on the one hand, while encountering the process of adapting (*tropicalizando*) the programme to the socio-cultural aspects of the local context where is introduced. For instance, a basic assumption that was adjusted by the teachers when delivering this programme to attendees in Mexican settings was that not everyone would have the availability of food. Yet, suppositions about food availability or the significant differences regarding the type of 'hungers that need feeding' (Vogel 2017) across the population, are largely overlooked in the generalisation of the

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[255] In contrast to the practitioners who have initiated or have already a background in practising Buddhist meditation before the training programme in 'mindful eating', the practitioners without this first-person experience tend to find more difficulty to engage in the 'embodied' aspect of it and setting a personal meditation routine, Raquel reported.

[256] During the different occasions in which I examined the website, it was said that the application process for scholarships was not available. However, in the interview I found that this would vary according to the numbers of attendees in the activities. It is important to mention that while the organisation constitute a private one, its members also were self-employed meaning their professional activity is their livelihood.

effectiveness of the standardised versions of MBIs as portrayed in the scientific literature. In the case of *alimentación conectada*, I have briefly mentioned the differences between patients or clients in the public versus the private health sector in an urbanised area. However, I expand further on the influence that peoples' geographical location has in these experiences of 'mindful nourishment' (Vogel 2017) and the meanings associated with the practice of 'mindful eating' in the analysis of the silent meditation retreat I attended in a rural area, in the following sections.

8.4. 'Mindful eating' practice: A residential silent retreat

The setting where the retreat took place is in the southern area of Mexican territory. This state is among one of Mexico's most ethnically diverse states, with a large concentration of Indigenous peoples, at least 16 groups are officially recognised. Besides, from its total population of four million inhabitants, about two-fifths speak Indigenous languages. Likewise, popular travel books define it as "the gourmet heart of Mexico" highlighting the variety and richness of the regional cuisine. Even though its cultural diversity, archaeological sites, and the variety of its climate, the state is also among the poorest in Mexico.[257]

My decision to attend the 3-day residential silent retreat on meditation and 'mindful eating' in that location was based on the saliency of the site with regards to the criteria of the main meditative practices pathways or lineages found in Mexico (i.e. Indigenous peoples/local knowledge) and from being a distinct geographical location to an urban area. This was the first retreat ever organised by the organisation "meditation group". The access to the site was facilitated by the teacher David, a male, young Buddhist meditation practitioner and MBI teacher, who I initially interviewed. He expressed his interest in the importance of conducting scientific research in the context of Mexico, and therefore, agreed in allowing me to take part in the retreat (see Chapter 4). For David, it was important that I could have the first-person experience of practising meditation during the retreat, partly because in this way, I would not interfere with the experience of other participants. So he suggested that I joined the meditation retreat as a retreatant, engaging with the meditation practices and activities just as everyone else. David mentioned being concerned that my presence as an 'observer' could reduce the possibility for participants to have a loose attitude and freedom towards the experience of the retreat. Full participation was a feature that I encountered in many of the sites where I observed, and so I had to balance my 'practitioner' and 'researcher' positions. This might have

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[257] The poorest states in Mexico have large Indigenous populations that have been historically marginalised. Due to their location in the south of the country, they account for a significant difference from the states in the northern Mexican region which are significantly less poor (Shvili 2021).

reflected the nature of the setting i.e. being a meditation retreat itself. So the expectations from the teacher as well as the rest of the attendees would have been that people participating would have been engaged in the actual practice of meditation.[258]

8.4.1. "Regenerating the earth's health and regenerating people's health": The retreat site

In contrast to urban meditation centres, the uniqueness of this site resided on the one hand, on its geographical location in a rural area located half an hour drive from the capital of the state. On the other hand, this residential retreat took special meanings due to the venue where it was hosted, a regenerative organic agriculture centre. Organised as a community-based project, the ecological village's mission is to develop a sustainable way of living based on the ethical principles of permaculture.[259] According to Luis, the place keeper, their purpose, is to "regenerate the earth's health and regenerate people's health". This was an important emphasis given at the start of the retreat when introductions were made. As Luis mentioned, the venue is only rented for events such as ours: "spaces where work on consciousness, like in meditation, is done". At that moment, it felt like the 'personal' development we were committed to engage with during the silent retreat was then inextricably linked to something bigger that contained it. Something that I describe as the responsibility for caring about the earth and the community within we were embedded. So, I realised that such 'personal' development would necessarily require a simultaneous protection of the living ecosystem where we belong to (see Figure 7).

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[258] Informed consent was obtained for audio recording the meditation sessions that took place during the meditation retreat, and I only transcribed the extracts which were relevant for the present analysis. Since the other attendees of the retreat had also a notebook with them and were also writing notes in-between meditation sessions and during the teaching sessions (i.e. where we revised theoretical Buddhist concepts, as well as concepts related to the 'mindful-eating' practice) it was non-intrusive and relatively 'easy' to take notes during the retreat. The memos produced from my field notes (Delamont 2016) after the retreat ended, largely informed my analysis. However, as I discuss later, there was a tension between my role as researcher who was conducting participant observation and my practitioner's role in the retreat, I had to adapt in accordance with the teacher's instruction for me to be fully engaged with the activities of the meditation retreat.

[259] These three principles are: a) caring for the earth, b) caring for people, and c) sharing surpluses with equity (Organisation's website).

Figure 7 Photograph taken at the Ecological Village, the Venue of the Retreat

8.4.2. In-between insider-outsider positions

Throughout the thesis, I have signalling the different implications that my in-between insider-outsider positions (Dwyer and Buckle 2009) have had during the research process. As for the feminist and psychosocial perspectives underpinning my approach to conduct qualitative research, my participant observation in this ethnographic site has an important point for discussion. Based on my positionality as 'mindfulness' practitioner and teacher and researcher, I did not adopt a 'neutral' stance towards by 'object' of study. I have always felt emotionally connected to the state where the retreat took place, and this emotional bond unfolded in the retreat during my observation at the site, primarily related to my assumption of being 'Mexican' ('insider'). Nevertheless, the position of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002), significantly changed to the one I have occupied while living in the UK ('outsider'). I was different from the other attendees for my experience of living and studying abroad, my 'expertise' and 'knowledge' as a researcher on 'mindfulness', and yet, as *defeña* (originally from Mexico City) I knew so little about the state where I travelled for the retreat that my identity as 'Mexican' was challenged. [260] In other words, becoming an 'outsider' in my homeland. This was a crucial, reflexive and painful moment I referred to as fragmentation of my social identity as 'Mexican' (see Epilogue).

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[260] The Spanish word '*defeña*' is related to the former name of Mexico's capital; that is *Distrito Federal* [Federal District], and so it is used to name citizens living there. Since 2015, the name was changed to 'Mexico City'.

There were other features that were new to me, and that I did not encounter in other meditation retreats and courses I participated in my fieldwork. It was very moving to meet the team in charge of preparing the food during the welcoming to the venue (a young woman, slightly older than me, another elder woman, and a young man, all visibly from an Indigenous background). Mixed feelings overwhelmed me; and as I recorded in my field notes, I was a bit uncomfortable since I did not want others to see my eyes filled with tears.[261] On the one hand, I felt grateful to the people for being there dedicated to cooking for us, it was so inspiring to see their smiles and commitment, and gentle ways of being there with us. Whilst I felt a deep appreciation for being in that place and connecting to the values and the people in the community, I was nostalgic too. Because from my 'outsider' position, I became aware of how I have drifted away – at least physically - from this meaningful space due to my academic trajectory, which has deeply led me to reflect on: What being Mexican means to me? (see Epilogue).

In such introductions then, it felt like a more intimate bond was made. This is not usually done in other meditation retreat venues due to the generally large number of people attending and so the cookers remain 'hidden', and where one will usually "see silent people standing in line waiting for their turn to take food" (Pagis 2019, p. 49). In this retreat, we were a small group of participants, and our meals were served in a more 'personalised' way on our seats, as we all sat together on a wooden table. Interestingly, the small group was formed by five women (between 29 and 40 years old); plus, just one man, our meditation teacher.[262] One of the women participating also shared the role of 'staff' during the retreat, and it was she who showed us the shared dormitory upon our arrival.

The other elements which made this site a distinct place was that, because of the dry tropical climate and lack of water in that region, it was necessary to learn how to use the composting toilet, as well as to only use biodegradable products in the shower, which we were asked to bring with us. These actions together then involved a real engagement as for the way of *being* in the community, while also meditating and participating in the rest of activities during the retreat. Nevertheless, as the retreat progressed, I came to realise some of the aspects which resemble the spaces and social organisation that are present in Buddhist meditation retreats

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[261] I remembered feeling uncomfortable by being observed on one occasion, which primarily brought some thoughts around having the 'privilege' of being there walking slowly in silence. The tensions regarding this intersubjective space feel quite sensitive and complex to be explore since it involves the intersection of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and religion. This makes me feel 'vulnerable' as the researcher conducting the study (Loughran and Mannay 2018, p.1) and finding it difficult to express within the limited space to elaborate on this.

[262] Among the retreatants, there was a young man too. He withdrew from the retreat also leaving the premises. Therefore, the analysis concentrates on the observations conducted and the experiences I had, in relation to the retreat and the other five women retreatants.

(e.g. Vipassana, see Pagis 2019) and important features which denoted salient aspects of the Mexican socio-cultural context as I shall explain. The spatial arrangement of the site is presented in Figure 8, where the green rectangles illustrate the several areas designated for vegetables, crops, and trees whereas the blue rectangle ("F") is the pond shown in the photograph earlier (see page 231). The white rectangles represent the buildings where we, the retreatants, spent most of the time (except in the kitchen, "E"). Similarly to the Vipassana meditation retreats (Pagis 2015) we spent time in "close physical proximity and interact[ing] with others" (p. 40) in the dormitories ("A", "C"), the meditation hall ("B"), the dining hall ("D") and occasionally in the outdoor kiosk ("G").[263]

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[263] For 'mindfulness' practitioners and teachers attending a retreat is a fundamental aspect for deepening their meditative practice. Intense and prolonged practice in retreats is even part of the Good Practice Guidelines (GPG, Crane and Hecht 2018) for MBI teachers as mentioned in Chapter 3. From the Buddhist perspective, retreats are also important since "retreatants can focus on their practice free from the distractions and responsibilities of everyday life. Retreats take many forms, and may vary in length from one day to many years and in size from solo endeavours to large group undertakings, but all are intended to deepen the participants' spiritual practice" (Tricycle Buddhism for Beginners 2019, para. 1).

Figure 8 Spatial Arrangement of the Retreat Site
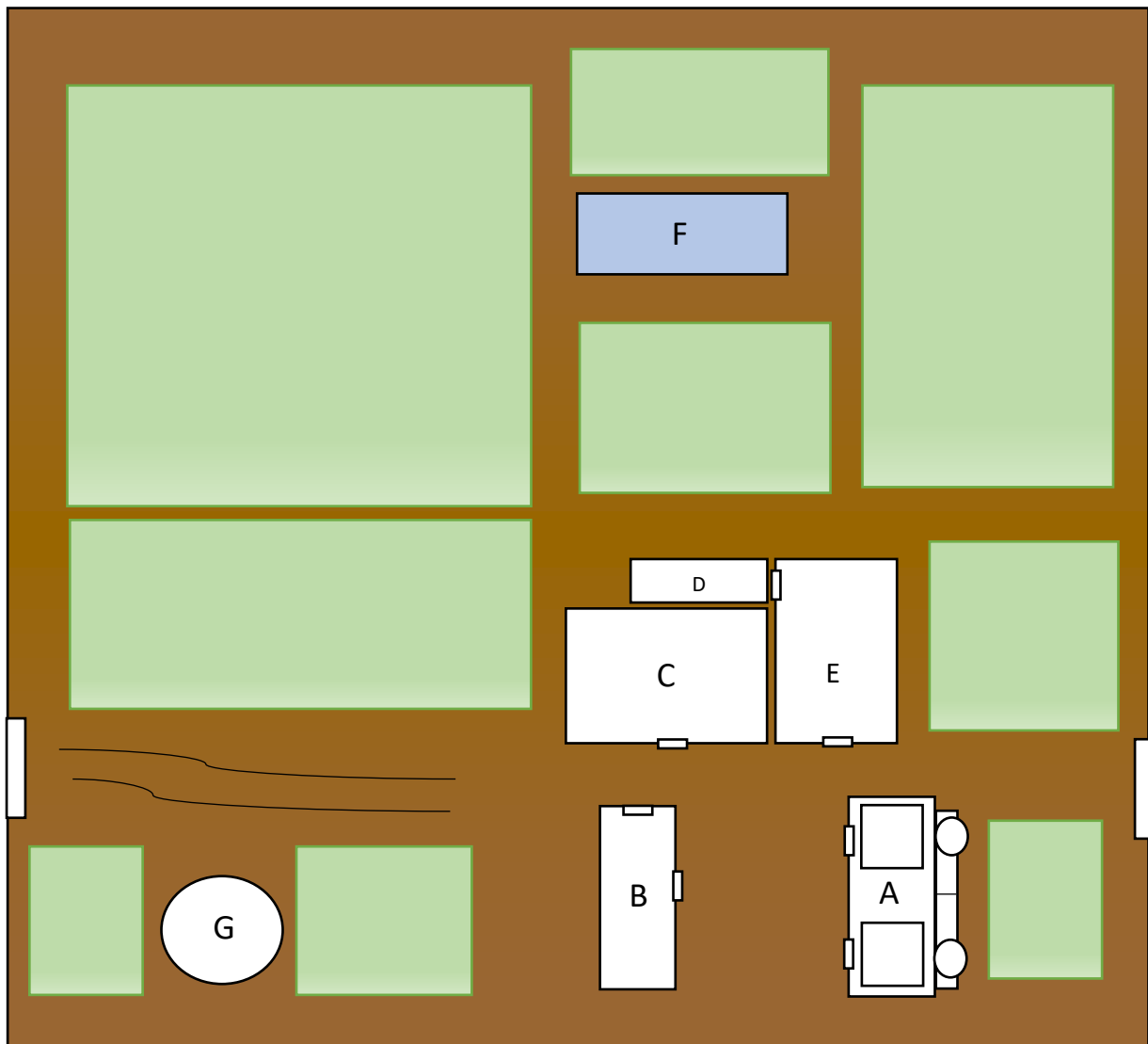
Although I analyse in more detail specific aspects observed during the retreat in the next section, it is worth mentioning that the retreat schedule comprised waking up at 6:30 in the morning after one of us rang the bell, starting the day with sitting meditation. Then, interspersed with sessions where we practised different meditative practices, the teacher delivered some talks where a Buddhist text was also read and discussed.[264] Finishing at night-time between 21:00 and 22:00 hrs, the retreat comprised maintaining silence for almost two days, although this was not as strict as in Vipassana retreats (Pagis 2015) since we could write messages on a paper if we needed to communicate.

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[264] While we practised extended periods of sitting 'mindfulness' meditation sat on a cushion, the practical sessions also included conscious movements and walking meditation inside and outside the meditation hall.

8.4.3. Between the 'secular' and the 'spiritual/religious' experience

Once again, the importance of linguistic aspects in the advertisement and conceptualisation of the practices came up. The combination of the Spanish phrase "*Retiro de Meditación"* [Meditation Retreat] with the catchier English phrase 'Mindful Eating' tells the reader about a 'modern' practice that could be interesting to try, demonstrating this ideological dilemma (Billig et al. 1988) being managed discursively. Once in the meditation hall and after having formally done our first meditation practice, I knew that indeed, attendees were attracted by this topic of 'mindful eating', since it felt relevant to the situations they were experiencing in their personal lives and which were also aspects they were seeking to work on in relation to meditation. This turned out to be of important significance because participants' motivations and expectations of engaging in the retreat like this one, contrasted a lot from what I described earlier about 'urban bodies' and the motivations that city women have (e.g. losing weight for accomplishing beauty standards) when seeking the 'mindful eating' programme as reported in the interview data. The group of attendees in the retreat expressed far deeper motivations related to ethical dilemmas (i.e. the will to quit eating meat while having a business that involves a living income through the sale of meat); philosophical questions like "who am I?" and seeking personal development; as well as their interest in practising meditation for dealing with eating disorders. Whilst a "retreat" assumes perhaps "deeper" purpose to a training course or private consultation, it could be argued in Vogel's (2017) words that "the hungering body is foregrounded as the medium through which life is lived" (p. 160) and via which introspection and 'mindful eating' are sought to solve issues that encompass issues beyond the individual level.[265]

Interestingly however, only two of us had experience in attending a silent meditation retreat, so this was the first time for the other three participants to take part in a meditation retreat which also comprised periods of silence throughout the three days. I was struck by the association made by some of the participants when they explicitly compared the experience of attending a "retreat" with "*religious* retreats", such as the first communion in relation to Catholic and Christian practices. This was a critical moment since the teacher said, "this is also a religious retreat". I was not the only one taken by surprise since others also expressed amazement, but this topic was not discussed further.

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[265] For instance, while attendees' motivations were framed in relation to their 'individual' concerns, these also involved social spheres of their lives (e.g. their families at large, including their children, partner or the family business).

As I wrote in my field notes, I found the 'religious connotation' challenging, finding some resistance myself when assimilating the statement.[266] I was critical of it, since I was sure there was no announcement of this on the description of the event on the social media page. When I went back to revise the text, I did not find a reference to the word "religious" or something alike. However, the event was framed as "spiritual retreat"; where an implicit association between the "spiritual" experience of going to a meditation retreat was linked to "Buddhist meditation". Yet there was no description of the "religious" aspect in the advertisement, as it stated:

> Spiritual retreats are more than just breaks and moments to rest and isolate yourself from the big cities in search of peace and tranquillity. The retreats offer a space for encountering oneself and for mental recovery, through meditation and yoga, all in a natural environment.
>
> A retreat is an excellent opportunity to put aside our daily life and provide an ideal space to find the inner peace and tranquillity necessary away from the hustle and bustle of cities. It is a space in which it is possible to find silence and nature, and being in a secluded place, it encourages reflection and self-knowledge. That is why it is an excellent opportunity to breathe fresh air, listen to the sounds of nature and connect with yourself and with nature.

Yet, it was mentioned that "traditional Buddhist meditation and mindful eating"[267], would have been used as guidance during the 3-day retreat. I was being critical in my position as researcher considering that there was a tension between framing the retreat as "spiritual" versus defining it as "religious". This revealed that the meanings attached to these two words were different from the teacher and the retreatants, or at least the expectations we, as participants have, after reading the advertisement of the event. It is more likely that the practice of "mindful eating" in the title might have prompted ideas of "eating healthy", "look after your body and what you eat" rather than having "religious" connotations. Seeing from a different angle, the phrase "traditional Buddhist meditation" might have explicitly meant "Buddhist religious practices" and not only "Buddhist spiritual meditation" as some might have expected.

The way in which the retreat unfolded in relation to its 'spiritual/religious' quality is of particular interest. There were varied symbolism and practices associated with Buddhism as 'religious'

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[266] This was one of the strong emotions I felt when conducting participant observation during my fieldwork. It arose in relation to the tension I observed about the "religious" perspective underpinning the meditation retreat and the discourse that was used to advertise the retreat online. I was less concerned about myself since I had the background knowledge about this tension as 'mindfulness insider'. However, it was more my preoccupation for retreatants to whom the retreat was being their first experience, making the ethical dilemma evident given that no explicit explanation of the "religious" underpinning was given prior the retreat.

[267] The English expression "mindful eating" was used coupled with the other text in Spanish language.

in the retreat site, specifically in the meditation hall where we gathered as a group every session. These symbols included a shrine, the teacher wearing his brown Zen Buddhist robe, and a vow we all took as part of other rituals involved (e.g. chanting) at some point of the retreat. All of this accompanied the experience of practising formal meditation on a cushion and gentle yoga (or "slow movements").

It was fascinating to also notice, however, that there were also representations associated with Catholic traditional practices as well as pre-Hispanic cultures embedded within Mexican culture itself (see, for example, Figure 9). The photograph on the left shows the shrine placed in the hall in which, besides the characteristic elements of a traditional Buddhist altar (i.e. Buddha's statue and teachings, candles, and incense), artefacts associated with Mexican culture were also set on the offering (e.g. a skull made of typical black clay over a Mexican-style handkerchief; as well as the colourful flowers set in Mexican vases). On the right side, the photograph shows the hall's window that faced towards the archeological site located near the retreat venue, which can be seen on the left side of the window, right at the bottom of the hill. Also, two *calacas* [skeletons] representatives of the Day of the Dead religious celebration in Mexico were placed on each extreme alongside two vivid flowerpots. Experiencing 'traditional Buddhist meditation' and the 'modern' practice of 'mindful eating' during the retreat, was constantly nuanced and intertwined not only by the geographical location where the retreat took place, but importantly, for the 'spiritual' and cultural specificities of the Mexican context as I shall describe next.

Figure 9 Photographs taken Inside the Meditation Hall
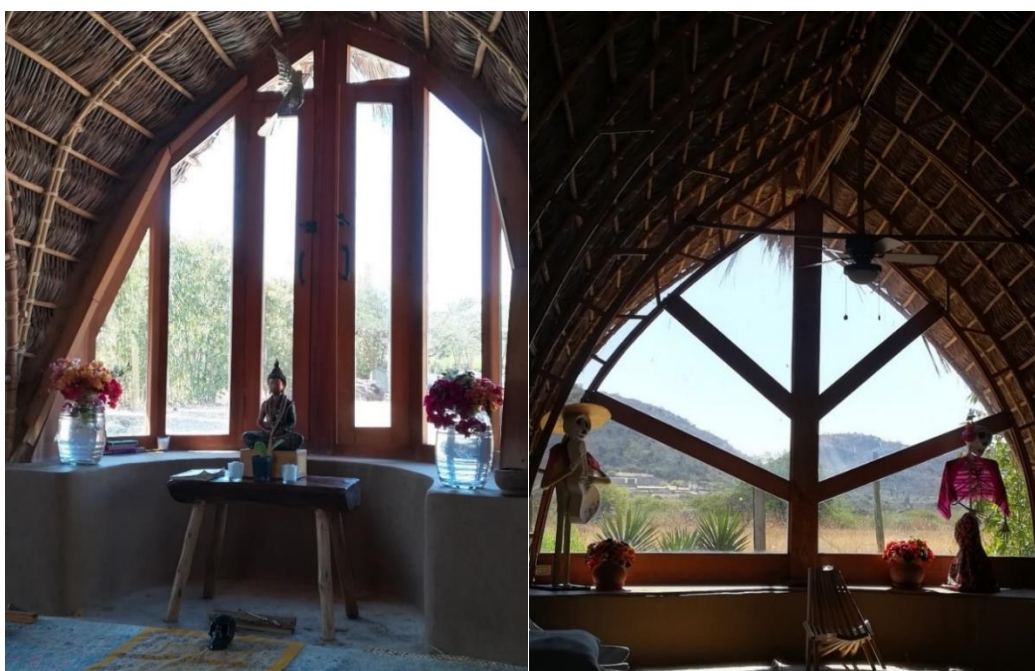
8.4.4. Space of cultural hybridisation

Following the description above, it could be obvious to draw upon the postsecular framework (Arat 2017; Arat 2018) to understand how meditative practices were assembled during this 3-day silent retreat. On the one hand, as Sullivan and Arat (2018) argue, the religious tradition of Buddhism was underpinning the way meditation and 'mindful eating' were presented, even that an arguably 'secular' discourse in the publicity of the retreat was employed. Thus surpassing the boundaries between 'secularity' and 'spirituality/religiosity'. Nevertheless, the Catholic and pre-Hispanic 'religious' and 'spiritual/ meanings conveyed, and additional practices interwoven with the Buddhist-informed meditation practices challenged the assumption of 'secularity' as a generalised characterisation of the Mexican context in the first place, and the relevance of postsecularity to explain the observation in this site second. I argue that instead, the entangled meanings and practices point to the delineation of a different process, that of cultural hybridisation.[268]

The hybridisation process defined as a "mix of cultural elements from different origins" (Giménez Montiel 2016, p.89) allows explaining two things. First, the concomitant representation of different religious and spiritual traditions in a single space as shown by the different artifacts displayed in Figure 9, on page 234. Second, the creation of specific meanings of the meditative practices which we, the retreatants, experienced. While there was a visible dilemma regarding the introduction of a 'modern' practice (i.e. 'mindful eating') discursively presented as 'secular', the intertwined specificities of the Mexican context facilitated the re-emergence of local knowledge and practices as I shall exemplify below.

We came to know that the Buddhist text called in Pali *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* or "Sutta on the Foundations of Mindfulness" in English, was the topic of the retreat.[269] It was then that the

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[268] The empirical data I collected in Mexico made me consider the pertinence of assuming 'secularity' in Mexico. Hill (2019) comments on the "ambiguity of Mexican secularism" because "alongside the formation of anticlerical state institutions and political discourse, Mexico has always retained high levels of popular religiosity" (pp. 669-670). Many of my interviewees expressed that Mexicans in general, have a "propensity to spirituality" and that "syncretism" also characterises Mexicans mainly due to our historical influences of both Catholicism and Mesoamerican cultures. In alignment with the decolonial framework underpinning this thesis and the consideration of the Mesoamerican Indigenous spiritualities and cosmovision (Marcos 2009), it could be argued that a decolonising approach to the debates about 'secularity' and 'postsecularity' should be advanced in future research. These two concepts have been understood from philosophical and sociological frameworks using the rhetoric of 'modernity' and Eurocentric point of view (see Chapter 2). In addition to this observation coming from my empirical data, there is also commentary on this direction emerging form the philosophical work of Rafael Vizcaino (2020).

[269] The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,* is "a discourse on the establishment of mindfulness, modernized interpretations of which have come to play a vital role in laying the foundations of the modern mindfulness movement" (Stanley et al. 2018b, p. 11). During the retreat, we read a Spanish version of

teacher explained to us his understanding of "traditional Buddhist meditation"; that is, "the teachings as given by the Buddha" taught within the Theravada Buddhist school. Additionally, the teacher commented that "*comer atento*" commonly translated as 'mindful eating', would also be the practice to carry on when having our meals during the retreat. So, although the teachings regarding Buddhist sitting meditation and even the 'mindful eating' practice were informed by the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* text we read, we also followed *la práctica de las siete hambres* [the practice of "seven hungers"].[270] The "seven hungers" is a model inspired by the US Jan Chozen Bays, a medical doctor, paediatrician and Zen Buddhist master, who is the author of the book "Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food" (2009). This is a self-help book that intended to present "mindfulness and how it can help with food issues" as argued on the back cover, representing a contemporary uptake of the Buddhist-inspired 'mindfulness' practice. However, more than engaging with the 'pleasurable' experience of eating or 'rediscovering' the 'wholesome' feature of the relationship with food, we explored 'mindful eating' as a contemplative experience which emphasised a particular interconnection: between "body, heart, and mind" and the ecosystem beyond the foodstuff solely. As expressed by the teacher:

> Mindful eating means bringing meditation to food. To make eating a meditative exercise. Mindfulness means atención plena, bringing conscious attention to what we think, do, and say, in a deliberate way. In this practice, we integrate our experience on body, heart, and mind. [It's about] seeing food not only as a necessity or something pleasant; but also as an act that shows our interdependence and interconnection with the Earth and the Universe. Mindful eating connects us with our body, feelings, emotions, and thoughts when it comes to eating.

This extract shows that articulating the definition of the practice cannot escape the use of English terms (i.e. 'mindful eating' and 'mindfulness') discursively, along with the use of the Spanish term *atención plena* and *atención consciente*. Yet, its meaning goes beyond bringing 'attention to the present moment' of the 'secular mindfulness' protocols by drawing on the Buddhist concept of interdependence (Purser 2015, p. 40). For example, we contemplated the external conditions that made it possible to have the food available there for us, as well as the

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this text titled "*El Sutra de los Fundamentos de la Atención"*, wich in contrast with the English title (i.e. "Sutta on the Foundations of Mindfulness") uses the word "attention" rather than *atención plena* or any other term to refer to 'mindfulness'. This text was mentioned in different instances during my fieldwork beyond the context of this meditation retreat; meaning it has been one of the popular references informing some of the approaches on 'mindfulness' taught in Mexican settings.

[270] The seven hungers include: eye hunger, nose hunger, mouth hunger, stomach hunger, mind hunger, cellular hunger, and heart hunger. Although all these types of hungers were explored through the 'mindful eating' practice, the stomach and the mind hungers were emphasised as key. This is because, through the meditative practice, we would explore for instance, if our type of 'hunger' experienced was arising from the sensation of 'not feeling completely satisfied' or due to 'the availability of food' (Field notes).

contradictory situations of waste of food and contexts of higher poverty where there is a lack of food and water. The emphasis on the interconnection with the "Earth and the Universe", however, provided further evidence of the wider 'ecological' view containing the retreat experience in the site as described earlier. Although it was not explicitly framed in these terms, this approach resembled socially engaged Buddhism (e.g. Thich Nhat Hanh work and Joanna Macy, see Edelglass 2009) since it underscored the centrality of the environment and the "whole" or the ecosystem in relation to the work developed at the individual level as the teacher commented:

> Eating also becomes an important topic because of the place where we are. This is part of a whole, that is, the work of the land, alimentation, and on the other hand, the personal work of consciousness. It is part of a whole, and it is precisely that we can carry it out here.

An interesting tension was evident though. While we learned the "seven hungers" model during the teaching sessions in the meditation hall, we practised it on a varied, rich, nutritious, and colourful Mexican food menu throughout the entire retreat, although the interaction during the first and last meals was not bounded by the retreat instructions of 'mindful eating' and noble silence. I did not take pictures of the food since part of our commitment during the 'noble silence' was keeping our mobiles off - plus I would have been distracted from the 'mindful' approach to the experience of eating. Still, this tension identified is relevant since it provides evidence of the cultural hybridisation process noted earlier.

The practice of 'mindful eating' was the theme of the 3-day retreat. However, it surprised me the degree of relevance that the particularities of Mexican food and the associations around these took over the rather general assumption that vegetarian meals are usually served at meditation retreats. Especially given that just a modest reference to this was made on the retreat's publicity.[271] For instance, our food menu involved many products of a basic diet as found in pre-Hispanic times such as maize. Corn tortillas were freshly made (by hand) on a large *comal* [griddle] over the fire. Although in urban areas is easy to buy processed tortillas at the supermarket, having a proper Mexican meal is associated with tortillas made by hand. Such technique and the use of *comal* dates from the time of the Aztecs (Mexica) Empire (1345-1521 CE) and has always been well regarded for its nutritional function accompanying a variety of food plates. Also, we drank plenty of Mexican *aguas frescas* [fruit drinks], a classic element in our diet – just as tea in many cultures. Typical fermented beverages such as tepache or *tepiatl* meaning "beverage made of corn" in Nahuatl, were freshly prepared for us,

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[271] The retreat's description advertised online only said that vegetarian food was included in the fee, along with the teachings of meditation and 'mindful eating' practice and two-night stay in a shared room.

and every single meal came with probiotics also freshly produced in the site.[272] The ancestral Mexican cuisine[273] and not just a simple 'vegetarian food' menu was present, forming part of our modern 'mindful eating' practice. Importantly, this entailed a collective effort beyond the cook who we were introduced at the beginning of the retreat, since most of the food was organically produced in the orchards of the site or brought from other towns connecting with more people who produced certain products, helping the sustainability of such communities.

I contemplated the taste, smell and sight of the Mexican food, not only in relation to the different types of 'hungers' as they arose in my exploration of the 'mindful eating' practice, but significantly, in connection with an affective bond to food for being Mexican. This I knew from my personal experience of being amazed by the delicate creation of each meal, and because Mexican food itself was the topic for conversation among the other retreatants, specifically in relation to the regional products used. I found myself listening mindfully to the retreatants' stories regarding the local foodstuff and their recommendations of popular places to visit and consume such "delicacies". As a city girl, I was unaware of much of this regional food. Their 'insider' knowledge and passion about food articulated in the conversations revealed retreatants' sense of identity bound to the geographical location where the retreat took place. In contrast with the case study of the private organisation from an urban area and the tensions between the 'modern' practice of 'mindful eating' versus the traditional nutritional/medical models at public health institutions, the assumptions held around health in the rural area of the retreat were intrinsically linked to the knowledge of two important Indigenous healers of the community. An Indigenous senior midwife and healer who knows about food medicinal properties and the benefits of ferments, and an Indigenous senior healer who uses life processes and ancestral cuisine as means of healing, are two teachers who have a significant influence on the type of food prepared and the cultivation methods used at the retreat's site.[274]

Finally, one of the highlight activities in the retreat agenda included a walk to the archaeological site near the retreat venue. Once again, the silent walk outdoors we undertook

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[272] After the initial Spanish conquest (1519–1521 CE) the recipe of tepache changed gradually to substitute the corn with fruits such as pineapple, guava, and apples. We were given this fruity tepache given the warm weather in the site. Again, tepache is well-known for its benefits in the organism; for example, improving the digestive process, protecting the microbial flora of the colon and being rich in vitamins and minerals. The cook who prepared the beverages freshly for us remained us at the end of the retreat of such properties and the importance of consuming it.

[273] Since 2010, traditional Mexican cuisine has been inscribed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO [no date]).

[274] On the second day of the retreat, I experienced a terrible headache which was not fading during the meditation sessions. Although the meditation hall and the bedrooms were fresh and well ventilated, it was a great challenge for my body to adapt to the hot and dry climate, which at that time was over 30 Celsius degrees. Another participant had a similar unbearable pain, so we were given natural 'remedies' such as smelling fresh rosemary and other drops specifically used for treating headaches.

as a group disentangled and differentiated from the Buddhist-informed walking meditation we practised in the meditation room which demanded slow movements and attention drifted to owns physical sensations. The experience of the silent walk to the archaeological site inspired the emphasis on 'interconnectedness' with the surroundings beyond the retreat venue highlighted earlier (see Figure 10). The 'contemplation' of the sunset at the top of the pyramid brought me closer to nature itself, but also to reflect on the underestimated spiritual values and practices linked to Mesoamerican cultures and the need for caring for and encourage the recognition they deserved.

Figure 10 Photograph taken at the Top of the Pyramid we Visited on the Silent Walk.

It has been exemplified that, meditative practices such as 'mindful eating', are far from being constructed free of Buddhist underpinnings. The set of cases (the private organisation in an urban area and the meditation retreat in a rural area) illustrate that either explicitly or implicitly articulated, the boundaries between the 'spiritual/religious' and the 'secular' are blurred (Sullivan and Arat 2018). Furthermore, this rises crucial tensions with regards to the geographical locations where the practices are being disseminated, the type of population practising such activities as well as the motivations that arouse people's interest in the 'mindful eating' practice or the types of "hungers that need feeding" (Vogel 2017).

Contrasting the ethnographic participation at the silent retreat presented in this chapter with the observation at the "Mindfulness for Health Conference: MBSP" in Chapter 7, the use of the framework of postsecularity (Arat 2017; 2018) in the analysis conducted might seem

contradictory. Nevertheless, as Napolitano and Flores (2003) documented in their study of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in two different states in Mexico, oriental medicine is transformed differently as it travels through Mexican low-income barrios to settings of the middle-class public (p. 90).[275] The authors argue that there are different angles of analysis and the picture of such transformation processes in Mexico is not one-sided (p. 91). I consider that the multiple layers of complexity in the Mexican context are thus evident when empirical data is collected in distinctive geographical locations and across sectors. As Stanley and Kortelainen (2020) note, the 'mindfulness' milieu can be characterised by its multiplicity and "paradoxical tensions and contradictory functions" (p. 37) when studied in situated contexts. Processes such as the importation of a decolonial framework and the re-emergence of local practices and cultural hybridisation (Giménez Montiel 2016) characterise the way in which meditative practices are disseminated and taught across Mexican settings.

8.5. Case study three: Ideological dilemmas and decolonisation of meditative practices

The third overarching theme on ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996) and decolonisation of meditative practices that I discuss in this final section, concerns the discussion of neo-colonial and internal colonialism uncovered in the discourses used to disseminate and teach meditative practices in Mexico. The aim of assembling this third case study is twofold. Firstly, to offer a possible explanation for the "elephant in the room" (Zerubavel 2006) of the "hidden path" (or meditative practices lineages rooted in Indigenous peoples and epistemologies) uncovered in Chapter 6. Secondly, to simultaneously reflect on the intricacies learnt through the study of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context including Dietz's (2018) perspective on interculturality (Chapter 2). My reflections are inspired by Smith and Delamont's (2019) collection on "The Lost Ethnographies: Methodological Insights from Projects that Never Were". As the authors explain, the "title 'Lost Ethnographies' is not be taken literally" (p. 1); since what is underscored from this perspective of a confessional genre, is to reflect on the meanings and understandings discovered from ethnographic studies that did not happen, which might be taken for granted otherwise.

Informed by the bricolage approach (Chapter 4), I have linked some of the findings related to other empirical chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), which assembled in this chapter illuminate the overarching theme of ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988). The contrasting views

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[275] The 'barrios' which literally means neighbourhood, is employed in Spanish to denote a poor area within a city or town.

demonstrating the dilemmatic discourse and the ideological complexity (Billig et al 1988, p. 12) regarding the neo-colonial and internal colonialism within which the dissemination of meditative practices is embedded, involves notions of classism and racism deeply rooted in Mexican contemporary society.

Through the analysis of the "contemplative practices" interpretative repertoire, as the discourse employ in interviewees' accounts and online documents to claim about the 'universality' and 'transculturality' of 'mindfulness', counter-themes are also revealed. First, the justification for excluding Indigenous communities as a target group to work with, for being a "minority group" claiming the 'dilution' of their cosmology and spirituality (see e.g. Wetherell and Potter 1992). This is closely linked to the second contradictory theme which raises assumptions about people's socioeconomic status as a hindrance to either having access to meditative practices or considers that such practices are not people's "priority" over other "basic needs". Yet, the methodological reflections concerning my 'lost ethnography' (Smith and Delamont 2019) which intended to study the work that a civil society organisation has developed with an Indigenous community in southern Mexico, suggest that instead of being "attenuated", Indigenous cosmologies and practices co-exist in these communities. Indeed, Indigenous cosmologies such as the practice of *Buen Vivir* become significant for some members of the Indigenous community, given that they (re)connect with it upon their encounter with some forms of 'modern' meditation perspectives such as *plena consciencia* or engaged Buddhism as discussed below.

8.5.1. Contemplation and contemplative practices: The repertoire of the 'universal'

Across interviewees' accounts, I noticed that instead of defining meditative practices in relation to the debate between 'spirituality/religiosity' and 'secularity' (Chapter 5), some interviewees talked about these practices as 'universal human capacity' present in all cultures and which can be practised regardless people's religious beliefs. In such cases, the use of terms such as *contemplación* [contemplation] and *prácticas contemplativas* [contemplative practices] was characteristic. This does not mean that interviewees stopped employing other terms such as *atención plena* or *atención consciente* in their narratives.[276] However, the use of this interpretative repertoire (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1992) was

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[276] In this section I employ the English words "contemplation" and "contemplative practices" to develop the analysis because in this case, the translation from the Spanish terms does not entails a significative difference such as the terms *atención plena* and *atención consciente* analysed in the interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987) in Chapter 5.

analytically interesting having two important functions. The discourse of 'universality' and 'transculturality' of contemplative practices was articulated to justify the dissemination and delivery of meditative practices to different settings (from the clinical and educational to the workplace) and across sectors (i.e. from the private to the public and the civil society). In fact, it was mentioned that such 'universal' capacity of contemplation was also present in Mesoamerican cultures and that it can be found even nowadays in the Indigenous communities in rural areas.

From the outside, the "spiritual practice" embedded in Mexican Indigenous peoples is also conveyed as an attractive characteristic for the Buddhist practitioner interested in doing "spiritual tourism" (Norman and Pokorny 2017), as the online Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* (Bard de Palazuelos 2020) argue in their recent publication titled "The Buddhist Traveler in Mexico City":

> Finding silence and inner peace in a metropolis of more than 21 million people can be challenging, but don't forget that Mexico is a land of many indigenous cultures that are centuries old and deeply rooted in spiritual practice.

The second function of the interpretative repertoire claiming the 'universality' of meditative practices was to justify their introduction to various sectors (i.e. 'spiritual/religious' and 'secular') based on the claim of 'secularity' and scientific efficacy. So I found that interviewees commonly assumed that no obstacles would be faced even the strong Catholic presence in the country. Nevertheless, the counter-theme to the interpretative repertoire of the 'universal', was evident in the interview extract below. The justification for a racist discourse of exclusion was articulated (Wetherell and Potter 1992), where paradoxically, the cultural group that was previously acknowledged for having 'contemplative' antecedents was devalued in the same context of the interview:

> Well, that's an environment [Indigenous communities] that we haven't explored much. First, because it really is a very minority environment in our country, there are very few individuals who embrace a genuine Indigenous worldview, and even the Indigenous populations are deeply acculturated by Christianity. So, wherever one goes, even in the most remote populations, Christianity has a very important influence. This is a consequence of 500 years of colony, isn't it?
>
> So, instead, we must attend the Judeo-Christian mental scheme. Yes, of course, there are elements of our pre-Columbian traditions, they are still present in an urban culture such as the Mexican one, we do pay attention to it, but it is not necessary to do it exclusively to that ideological focus because it is very diluted (male, middle-aged Buddhist teacher).

This ideological dilemma alerts us about internal colonialism at play when it comes to the discourse used to disseminate meditative practices in Mexico which follows the long-standing issue of colonialism in Mexico due to the Spanish invasion. Yet, it is not only the denial of distinct epistemological views and practices rooted in Indigenous lineages which are at stake. A neo-colonial practice is also implicitly conveyed since "the Judeo-Christian mental scheme" generalised to all Mexican population, is the one to be "dealt with" or "treated" using the contemplative practices from the Buddhist tradition that the interviewee above represents.

Furthermore, I also found other views which claim that people with lower educational and socioeconomic status have "difficulties to have access to their internal experience". The argument is that people are less likely to be sensitive to have that 'inward gaze' unless they have had, for instance, some education on the matter such as the Montessori method. One interviewee addressed this explicitly saying that many people in Mexico have this 'taboo about social class'. That is, that "only the educated people can or have the privilege to train their minds" while people with lower socioeconomic status and less educated "have more basic needs" to attend to like being "concern[ed] about having food to eat". The dilemmatic nature of these arguments unveils both assumptions about racism and classism underpinning some of the discourses employed to disseminate meditative practices in Mexican settings. I argue that those assumptions interwoven in some of the arguments presented above partly explains the legitimation and dominance of the two 'common' pathways or lineages (i.e. Buddhism and science), leaving the lineage rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and practices "hidden" and excluded.

Although it is problematic to attempt providing further evidence to support my argument while trying to maintain anonymity and confidentiality at the same time, it is worth mentioning that the explanation I offer above is based on the observation of patterns regarding the status of some Buddhist schools and scientific communities in Mexico, which have also been identified elsewhere. For instance, the conformation of US Buddhist institutions through the association with Western elite groups of middle-upper class and educated circles who were the ones facilitating both economically and politically the raise of such groups' popularity and power (Kucinskas 2019). Also, scientific communities legitimising the popularisation of meditative practices based on their privileged positions of social class, educational level, and the status of 'scientific knowledge'. As Kucinskas (2020) documents, such elite groups have lacked however, the "perspectives of those less intellectually, economically, and racially privileged than them" (p. 183). Sullivan and Arat (2018) point out the "Orientalism and other forms of exclusionary discourse practice underpin[ning] the history and ultimate success of mindfulness in the West" calling this the "politics of representation at the root of the modern

mindfulness movement" (p. 350). In the Mexican scene, this situation becomes even more complex since the discourses and ideologies for preserving foreign practices and knowledge happens through different layers: from Asian countries via the Anglo-American perspective, sometimes mediated by Spanish European lenses; and in some other cases, directly from foreign "minority" cultures (e.g. Tibetan culture) also imported to the country which in turn enact oppressive practices upon Mexican local vulnerable and unrepresented groups. In the next section, I discuss how the intricacies of the Mexican context can also challenge some of the racialized assumptions and tensions discussed above.

8.5.2. The practice of *Buen Vivir* and reflections on the 'lost ethnography'

As I mentioned in Chapter 6, having found programmes that were beyond MBSR and which were tailored to culturally diverse populations with specific circumstances within the Mexican territory, prompted my interest in conducting ethnographic work in one of the Indigenous communities where I found meditative practice was being taught. Interestingly, I observed that my interaction online with the members of the grassroot organisation was welcoming. In contrast with other situations during my fieldwork, I did not feel threatened or questioned regarding my 'authority' to be conducting my research. Besides, the negotiation for having access to the site was being facilitated by one of the members of the organisation (Nicté) with whom I had a very good rapport. In my journal, I noted that the research participant commented "you inspire me confidence" meaning that I had gained her trust while conducting the interview also showing her enthusiasm for me to take part in one of the workshops that she delivers to Indigenous youths. Nevertheless, I soon found myself pondering about the "mindful ethics" (González-López 2011) of my participation. I was dealing with an unanticipated ethical dilemma of questioning my 'outsider' position as a researcher based on my self-identity and location (Epilogue) to enter this site, while trying to keep the trust bond built during the interview interaction with Nicté, a middle-aged Indigenous woman who had training in education and training as *plena consciencia* teacher.

Again, various emotions emerged as "a constitutive element" (Loughran and Mannay 2018, p. 2) of my research although not in the sense of strong feelings or emotional reactions (Chapter 6). But in relation to caring about what entailed conducting research with vulnerable groups accompanied with mix feelings of excitement and insecurity. Informed by a feminist sensitivity to attend to unheard voices and experiences in the study of 'mindfulness' in Mexico and document some of the approaches to teach meditative practices socially and culturally relevant, my enthusiasm led me to make necessary amendments to my ethics application form to 'secure' access to the site (Chapter 4). Yet, I felt uncomfortable after listening Nicté's

experience of 'having been used to these processes of research and people visiting the community' in one of the conversations we had. Whilst I knew the civil society organisation has a programme offering placements and other types of collaborations with other institutions, I reflected that the research design of my study seemed limited to include features common to Indigenous methodologies (e.g. a collaborative design and Indigenous research agenda, Smith 2012; Ashdown et al. 2018). Hence I questioned the pertinence of this fieldwork trip and my 'readiness' to enter the site. Interested and responsible for addressing this tension of power given my 'outsider' position, I was equally concerned about looking after the relationship of confidence established initially during the interview.

Further challenges arose regarding both the practicalities for travelling to the site under the consideration of conducting solo research as a young woman in Mexico (Chapter 4) and contingencies related to the larger socio-economic and political environment of the country in 2019, which prevented me to conduct the ethnography.[277] This almost sudden 'ending' of my ethnographic project which 'did not happen' caused me frustration; since this final act of 'letting it go' (Fitzpatrick 2019) felt something imposed. I was angered not because *my* fieldwork trip was halted but for realising that the inequal circumstances surrounding vulnerable groups such as this Indigenous community, might be also the same conditions maintaining "hard-to-reach" groups underrepresented.

Yet, instead of disregarding these methodological difficulties and ethical dilemmas faced as an 'incomplete' ethnography, I have reflected on these experiences faced to uncover an important meaning (Smith and Delamont 2019). This is mainly challenging the ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988) exposed earlier, also calling upon decolonising meditative practices. This case study demonstrates that although possibly difficult to reach and not as publicly visible as other dominant cultural groups, Indigenous cosmologies and practices co-exist nowadays in our Mexican communities, and they are in fact, also encountering some forms of contemporary meditative practices the present research planned to study.

Two Indigenous members of this community narrated how the contemporary meditative practice they knew, i.e. "engaged Buddhism", resonated with them and connected them with

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[277] Two situations were crucial for deciding not to continue with the plan of my ethnographic work in this setting. First, I had to prioritise my safety as researcher following the university regulations for solo research, due the migration crisis for which the Mexican Government deployed security forces to stop the advance of a new migrant caravan from Central America which was making its way through southern Mexico, heading for the US border during the spring of 2019. Second, because the union of teachers' school went on strike and so there was no certainty about the timeframe in which the schools would be open for the workshops on meditative practices to be delivered.

experiences they already had in their "traditional culture", which they called the practice of *Buen Vivir*. It was interesting to note that the discourse employed to talk about meditative practices did not involve the arguments about "mindfulness ownership" or debates regarding its origin, but how they have *lived* or *experienced* it. As Yunuen, a young Indigenous male environmentalist, said "the truth is that I did not find much difference to what is my 'traditional culture' in [Mexican region], so to speak. With this, I mean that I do not practice any religion". Yunuen emphasised that in the Indigenous communities and particularly in his particular cosmology "we have respect for the Universe, the Moon, the Earth and [we are] grateful for Life. Not with a God, but with Life and with the Natural elements" (see Chapter 2). These statements make evident that the ideological dilemma conveyed earlier in the generalisation of the "Judeo-Christian mental scheme". The way in which Yunuen reported his experience not only distanced himself from having a religious stance but articulated his practice in relation to nature itself and the vital "connection and care with Mother Earth". Although Yunuen did not know the practices under the name in which this was introduced (i.e. as "engaged Buddhism"), he asserted that he had already performed similar elements of this practice in the framework of *Buen Vivir*; for instance, "share the table when eating", "share the talk" and "be kind in the speech".

On the other hand, Nicté also told me that although practised for generations and "learned through our ancestors", colonization processes such as the Spanish invasion have impacted in losing some rituals and aspects associated with the practice of *Buen Vivir*. However, to her, the practices are not detached from each other, in that they involve for instance: "sharing with the family", "relating in a cordial way", and "being connected to the Mother Earth". Nicté argued that their encounter with "engaged Buddhism" has "allows us to recover part of the essence of our practices that have been lost. I feel that instead of feeling harmed, it is something that adds to what we want to be, the ideal of Buen Vivir within the communities". Attending the perspectives of Yunuen and Nicté and upon the refection of my 'lost ethnography' (Smith and Delamont 2019) decolonising contemplative practices and 'mindfulness' is necessary. Important considerations regarding neo-colonial and internal colonialism discourse practices were uncovered through the analysis of ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988) including issues of racism and classism as addressed in the final case study articulated in this chapter.

8.6. Conclusion

From the set of case studies presented above and the discussion of the different tensions and dilemmas found in the analysis of the multi-modal data collected, it can be concluded that the study of meditative practices in the case of Mexico is intertwined with issues of identity and

the specificity of the socio-cultural aspects where the practices are taught. Contrary to the assumptions of the standardised MBIs protocols and the premise of the 'universality' of 'mindfulness', the findings of this chapter illuminate two things: the different processes happening on the ground when meditative practices are taught (e.g. re-emergence of local practices and cultural hybridisation), and the unintended reproduction of neo-colonial and internal colonialism via discursive practices through which meditative practices are disseminated.

Some of the case studies that I assembled in this chapter following a bricolage approach (Chapter 4), entailed considerable methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas. Nevertheless, the reflection of these issues was fruitful in understanding more deeply the intricacies of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. In this regard, I resonate with Fitzpatrick's (2019) words:

> We can never be in all places and listening to all conversations, we cannot follow all the possible leads we would like to (because of time, energy and focus); and we cannot continue a project forever. When we do finish, we are then faced with the crises of representation, with losing our way in the materials, and we have to face the question of how to deal with the interplay of voices in our writing: authorial voice, the voices of participants and the voices of theory (p. 167).

The analysis of my case studies evidences the need for conducting further empirical studies investigating how and to what extend the Mexican context is shaping the way in which meditative practices are delivered; and vice versa, to examine how the importation, adaptation, or '*tropicalización'* of programmes based on meditative practices also impacts the intercultural context of Mexico. The analysis also shows that far from being simple, one-sided (Napolitano and Flores 2003), or a singular, totalising discourse (Stanley and Kortelainen 2020), 'mindfulness' is a complex phenomenon that requires to be examined from different angles.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1. Concluding remarks

In this final chapter, I examine the implications of my thesis findings for both the Mexican meditative practices milieu and the wider international area of social studies on 'mindfulness'. In sum, this study contributes to the understanding that 'mindfulness' in Mexico is not a homogeneous phenomenon. In fact, some of the conceptualisations and approaches found distance from the so-called Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" (Wilson 2014). As exemplified in Chapter 5, conceptualisations of meditative practices by Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers have had a distinctive history, which contests the taken-for-granted definitions of 'mindfulness' widely spread in the Anglophone scientific literature. This is the reason why the English word 'mindfulness' was written in single quotation marks throughout the thesis, representing the decolonising approach to taken to research this subject matter in the Mexican case. Also, the provision of meditative practices across Mexican settings is heterogeneous, underscoring that a 'mindfulness field' cannot be assumed.

The plurality of mediative practices approaches mapped through the study sample (i.e. beyond the MBSR protocol), shows that these practices are being adapted to tackle collective issues faced in contemporary Mexican society, rather than being applied for "stress-reduction" and "being in the present moment" purposes only. Yet, the diverse meditative practices milieu documented in my study is not free of tensions and difficult emotions. The embodied high reactivity and emotionality throughout my research speak of a very contested milieu due to members' positions, i.e. as practitioners, teachers, and researchers of 'mindfulness' intertwined with their professional trajectories. Issues of social identity, as well as the specificities of the Mexican context, appear as important aspects influencing the dissemination of meditative practices, which have nevertheless been overlooked partly due to the 'scientific discourse' underpinning the implementation of the 8-week standardised Anglo-American interventions.[278] I discuss these findings in detail in relation to the answers provided to my research questions and sub-questions below.

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[278] While the effectiveness of MBIs to tackle some medical and psychological disorders might be of great value for the populations where these have been largely studied, what I contend is the Anglophone bias that accompanies the importation of such MBIs. Considering for instance, the scant empirical studies from cultural psychology and social scientific looking at the adaptations of these interventions in Mexico and other Latin American countries. The generalisation of the scientific evidence and effectiveness of such programmes is produced based on a 'universal' conceptualisation of 'mindfulness' ignoring the socio-cultural, linguistic, and historical aspects of the context where they are applied. This argument also dovetails with recent social science scholarship which has problematised 'mindfulness' as a "universal panacea" (Stanley and Kortelainen 2020, p. 36) that generates the same effects everywhere.

In the introduction of the thesis (Chapter 1) I narrated my professional biography and trajectory as a 'mindfulness' practitioner, teacher, and researcher, positioning myself as an 'insider' of the social group I have studied. My interest in the popularisation of 'mindfulness' in my home country and the ambivalent feelings that started to emerge due to the tensions observed as 'mindfulness' delivery started to grow in Mexico (e.g. power dynamics, marketization of the practice), motivated me to conduct this research project. Writing about my professional trajectory as an introduction to my subject matter has been fundamental to demarcate three key aspects that have informed the research design of my study.

Firstly, situating my encounter with the secular practice of *atención plena*, along with my twin sister Ximena, as psychology students at a public higher education institution, led me to reflect on the assumptions I held about 'mindfulness' as an objectively measurable phenomenon due to my training in experimental psychology. Yet, moving away from Mexico to train as a social scientist in the UK allowed me to embrace my critical questionings about this topic but crucially, to shift to an understanding of 'mindfulness' as a historical and socio-culturally situated phenomenon, transitioning to an 'outsider' position. This second aspect facilitated conceiving the study in relation to three broad areas which at that time, in 2017, were understudied, namely: what is the history of 'mindfulness' in Mexico? Who are the Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers disseminating 'mindfulness' in Mexico? And how are 'mindfulness' and related practices taught in that context? These key questions were refined in relation to the qualitative methodologies chosen to collect the data and given the emergent nature of the study.

The third aspect mapped through my professional biography and my in-between insider-outsider positions and which also makes this study an original contribution in the social studies on 'mindfulness', is the decolonial theoretical framework underpinning it. The decolonial thinking perspective was articulated, on the one hand, on the researcher's position of colonial difference (Mignolo 2002). My 'mindful journey' and the reflexive stance adopted compelled me to critically examine my identity as a 'Mexican woman' with a mixed heritage studying abroad at a University in Wales, being educated, and writing my research in the English language as addressed in the Epilogue. Building this decolonial theoretical framework was simultaneously guided by the research findings (see e.g. Collins and Stockton 2018). To date, this is the first investigation bringing a decolonial lens to the study of 'mindfulness' in Mexico, having collected multi-modal empirical data.

The above had fundamental implications at a methodological level reason why I embraced a bricolage approach (Chapter 4). The bricolage approach in this thesis is a novel contribution

closely linked to the theoretical framework decision for two reasons a) it facilitated the analysis of the multi-modal data from different angles incorporating an interdisciplinary perspective rarely done within social scientific studies on 'mindfulness', and b) it foregrounded the role of researchers' subjectivity in knowledge production around the topic of 'mindfulness' while using 'mindfulness' practice as a method informed by "mindful inquiry" (Bentz and Shapiro 1988) and "mindful ethics" (González-López 2011).

So far, social studies looking at 'mindfulness' in context have employed a different array of qualitative research methods (i.e. interviews and ethnographic data, archival and documents analysis and audio recordings). These studies have provided important insights regarding the historical development of Anglo-American 'mindfulness', the trajectories of mindfulness leaders and advocates (see e.g. Wilson 2014; Wheater 2017; Drage 2018a; Gleig 2019; Hickey 2019; Sullivan and Arat 2018; Kucinskas 2019; Pagis 2019), also documenting the socio-culturally nuanced and contradictory effects of 'mindfulness' provision in specific contexts (Hedegaard 2020; Stanley and Kortelainen 2020). Yet, most of these studies seemed to be driven by methods associated with particular disciplines (e.g. sociology, Buddhist studies, anthropology). Besides, in the social scientific investigations nor the psychological and neuroscientific studies reviewed in Chapter 3, researchers' subjectivity in its form of colonial difference has not been explicitly addressed nor problematised. This is the reason why the psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001), feminist sensitivity (Marcos 2009; Lugones 2010) and intersectionality analyses (Phoenix 2006; Viveros Vigoya 2016) have been key for the understanding of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican case.

This thesis sought to achieve three academic aims, specifically to 1) explore the topic of 'mindfulness' in Mexico, 2) to become an emancipatory project in giving voice to the experience of Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers which has not yet been portrayed in 'mindfulness' academic literature so far, and to 3) contribute to the development of a decolonial theoretical framework for the study of 'mindfulness' within social sciences studies. In the next sections, I conclude by explaining how my research work has fulfilled these academic purposes, describing some of the unexpected methodological challenges encountered while developing the decolonial emancipatory framework. I begin with the discussion of the empirical findings of my thesis which address the academic aim 1) stated above, and which specifically responds to the research questions and sub-questions proposed.

9.2. *Emic* conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' and the emergence of meditative practices in Mexico

A key overall finding was that 'mindfulness' in the Mexican context does not resemble a sole, unique phenomenon. I found that, the English words 'being mindful' and 'mindfulness' were a narrow way to represent the array of conceptualisations that Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers use in practice. Hence, the decision to adopt "meditative practices" for the present thesis as an encompassing term accounting for the various interpretative repertoires found. Closely linked to this finding and informed by a discourse analysis perspective is the understanding that such conceptualisations are socially, culturally, and historically situated since a) many depend on the usage of Spanish (e.g. *atención plena, atención consciente,* and *plena consciencia*), and b) their meaning is influenced by the way it is articulated in texts and discourse in relation to milestones specific to the Mexican historical context. For example, the English word 'mindfulness' itself and the acronym 'MBSR' did not feature as conceptualisations known and employed in the Mexican context at least during the first decade of the 2000s. These findings have important implications in the larger social scientific, psychological, cultural and Buddhist 'mindfulness' literature since I contest the hegemonic view of 'mindfulness' and its study from the Anglo-American perspective.

In this regard, the findings presented in Chapter 5 contribute to two fields of study, critical historical scholarship, and cultural and indigenous psychology as follows. First, the thesis uncovers the emergence of meditative practices in Mexico intertwined with the development of psychoanalysis, experimental psychology, and Buddhism in Mexico, also influenced by the rise of Anglo-American MBIs documented by Wilson (2014). With the revision of historically 'hidden' figures (i.e. Erich Fromm and his disciple Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova, Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum), and the role of various female leaders facilitating transnational connections between Massachusetts and Mexico and their initial work in the application of 'mindfulness' programmes, my research builds on the recent historical scholarship (Harrington and Dunne 2015; Fox Lee 2019; Helderman 2019; Hickey 2019), which has challenged the dominant narratives and histories around the Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) in the US context.[279]

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[279] The historical review presented in this thesis is fragmented and limited to the documentary and archival research I had access to, as well as to the interview accounts of my sample, which were possible given the practical constraints of the PhD project. Also, it is not claimed that this is *the* history of meditative practices in Mexico but rather points out to important milestones and threads which still deserve further research.

My empirical work based on the Mexican scene has sought to primarily fill the gap identified in Mexican literature (Chapter 3) in alignment with indigenous and cultural psychology. However, it has also attempted to resist the process that Pickren (2009) evidences with regards to the exportation of 'American psychology', but in the case of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. As he states:

> It became redundant to use the modifier, American, before psychology. The accompanying history of psychology by North American textbook authors reflected this domination; historians of psychology appeared to take it for granted that the history of psychology was identical to the history of American psychology (p. 87).

In avoiding the re-production of 'colonial histories' on 'mindfulness' in Mexico, the historical investigation presented in the thesis has been committed to the development of a decolonising project, which, according to Pavón-Cuéllar (2020), is an important component for the indigenisation of psychology (Chapter 2). In taking a psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Flores Osorio 2017) and emphasising the researcher's subjectivity understood in its historical specificity (Blackman et al. 2008) that of colonial difference as mentioned earlier, it has contributed to the development of "emergent subjectivity" (Pavón-Cuéllar 2017; Pavón-Cuéllar 2020b) about, and in relation to, meditative practices in the Mexican context.

In the production of knowledge from and with voices gathered through the multi-modal data in the Mexican context, the thesis contributes to what Pereyra et al. (2005) describes as the functions of history. The legitimacy of developing social scientific knowledge about a specific unexplored socio-cultural and geographical location such as Mexico, concerning the study of a 'global phenomenon' or 'global trend', yet resisting hegemonic histories (Grosfoguel 2007). And the social function of history, that is, so that the insights generated from this empirical research can feed back to the Mexican meditative practices community and shed light on new avenues and ways of addressing the challenges and tensions faced. As Harrington and Dunne (2015) conclude in their historical revision of the "bigger picture"; for instance, Zen and psychoanalysis and Transcendental Meditation, which precede the "particular moment" of the introduction of 'mindfulness' in the form of Kabat-Zinn's MBSR:

> Understanding how we got here, and why we are exercised about this program in the ways that we are, may serve us as a first step toward deciding how best to move forward with discernment and, if we may use the term, mindfulness (p. 628).

As for the empirical data collected and the historical scholarship in my study, I argued that there were no variants of the English word 'mindfulness' which have entered the Spanish vernacular in Mexico prior to the rise in the dissemination of Anglo-American 'mindfulness'

practices in the country in 2014. Therefore the *atención plena* interpretative repertoire contesting the emergence of Kabat-Zinn's 'mindfulness' in Mexico and consequently the first title of this thesis in quotation marks *"*Before mindfulness" – echoing one participant's expression "It was atención plena first, wasn't it?" Since, during my fieldwork I soon realise, that, as much as the diversity of *emic* conceptualisations was tied to the Mexican historical and linguistic context, it was similarly influenced by the participant's trajectories and professional backgrounds.

9.3. The Mexican 'mindfulness' network

In studying the social organisation of Mexican meditative practitioners, teachers, and researcher of my study sample and the organisations where they work, I discovered a second key overall finding: the heterogeneity and diversity of approaches to meditative practices across Mexican sectors. Contrary to my initial assumption of a 'mindfulness field', I found that one of the particularities of 'mindfulness' in Mexico is its non-conformity to the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" (Wilson 2014) thesis. This finding adds to sociological work on therapeutic culture which criticises the "idea that mindfulness is a totalising discourse, producing the same effects everywhere it goes – such as individualisation or self-governance" (Stanley and Kortelainen 2020, p. 36) and cultural psychology scholarship contesting the "universality and translatability" (Hoffman 2018, p. 1) of MBSR among Haitian mental health practitioners and educators.

In the Mexican context, the heterogeneity observed has different implications. On the one hand, I reiterate what I pointed out in Chapter 6, that there is no single answer to defining what the different meditative practices in the wider socio-cultural, political, and economic context in Mexico mean. Elsewhere, Stanley and Kortelainen (2020) report that "rather than being a singular and coherent totality, the therapeutic culture of mindfulness can be understood as an assemblage" (p. 36). This characterisation exemplifies the way 'mindfulness' is being disseminated and delivered across Mexican sectors, not fitting only to its "stress reduction" therapeutic form such as MBSR. I argue that the first implication of such diversity of approaches constitutes some form of resistance to the standardised Anglo-American and European MBIs which have been exported around the world.

While I found that there is a continuation of various MBIs imported from Anglo-American and European countries to Mexican settings, I also documented accounts of criticism towards the dominant conceptualisations of Anglo-American 'mindfulness', and approaches to meditative practices which have built on previous work, adapted or creating programmes for the Mexican

population to tackle issues specific to Mexican settings, which I, therefore, theorised as 'innovation' in the Mexican milieu I studied. This is a fascinating finding, and future studies might concentrate on exploring in-depth courses and programmes which teach social dimensions of 'mindfulness' or meditative practices programmes targeted to vulnerable groups such as activists or Indigenous populations. Related to this is a second major implication of the pluralistic provision of meditative practices in Mexico; namely, the tension between the type of organisations formed, i.e. "collective organisations", "entrepreneurial styles" and "association style with no self-branding orientation" (Chapter 6) and the ethos of the organisations. For example, how the structure of 'private' organisations appears so often blurred with the arrangement and objectives defining the mission of Mexican civil society associations. Since the main critique is that some of these associations in Mexico might be legally conformed following the criteria in this sector, yet not committing necessarily to social change or political action (Olvera 2019).[280]

The two main pathways (i.e. based on Buddhist and scientific epistemologies and backgrounds) that the participants of my study reported having followed, explains in part the approaches to 'mindfulness' found in the study sample in Mexico. This is a very common distinction made around the "mindfulness ownership" (Valerio 2016). That is, the debates between its origin in canonical Buddhism and the critiques of its authenticity in light of the "Western modern" conceptualisations, namely, the Anglo-American MBIs including its the the therapeutic and medicalise uptake (Barker 2014). Nonetheless, according to my findings, Mexican practitioners and teachers' journeys cannot be fully explained by those two main pathways or lineages, nor the social relations among the members integrating what I called the Mexican 'mindfulness' network. This thesis uncovers a third 'hidden path' or "elephant in the room" in Zerubavel's (2006) words; that is, the lineage rooted in Indigenous peoples. The three pathways and lineages account for the intercultural characterisation of the Mexican network (Dietz 2018), although it also underscores that the dissemination of meditative practices has been driven by elite groups (Kucinskas 2019). In alignment with the decolonial theoretical framework (Chapter 2), future research might focus on exploring the way that Indigenous cosmologies and practices (e.g. *Buen Vivir*) encounter modern 'mindfulness' meditation*.* As far as the reflections around the 'lost ethnography' presented in Chapter 8, this

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[280] Olvera (2019) critiqued the "clientelism" and "corporatism" of associations legally formed within the sector of Mexican civil society, since these behave as private organisations in providing services rather than mobilising and articulating unity and action. I consider that it was difficult to provide a thorough assessment about this in relation to the meditative practices milieu I studied at this stage, given the thesis space restriction to elaborate on more case studies and the practical constraints of not having been able to observe a larger sample of sites, sectors and organisations for my research. Nevertheless, this tension between the private and the civil society ethos and the conformation of the organisations is present in the Mexican milieu and deserves attention in further studies.

constitutes an important consideration that challenges the frameworks of Buddhist modernism and postsecularity underpinning social scientific research so far (I return to this point in the next section).

Surprisingly, the Mexican 'mindfulness' network I studied in my research resembles very much what Drage (2019) calls a 'Buddhistic milieu'. As he tells, its use of the term is loose, though he employs it to refer "to the constellation of communities, institutions, texts and practices which are strongly influenced by the Buddhist tradition, but which do not – or do not always – self-identify as Buddhist" (para. 20). This describes very clearly most participants' uptake of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation practice. While they would articulate their discourse in terms of Buddhist philosophy and 'Buddhism as science' (Lopez 2008; McMahan and Braun 2017) and even referred to different Buddhist teachers and the Buddha himself as 'pioneers', many resisted to self-identify as 'Buddhist'.[281]

This understanding contributes to the existing gap in current literature about the history of Buddhism and the study of current Buddhist groups in Mexico (e.g. Morales Ramírez 2014; May May 2015b; May May 2019). It highlights the disjointed conceptualisations regarding religious affiliation to Buddhism questioning the arguably "Orientalist" assumptions concerning 'Buddhism' as an "Eastern religion" in the leading national surveys (e.g. see Hernández Hernández et al. 2016; May May 2019). These surveys seem to underestimate the dissemination of Buddhist philosophy and meditation as well as the increase of Buddhist practitioners as significant social phenomena in Mexico. While the National Census conducted in 2020 (INEGI 2020), which results will be published throughout the current year, might change the scenario about this, this study calls for further research from Buddhist studies scholars, historians, and sociologists of religion because of the following: considering the popularisation of 'mindfulness' as practice inspired by Buddhist meditation (Gómez Rodríguez 2019) and the use of other meditative practices as therapeutic approaches and their

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[281] Interestingly, I noted for instance, how 'kinship' was a key element in my study sample. Considering that my twin sister and myself continued a 'mindful journey' together, I also found that some participants exposed the significance of their relationships (e.g. siblings and partners) in their trajectory of being engaged with Buddhist meditation practice. This has made me consider two possibilities so far: 1) a possible specificity of Mexican socio-cultural context due to the relevance of family bonds in what is thought to be a collectivist society (e.g. Shkodriani and Gibbons 1995) Or perhaps 2) a feature of the "Buddhist milieu" that Drage (2019) delineates, given the cases in which meditation 'becomes a way of life'. For example, in her ethnographic work concerning Vipassana meditation practitioners, Pagis (2019) documents "meditation as a way of life", that is, as a life-course orientation that many participants step into, which beyond "a question of internal orientation" she argues, "it means reorganizing or shaping many "external" social relationships – friends, partners, family, and even work – so that these relationships can support a Vipassana-practice-centered life" (pp. 138-139). It will be worth taking this aspect into account in future studies as further generations of meditative practices practitioners and teachers train themselves examining how 'kindship' and bonds influence the milieu.

introduction across sectors in Mexico, from education and health to vulnerable populations and even other religious groups.

For instance, an interesting thread for future studies concerns the generational pattern observed between the older, relatively young, and recent generations of meditative practices' practitioners, teachers, and researchers who differ importantly in their initial encounter with Buddhism and Buddhist meditation before knowing the 'secular mindfulness' approaches (older generations), and those recent generations who have trained within modern and secularised 'mindfulness' certifications (younger generations). Which directions will the spread of meditative practices take? And which types of obstacles or difficulties might the recent generations face?

As a participant mentioned, within her organisation there was a relevant difference for those professionals who were interested in training themselves in an Anglo-American 'mindfulness' certification. They struggled to initiate and maintain a personal meditation practice. Whereas for her and the rest of her colleagues who have engaged with Buddhism and Buddhist meditation practice, the role of the 'first-person experience' in meditating and the commitment to this was unquestionable. It was an integral part of their personal biography but also crucial in bringing meditative practices to their professional areas of activity. This is an issue that has not been foregrounded which, nevertheless, could have important implications in terms of the Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs, see Crane and Hecht 2018) supported and developed by groups of Anglo-American and European 'mindfulness' professionals and institutions. Indeed, as outlined in Chapter 3, "teacher's engagement with personal daily mindfulness practice combined with periodic intensive residential mindfulness practice opportunities" (p. 1372) is among these GPGs principles.

Furthermore, my research findings complicate the dual categorisation of 'science' and 'Buddhist meditation' as the main and only domains/boundaries which 'mindfulness' practitioners, teachers, and researchers move across. For instance, Wiles' (2018) theorisation of embodied practitioner knowledge is very useful to understand some of the justifications that meditative practices advocates elaborate in their discourse for the introduction of these arguably 'secular' practices. However, I found that intersectionality analyses (Phoenix 2006; Vidal Viveros 2016) elucidate the complexity of both the social positions and social relations within which participants in my sample move and from which they argue about the "mindfulness ownership" (Valerio 2016, see Chapter 6). So on the one hand, their conceptualisations of meditative practices and the approach they take are importantly informed and justified and argued according to their professional pathways and trajectories.

Nevertheless, at a relational level, this is problematised and indeed, generates power dynamics about the 'authority' and 'credentials' over 'mindfulness' as well as difficult feelings among members and within the Mexican 'mindfulness' network. This is because, more than just social identities as "scientists", "Buddhist practitioners" or "meditation practitioners" intersect. Participant's lineages, gender, status, and ethnicity overlapped. The embodiment and embeddedness of high emotionality in the Mexican 'mindfulness' network was an unexpected finding, which is definitely an unexplored area so far within social studies on 'mindfulness' worthy of further investigation. For the Mexican context, this has considerable effects on the cohesiveness and connectedness between people and the organisations of the network, as interviewees revealed in their accounts. While the heterogeneity of meditative practices provision across Mexican settings and the high emotionality embedded in the network reveal some of the specificity of the Mexican 'mindfulness'; they also appeared as crucial aspects determining the directions of this milieu with regards to institutionalising and professionalising of 'mindfulness' in the Mexican scene.

Although assessing the implications or making recommendations for policy-making process for the Mexican 'mindfulness' milieu was beyond the scope of this research, the findings of my thesis contribute to underscore two important aspects. Firstly, since the variability of definitions of 'mindfulness' was an *emic* concern among Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers, attention might be given to the plurality of approaches being adapted and created in Mexican settings. Rather than assuming a sense of unity based on 'universalising' (*etic*) conceptualisations or approaches, fruitful dialogues and coalitions might be built on the recognition of such differences. Secondly, while the consideration of 'regulating' the meditative practices milieu in Mexico reflects a real concern of Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers, one might ask if the "plain translation" and importation of the Anglo-American and European Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs) to the Mexican context might be appropriate. As discussed earlier (Chapter 3), these require further empirical investigation in the Anglo-American and European contexts where these have been created as their authors' report (Kuyken et al. 2017; Crane and Hecht 2018). Further research is necessary for both theorising meditative practices in Mexico and developing 'Good Practice Guidelines' based on the practical challenges encountered by Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers, which also attend Mexican socio-cultural and linguistic specificities. As I document in the case studies analysed for answering my third research question and sub-question, the tensions and dilemmas that emerge across Mexican settings where meditative practices are delivered are complex.

9.4. Particularities of the Mexican context influencing the dissemination of meditative practices

Similarly to Gleig (2019), who studied US convert Buddhism and secular mindfulness using the dual methodology of multisited ethnography and discourse analysis to "illuminate more dimensionality and complexity" (p. 13), I used a bricolage approach to apply various analytic concepts and strategies (Chapter 4) for interpreting my multi-modal data and articulate case studies which exemplified the intricacies of 'mindfulness' in Mexico. My empirical chapters demonstrate that forms of discourse analysis such as interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell and Potter 1988; 1992), rhetorical and ideological dilemmas (Billig et al. 1988; Billig 1996; Goodman 2017) as well as the psychosocial perspective (Walkerdine et al. 2001), can "speak to each other" (Billig et al. 1988, p. 4) bringing understanding of a research topic from multiple angles. Specifically, Chapters 7 and 8 showcased tensions and dilemmas arising from the dissemination of meditative practices linked to the linguistic, geographical, and cultural aspects of Mexico. These findings are new knowledge that adds significantly to the current debates of social studies of 'mindfulness' (Drage 2018a; Stanley et al. 2018b; Dagre 2019; Gleig 2019; Helderman 2019; Hickey 2019; Kucinskas 2019; 2020; Hedegaard 2020).[282] Specifically, from cultural, indigenous psychology (Pickren 2009; Pavón-Cuéllar 2020a), I had examined this topic from a localised gazed in the "Global South" and gaining insights from within Mexico. As I will also comment below, these findings open important questions for future research.

The provision of meditative practices in Mexico is cross-sectorial from educational to clinical settings, including the companies and non-Christian religious groups, largely associated with urban areas, but extending to rural areas too. The case studies analysed (Chapters 7 and 8) showed crucial differences regarding the geographical locations where meditative practices are delivered. These differences were related to various elements, including the targeted audiences who had access to these practices and their specific needs or motivations to practice, the type of sector (i.e. private, public, and social or civil society), and the nature of the activity (e.g. silent meditation retreat). Importantly, the variations found, were also shaped by 'local' conceptualisations and practices of the sites which broadly speaking involved: 'modern' 'secular and standardised' protocols (e.g. "Mindfulness for health – MBSP" and the practice of 'mindful eating') versus conventional nutritional/medical practices in the Mexican public health system and Indigenous local knowledge and practices. As Stanley et al. (2018b)

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[282] Considering the forthcoming publications of recent studies such as Hailwood (2020), Karelse (2020), Lilley (2020), and the project "Beyond Personal Wellbeing: Mapping the Social Production of Mindfulness in England and Wales" by Stanley et al. in 2021.

argue, approaching the study of 'mindfulness' in a social and culturally situated manner, allows us to uncover trends "constitutive of a wider milieu" (p. 15). Linked to the tensions and dilemmas identified during my fieldwork, I locate three main challenges that Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers must take into account for the 'mindfulness' milieu moving forward.

Firstly, accessibility of meditative practices for the Mexican population at different levels (i.e. from the general public to health professionals and people interested in becoming a 'mindfulness' teacher) appears as a key topic. The proposal of institutionalising 'mindfulness' as a mental health preventive measure as documented in the "Mindfulness for Health: MBSP" conference at a public health organisation, raises questions about 'mindfulness' becoming a public good. This is a timely concern given the NOM 035 (Mexican policy about the "Psychosocial risk factors at work - Identification, analysis and prevention", Diario Oficial de la Federación 2018) deployed between 2019 and 2020, not to mention the increase of 'mindfulness' provision online due to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.[283]

Furthermore, within the framework of the visit of UK MP Chris Ruane to Mexico City in 2018, where he met Mexican politicians, and also gave a talk about "Mindfulness as an Initiative of Law in the English Parliament and its Significance in the World" (Alianza Médica 2018; The Mindfulness Initiative 2018), I suggest that as leading public policy on the dissemination of 'mindfulness' in the Anglo-American world, the Mindful Nation UK report launched by the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (2015), must be critically examined. While translated into Spanish as "*Reino Unido Nación Consciente*" literally, 'United Kingdom a Conscious Nation' in 2018, the evidence provided in this thesis advices careful considerations in this important task.[284] While the conceptualisations of 'mindfulness' given the linguistic differences in Mexico from the UK is the most obvious reason, the second challenge I elaborate on next, also provides a crucial rationale for thorough deliberation.

Discussions about politics of representation within the Anglo-American "mindfulness movement" (Sullivan and Arat 2018; Gleig 2019; Karelse 2020; Kucinskas 2020) have become

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[283] The first positive case of COVID-19 in Mexico was confirmed on the 28th of February 2020. Although certain measures started to be taken since the 20th of March, it was until the 30th of March 2020 that a health emergency was officially declared in the country (*El Economista* 2021). Since then, various online activities (many free of charge) such as *atención plena* and 'mindfulness' sessions, webinars on how to manage uncertainty and other emotions associated with the lockdown measures, including 'communities of practice' emerged.
[284] For instance, the contrasting terms used i.e. *consciente* [conscious] rather than 'mindful' and based on the repertoires found in my study, one might question the exportation of ways of being such as 'being mindful' or building a 'mindful nation'.

a focus of attention in social studies recently. During my study, I found that other research participants shared a feeling of being 'alone' and have also noted that Latin Americans in general, and particularly the work and experiences of Mexican practitioners, teachers, and researchers were underrepresented in this international 'mindfulness field'. While my study has contributed to acknowledge and give voice to the perspectives and views from a Mexican 'mindfulness' network largely Spanish speaking, the empirical data collected in the intercultural context of Mexico complicates this topic further. This is because in connection with issues of identity, dilemmas of neo-colonial and internal colonialism intertwined with the discourses of racism and classism accompany the dissemination of meditative practices. Uncovering the "elephant in the room" (Zerubavel 2006) regarding Indigenous peoples' lineages (Chapter 6) and discovering local epistemologies being overlooked in the articulation of the "contemplative practices" repertoire (Chapter 8), add important layers to the challenge of widening access mentioned above. The reflections about these findings overlap with novel research arguing for recognising Indigenous Mesoamerican Nahua and Maya traditions as "equal holders of sophisticated systems of transformative science and practice" (Celidwen 2020, p. iv) in relation to other major contemplative traditions including Mahayana Buddhism. Advancing the 'contemplative sciences field' in this direction might require not only interdisciplinary research under a decolonial framework but fostering collaborative decolonial methodology (Smith 2012; Ashdown et al. 2018).

The third challenge to highlight is the need for reviewing the frameworks of Buddhist modernism (Sharf 1995; McMahan 2008: Lopez 2008; McMahan and Braun 2017; Gómez Rodríguez 2019) and postsecularity (Arat 2017, Arat 2018; Sullivan and Arat 2018). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Gleig (2019) discusses the relevance of considering an alternative interpretive paradigm to modernity to account for transformations observed in the 21st century US Buddhist meditation-based convert lineages she studied.[285] In the Mexican scene, problematising these frameworks arise as a fundamental matter from the empirical data collected. This is because the complexity layers found required to only ponder the convoluted exchanges in which Buddhism was exported during the British colonisation of Southeast Asia (Stanley et al. 2018b) and its transformation in the "West" (McMahan 2008: Lopez 2008), but also precisely explaining the tensions when it 'lands' on a non-Anglophone context which has its own colonial history, faces neo-colonial discourses and practices as well as internal colonialism. A concrete example is the assumption of 'secularity' in Mexican settings. The

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[285] Building in previous work by Baumann (2001) and McMahan (2008), Gleig (2019) problematises 'modernity' as an interpretative paradigm examining alternative categories such as 'postmodern Buddhism', 'postcolonial Buddhism' and 'postsecular Buddhism' (pp. 282-298) to explain the shifts observed in US Buddhism.

case studies analysed in Chapter 8 provide evidence (e.g. Catholic views and symbolism as well as Indigenous spiritualities) that challenge such assumption, at least in the study of 'mindfulness'. This is a great area of opportunity for developing social scientific and religious studies, given the gap in the literature regarding Buddhist meditation groups in Mexico and the tension between 'spirituality/religiosity' and 'secularity' observed in the dissemination of 'mindfulness' across settings.

9.5. 'Translating back': Methodological issues and dilemmas of representation

In my commitment to conduct exploratory social research about 'mindfulness' in my own country with the aim of documenting and disseminating underrepresented perspectives in the academic field, I encountered both methodological issues including ethical quandaries, and dilemmas of representation throughout the research process. Initially, the reflexive stance (Popoveniuc 2014) I employed was crucial in generating insights about my research topic along with the data generation and analysis processes. It was then crucial for the practice of building knowledge as Lazard and McAvoy (2017) put it: "allow[ing] the exploration of what studies can or cannot tell us about the topic [we investigate] and why that might be" (p. 14). However, it became clear that from the decolonial theoretical framework articulated, the methodological and ethical issues as well as the dilemmas of representation I faced, required further critical examination.

The generation of knowledge carried out under the decolonial research endeavour is not exempt of failing to promote internal colonialism (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010; see, also González Casanova 2003). For this, Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) proposes an analysis of the "political economy of knowledge" which necessarily entails addressing "the economic strategies and material mechanisms" implicated in the knowledge production at academic institutions. Having been awarded a competitive scholarship from CONACYT, I obtained the privileged to study at an elite "Global North" university located in Wales, the first English colony. Among 24 UK University members of Russell Group's "world-class, research-intensive universities" (The Russell Group of Universities 2020), Cardiff University is the only university belonging to this leading group in Wales. English, and not Welsh, is the dominant language used, not only for learning and teaching activities but for academic publishing nowadays.[286] Besides, from the

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[286] As said in Chapter 1, the Welsh Government is currently working to deliver the "Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers" strategy, importantly expanding Welsh-medium provision in further education and higher education. Among the areas of action for the period 2021-2026 is to "Promote Wales's bilingualism on the international stage and contribute to the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022 to 2032" (Welsh Government 2021 p. 21). This will increase the awareness of Welsh language policy internationally.

over 600,000 students at the Russell Group's universities in the 2018-19 academic year, 32% of the students were of non-UK nationality; allegedly "attracted to our universities by the quality, relevance and reputation of research" (The Russell Group of Universities 2020). As Cupples (2019) argues, "the combination of a set of elite-sounding characteristics" such as the Russell Group membership, high positions in various ranking tables, the length of the university's history as well as the status of knowledge production as stated in the quote above, "facilitates the reproduction of coloniality" (p. 7). This is also the case for the status of English as the academic dominant language for writing and disseminating research like the present thesis; not only within UK universities but globally (Altbach 2007). Therefore representing both a methodological challenge and dilemma of representation in my research.

Methodologically speaking, I conducted the transcription of the interviews originally in Spanish, translating into English the quotes and extracts I presented in the thesis. While I am not qualified as a translator, Spanish is my mother tongue and therefore I have used this knowledge to thoroughly transcribe and render the translation process into English; especially given that it was me who also conducted the interviews. Nevertheless, this step of 'translating back' has important implications. On the one hand, the linguistic focus of the investigation of 'mindfulness' conceptualisations remained restricted to Spanish and English languages (all interviewees spoke Spanish though the majority also have proficiency in English), which are colonial idioms themselves over the Indigenous languages spoken in Mexico. I have no proficiency in any of the latter and so this remains an unanticipated shortcoming of my study; considering that some of my research participants spoke Spanish and other Indigenous languages too.[287]

On the other hand, I realised the difficulty of representing both linguistic and cultural aspects of Mexican culture while writing my research in English academic language. For instance, how humour was used by interviewees as a way of expressing ideas or issues being discussed during the interviews, idioms and even regional phrases denoting differences within

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[287] With regards to the bilingual/trilingual aspects I note here, Du Bois's work on "double consciousness" would be relevant in analysing these "internal conflicts" (cited in Dickson 1992, p. 301). In the case of my study, this will mean addressing the questions; what is "Mexican" and what is "Indigenous"? or what is "Spanish" and what is "Anglo-American"? As an emerging theme, I found fascinating to document that some practitioners and teachers reflected on the way they learnt 'mindfulness' for the first time (i.e. in English). Yet, some reported having found difficult to commence the translation of the practice for Spanish-speakers, the audience they wanted to teach to. Paradoxically, other interviewees argued about the "limitations" of the Spanish language to translating some of the concepts that they considered were nicely expressed in English. Pursuing further examination of this tension will be fundamental in consideration of a decolonial perspective on 'mindfulness' and cultural psychology's interest in giving attention to people's subjective experience as it encounters possible unintended cultural and linguistic imperialism.

geographical locations of Mexico, all features of Mexican idiosyncrasy arising concerning my 'insider' position as Mexican. In this sense, I felt that the use of English as an academic language, which I have trained during the last few years in my academic career, did not give me the breadth to contain such aspects from the socio-cultural context where I conducted my research. Paradoxically, the topic under study would not have been fully examined if not were for the 'bilingual' aspect (of English and Spanish) involved. Leaving either English or Spanish out would have made the understanding of my subject matter 'partial' (at least for the aims of this thesis) and would have converted it into a different project.

Furthermore, based on my decolonial framework informed by feminisms and intersectional analyses (Marcos 2009; Phoenix 2006; Viveros Vigoya 2016), I became aware of the intersectionality of my different positions. For example, the power relationships created in relation to some of my interviewees due to my position as PhD researcher coming from an elite foreign university, intersected by my gender and ethnicity and other social identity aspects such as religious background. This was far from straightforward, since in some cases I faced dilemmas of representation. Asher (2017) delineates this as the "constitution or production of the subjects and objects of intervention" and describes facing the risk of "speaking for or on behalf of marginalized or subaltern subjects" (p. 517). While in other cases, the power relationship with other interviewees have put myself in the position of the oppressed (e.g. defensiveness of interviewees in many cases telling me what to do or not in my research or being seen as a 'strategic person' to make connections abroad to offer their courses). To negotiate these tensions at a methodological and analytic level, I have used the Researchers' Social Identity Map (Jacobson and Mustafa 2019) as a practical tool to foster my self-reflection, being rigorous during the interpretation of my data while integrating interviewee's and researcher's subjectivity (e.g. understanding participants' experiences and views concerning my position and vice versa).This links to the achievement of the second academic purpose stated at the beginning of this chapter, that of becoming and emancipatory research project in documenting the voices from Mexico.

With an emancipatory commitment (Macleod and Bhatia 2008), this thesis has brought attention to what Frantz Fanon defines as "psychopolitics" (cited in Hook 2004, p.85). That is, the "critical awareness of the role that political factors (i.e. relations of power) play within the domain of the psychological" (p. 85) and how indigenous psychologies and local knowledge have been obscured by hegemonic and more 'established' psychologies. This is related to achieving the third academic purpose of my thesis, i.e. contributing with a decolonial theoretical framework for future research on 'mindfulness'. In this regard, the present thesis has raised central questions; that, if they were not posed, would have supported complicity

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with an understanding of 'mindfulness' based on the Anglo-American point of view only. Therefore, it is suggested that the decolonising praxis and the decolonial feminisms (e.g. Marcos 2009; Lugones 2010; Asher 2017; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Macleod et al. 2020) might be taken further and examined in other socio-cultural and geographical contexts as appropriate.

9.6. Implications for future research

When investigating 'mindfulness' and related practices, new studies might carefully consider the intricacies of the milieu. This involves not only the heated debates about its origin and definition but the level of investment that practitioners, teachers, and researchers have in the topic and in their commitment to sharing meditative practices and their benefits. These considerations become more and more critical for three reasons 1) due to the growth of 'mindfulness' provision across sectors, 2) the professionalisation of the 'field' globally, and 3) as that the delivery of meditative practices turning to a common way of livelihood.

Further interdisciplinary work and cross-sectoral research will be relevant to understand better a contested topic such as 'mindfulness', gaining more insights into what happens 'on the ground' when meditative practices are taught in different places. Methodological considerations such as the 'requirement' to be an 'insider' (i.e. meditation practitioner) for studying the topic itself and for gaining access to observational sites, and the tensions between 'full participation' and researcher's role as the 'observer' should be made. In this regard, two closely linked points to the complexity of my insider-outsider positioning and the implications these have had on the data generated, and the presentation of my findings are worth mentioning.

First, the insights generated about the Mexican milieu of meditative practices in this thesis were possible due to my multiple, changing positions as discussed in Chapter 4 and the Epilogue and throughout the empirical chapters. I was motivated to conduct this research partly because I was experiencing ambivalent feelings due to some of the tensions accompanying the spread of 'mindfulness' delivery in Mexico. However, it was until the data generation and analysis process that I realised how some of the emotional exchanges and dynamics were negotiated and reproduced (Mahoney 2018, p. 70) during my fieldwork. Reflecting on and including my subjectivity in the data analysis were crucial (Walkerdine et al. 2001; Loughran and Mannay 2018) to contextualise such emotional exchanges and what these meant in the Mexican 'mindfulness' network (Chapter 6). Yet, this unforeseen research finding also entailed facing ethical dilemmas related to the second point I want to underscore.

This issue was trying to maintain participants' anonymity and confidentiality while simultaneously facing the risk of generating relative invisibility of some of the participants' accounts.

Following Mahoney's (2018, p. 68) reflections on the importance of recognising and analysing positive emotional exchanges (e.g. admiration, commonality, reverence) in the generation of critical histories of women's movement, I recognised that the difficult feelings experienced in my research could not be disregarded. On the one hand, this could have raised concerns of my credibility as a researcher for not reporting the observations I have written in my fieldnotes and that constantly emerged during my interactions with interviewees. On the other hand, since the difficult emotions and reactions were embedded in the interviewee-interviewer relationships, in many cases expressing participants' views about the Mexican milieu of meditative practices, I was also 'accountable' (Mahoney 2018, p. 67) for the representation of such perspectives (e.g. presenting interviewees' direct quotes). Nevertheless, considering that presenting the extracts of the interview was unacceptable ethically, as they would have compromised participants' anonymity due to the small size of the Mexican milieu, I decided to use McAvoy's (2017) limited disclosure strategy to talk about the arguments and concerns that were raised in relation to the difficult emotions.

Simultaneously, I took into account the possible unintended consequences that making participants visible through the interview extracts could have, not only to others in the 'mindfulness' milieu but also to the wider audience. Here, the complexity of my insider positioning was again crucial since I was aware that, in some cases, interviewees revealed difficult emotions based on a relationship of trust. In contrast, in other cases, this same position triggered the emotional exchanges in other interviewees. In both circumstances, I felt uncomfortable with the possibility of generating harm by exacerbating the tensions already present in the milieu. As I have discussed, pondering the nature of the researcher's insider-outsider positioning involves not only methodological challenges when accessing the field but continuous reflexivity regarding the impact that emotional exchanges might have in the studies and how these projects "are researched and produced" (Mahoney 2018, p. 78).

Finally, the thesis opens additional threads researchers might find interesting to explore further. For instance, the investigation of historical milestones and shifts in the broader Mexican context concomitant to the introduction of Buddhism and the development of psy-disciplines in the country (i.e. the influence of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapists' interest in mind-body practices like Charlotte Selver's work on Sensory Awareness and the introduction of the Hakomi Method influenced by US psychotherapist Ron Kurtz, see Prengle

2009). Finally, the plurality of meditative practices found in Mexico call for new studies to examine other types of practices also taught in the country such as compassion meditation, foregrounding the need of exploring Mexican people's knowledge of the terms 'mindfulness', *atención plena*, *atención consciente*, *plena consciencia* and *Buen Vivir*.

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Appendices

List of Appendices

Appendix A

Timeline of the Rise of Meditative Practices in Mexico

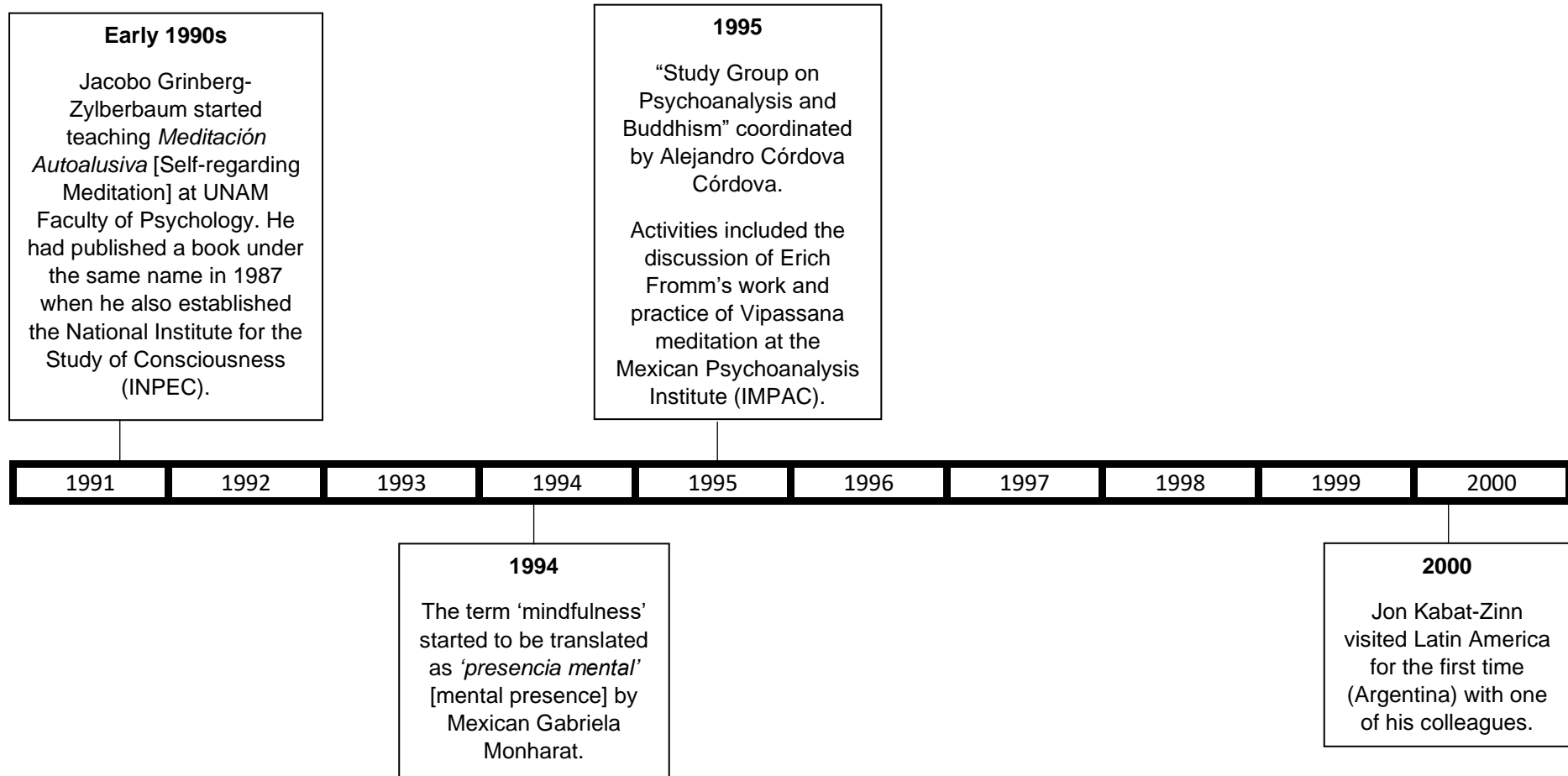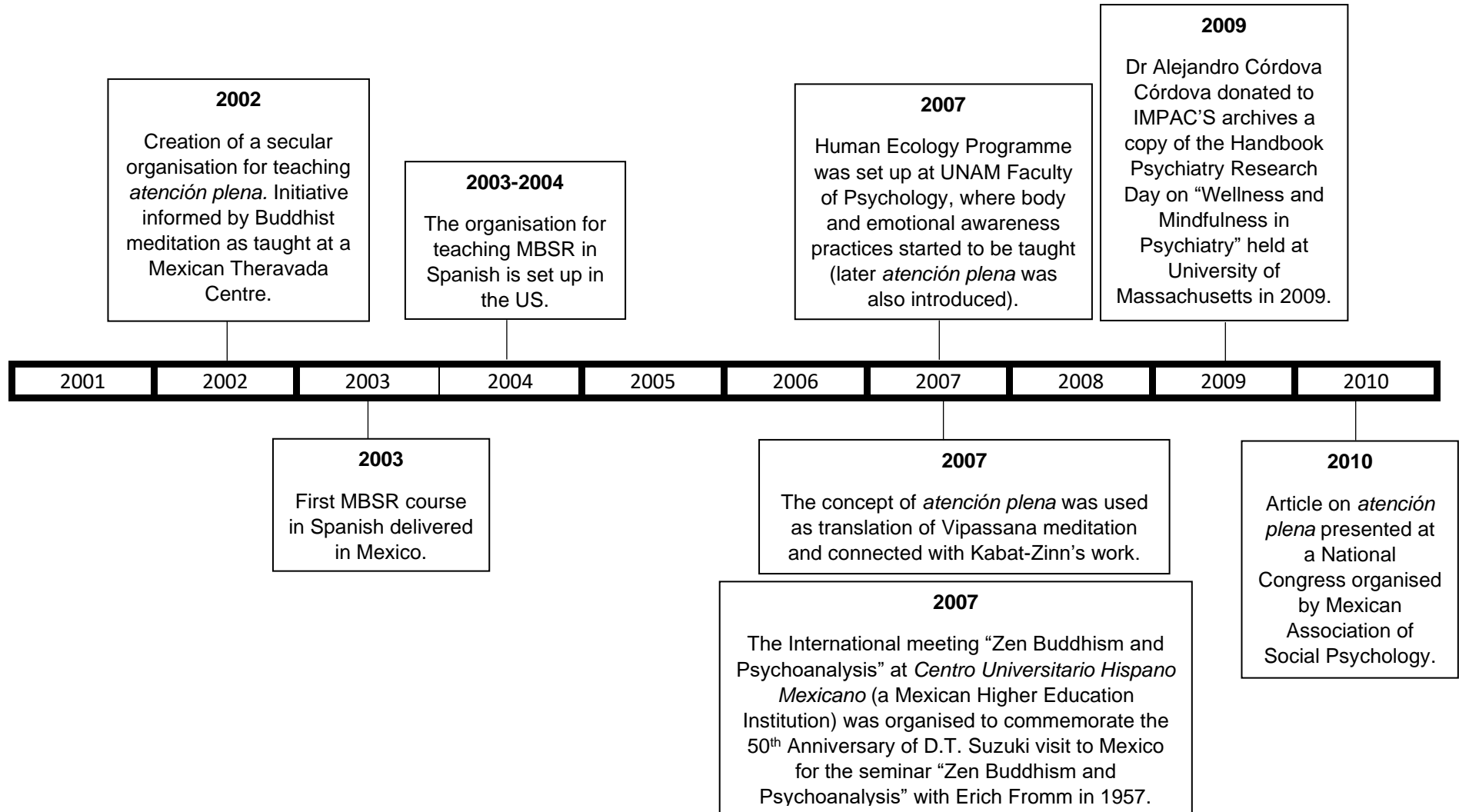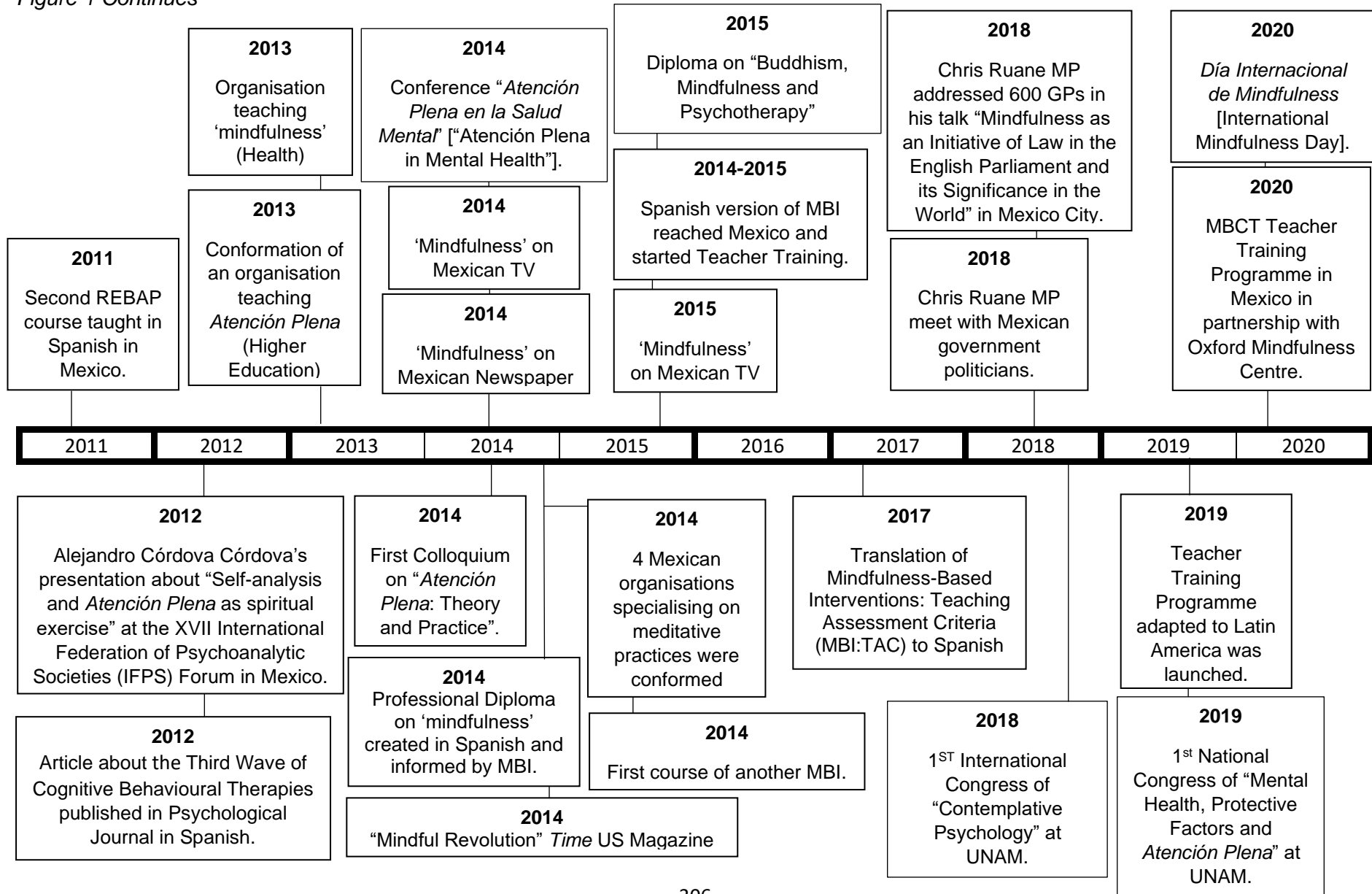*Figure 1 Timeline of the Rise of Meditative Practices in Mexico, 1991-2020*

Early 1990s

Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum started teaching *Meditación Autoalusiva* [Self-regarding Meditation] at UNAM Faculty of Psychology. He had published a book under the same name in 1987 when he also established the National Institute for the Study of Consciousness (INPEC).

1995

"Study Group on Psychoanalysis and Buddhism" coordinated by Alejandro Córdova Córdova.

Activities included the discussion of Erich Fromm's work and practice of Vipassana meditation at the Mexican Psychoanalysis Institute (IMPAC).

1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000

1994

The term 'mindfulness' started to be translated as *'presencia mental'* [mental presence] by Mexican Gabriela Monharat.

2000

Jon Kabat-Zinn visited Latin America for the first time (Argentina) with one of his colleagues.

Figure 1 Continues

2002

Creation of a secular organisation for teaching *atención plena.* Initiative informed by Buddhist meditation as taught at a Mexican Theravada Centre.

2003-2004

The organisation for teaching MBSR in Spanish is set up in the US.

2007

Human Ecology Programme was set up at UNAM Faculty of Psychology, where body and emotional awareness practices started to be taught (later *atención plena* was also introduced).

2009

Dr Alejandro Córdova Córdova donated to IMPAC'S archives a copy of the Handbook Psychiatry Research Day on "Wellness and Mindfulness in Psychiatry" held at University of Massachusetts in 2009.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |

2003

First MBSR course in Spanish delivered in Mexico.

2007

The concept of *atención plena* was used as translation of Vipassana meditation and connected with Kabat-Zinn's work.

2007

The International meeting "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" at *Centro Universitario Hispano Mexicano* (a Mexican Higher Education Institution) was organised to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of D.T. Suzuki visit to Mexico for the seminar "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis" with Erich Fromm in 1957.

2010

Article on *atención plena* presented at a National Congress organised by Mexican Association of Social Psychology.

305

Figure 1 Continues

2011

Second REBAP course taught in Spanish in Mexico.

2012

Alejandro Córdova Córdova's presentation about "Self-analysis and *Atención Plena* as spiritual exercise" at the XVII International Federation of Psychoanalytic Societies (IFPS) Forum in Mexico.

2012

Article about the Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioural Therapies published in Psychological Journal in Spanish.

2013

Organisation teaching 'mindfulness' (Health)

2013

Conformation of an organisation teaching *Atención Plena* (Higher Education)

2014

Conference "*Atención Plena en la Salud Mental*" ["Atención Plena in Mental Health"].

2014

'Mindfulness' on Mexican TV

2014

'Mindfulness' on Mexican Newspaper

2014

First Colloquium on "*Atención Plena*: Theory and Practice".

2014

Professional Diploma on 'mindfulness' created in Spanish and informed by MBI.

2014

"Mindful Revolution" *Time* US Magazine

2015

Diploma on "Buddhism, Mindfulness and Psychotherapy"

2014-2015

Spanish version of MBI reached Mexico and started Teacher Training.

2015

'Mindfulness' on Mexican TV

2014

4 Mexican organisations specialising on meditative practices were conformed

2014

First course of another MBI.

2017

Translation of Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Teaching Assessment Criteria (MBI:TAC) to Spanish

2018

Chris Ruane MP addressed 600 GPs in his talk "Mindfulness as an Initiative of Law in the English Parliament and its Significance in the World" in Mexico City.

2018

Chris Ruane MP meet with Mexican government politicians.

2018

1ST International Congress of "Contemplative Psychology" at UNAM.

2020

Día Internacional de Mindfulness [International Mindfulness Day].

2020

MBCT Teacher Training Programme in Mexico in partnership with Oxford Mindfulness Centre.

2019

Teacher Training Programme adapted to Latin America was launched.

2019

1st National Congress of "Mental Health, Protective Factors and *Atención Plena*" at UNAM.

2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020

Appendix B

Map of Mexican Territory Divided by States

Source: (Google, INEGI ©2021)

Map of Regions within Mexican Territory

Northwest
Baja California
Baja California Sur
Sinaloa
Sonora

Northeast
Coahuila
Nuevo León
Tamaulipas
Chihuahua
Durango
Zacatecas
San Luis Potosí

Southeast
Campeche
Quintana Roo
Tabasco
Yucatán

West
Aguascalientes
Colima
Guanajuato
Jalisco
Michoacán
Nayarit
Querétaro

Central
Mexico City
State of Mexico
Hidalgo
Morelos
Puebla
Tlaxcala

South
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas
Veracruz

Note. Map adapted from Structure of the Regional Advisory Councils by Consejos Consultivos para el Desarrollo Sustentable. 2008. *Estructura de los Consejos Consultivos Regionales*. Available at: http://ccds.semarnat.gob.mx/ccds2008_2011/ccds/ccds.org.mx/consejos_regionales.html [Accessed: 13 March 2021].

Appendix C

Buddhist Centres and Groups in Mexico

Table C1 Buddhist Centres in Mexico Organised by Buddhist Tradition, Lineages, and Number of Branches

Buddhist school	Lineage/Country	Type of organisation	Branches
Vajrayana (Tibetan)[288]	Nonsectarian	*Casa Tíbet* [Tibet House] Mexico – Founded by the Dalai Lama.	16
	Gelug	Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) Centres. 6 Study groups across different states in Mexico.	4
	Gelug	Mexico-Mahayana Foundation.	1
	Gelug	Drepung Loseling Institute Mexico.	1
	Nyingma	Shechen Mexico – following Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's lineage.	2
	Kagyu and Nyingma	Tergar – under Mingyur Rinpoche's guidance.	1
	Bön	Tibetan Cultural Garuda Association.	1
Theravada	Thailand	*Casa de Meditación Vipassana* [Vipassana Meditation House].	1
	Myanmar/ Burma	Theravada Monastery – led by Venerable Nandisena ordained in Taungpulu Kaya Aye Monastery, Boulder Creek, California, US.	1
	Thailand	Vimutti Foundation - Thai monk Achan Sobin S. Namto (1931-).	1
Mahayana	Zen	*Casa Zen* [Zen House] (Soto-Rinzai).	2
		Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom (Soto-Rinzai).	1
		Thich Nhat Hahn's Order of Interbeing (Community).	3
		Maezumi Kuroda Zen Centre (Soto-Rinzai).	1
		Dharma Sangha Mexico - Suzuki Roshi-Baker-Roshi lineage affiliated to US Crestone Zen Mountain Center.	1
	Pure Land	Shin Buddhism Assembly.	1
	Nichiren	Soka Gakkai.	3
Triratna Buddhist	Founded by Sangharakshita in the UK (1967)	*Centro Budista de la Ciudad de México* [Mexico City's Buddhist Centre]. Founded as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) which changed to Triratna Buddhist Community in 2010.	3
		Total	44

Note. The table is of self-creation based on independent online and archival research carried out during my fieldwork in Mexico; partly informed by the online Directory of Buddhist Centres in Mexico (2010b). From the total of 44 branches of the different Buddhist schools, 14 are in Mexico City while the other 30 are spread across 15 states.

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[288] There are other strands of Vajrayana, but the Tibetan tradition is widely found in Mexico.

Table C2 Buddhists Groups in Mexico by Buddhist School

Buddhist school	Number of groups
Tibetan	24
Zen	13
Theravada	9
Nonsectarian	6
Nichiren	1
Pure Land	1
Soka Gakkai	1
Total	55

Source: (Buddhanet 2020)

Appendix D

Social Research Ethics Committee Letter of Approval I

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

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www.cardiff.ac.uk/social-sciences

13 December 2017

Our ref: SREC/2610

Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Prifysgol Caerdydd
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Rhodfa'r Brenin Edward VII
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Dear Barbara,

Your project entitled *'The Pedagogy of Contemplative Practises in Higher Education in Mexico'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Emma Renold
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Steven Stanley, Corinda Perkins

THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
2013

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

QAA
UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

Registered Charity, no. 1136855
Elusen Gofrestredig, rhif 1136855

Appendix E

Social Research Ethics Committee Letter of Approval II

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

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15 January 2019

Our ref: SREC/3168

Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Barbara,

Your project entitled *'Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practies in Mexico: Its Emergence and Evolution'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alison Bullock
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Cc: Steven Stanley

THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
2013

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

QAA
UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

Registered Charity, no. 1136855
Elusen Gofrestredig, rhif 1136855

Appendix F

Interview Schedule

Professional background:

- Could you tell me about your education and professional background?
- Could you tell me about your background on mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* or any other meditation practices?
- Do you **teach/train/investigate** any of these practices?
- Is this related to your professional career? When did this start to be related? In which way?
- Which do you consider the main area or sector where you currently **teach/train/research** mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* or any other meditation practices?
- Do you see yourself as a pioneer or leader in teaching these practices in Mexico?
- What characterises your work as pioneer/leader in teaching these practices/training teachers?

Teaching experience:

- What is the role that you perform at the moment? That is, are you a practitioner, facilitator, instructor, or researcher on mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* or any other meditation practice?
  -Could you describe your experience of holding these multiple 'identities'? (e.g. is there any conflict between them? Do they complement each other?)
    o Where are you teaching at the moment? What content are you currently teaching?
    o Where have you taught before? To which audiences? (e.g. teacher training, the general public, specific sector).
    o Which is the pedagogical approach and strategies you use for teaching?
    o What do you think is the most important element for teaching mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia*? Why?
- Why did you decide to start teaching any of these practices? / What was the reason why you started teaching these practices?
- Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in the teaching of mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia*?

History of personal practice: Motives

- Do you have a personal practice?
    o How did you start practising and what type of practices do you do? Are these the same practices that you teach?
    o When did you start practising?
    o Would you say there is a 'before' and 'after' of practising mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* or any other related practices?
    o Where have you trained? And where have you studied these practices?

- Which have been the main teachers, training programmes, books, or any other readings that have influenced your practice, and also your teaching? (consider both at a national and international level).
- How would you describe your journey in learning, practising these practices?
- How would you describe your journey in teaching and or training teachers?

Views on mindfulness/*atención plena/atención* consicente/*plena consciencia*

- How would you define mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia*?
- What do you think about the English and Spanish terms and the use of these?
- How would you describe the type of practice you teach/ train (i.e. secular, spiritual, hybrid)?
- How has been the journey of teaching/training teachers on these practices?
  -Do people' perceptions towards your job/practice as 'mindfulness teacher/facilitator' have changed throughout time?
  -Do you think people have less or more understanding of what these practices entail?
  -How do you feel about this? Is there anything that needs to be done about it?
- Would you say that mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* have a Buddhist background?
  - Would you consider yourself Buddhist practitioner? If so, what being a Buddhist practitioner means to you?
  - What do the Buddhist teachings represent within these practices and specifically, in the context where you teach/train?
  - How would you define laic/secular?
  - What is the role of ethics in the practice and teaching of these practices?
  - What are your views about McMindfulness and the critiques about mindfulness?
- What is your opinion regarding the debate about the religiosity and secularity of delivering mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia*?
- Do you know when Buddhism was brought to Mexico?
  - Which have been the aspects that have helped to spread Buddhism in Mexico?
  - Is mindfulness or Buddhist meditation an aspect that has influence this phenomenon?
- Do you consider there is any limitation of these practices in the settings where they are being applied and in the settings where you actually teach/train?

Views on Mexico:

- Do you know when mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* started to be implemented in Mexico?
  - Is there any local knowledge in Mexico which might have informed the type of practices taught right now?
  - Is there any influence of Indigenous practices in the conceptualisation of mindfulness or any other practice?
- Do you think there has been an increased on the mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* courses, programmes, teacher training, seminars offered in Mexico?
  - When does this start to happen?
  - Why do you think this is happening?
  - What are the characteristics of the Mexican context which might have helped the expansion of mindfulness and related practices?

- What do mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* mean in the context of Mexico?
  -What do you think is unique of the Mexican context with regards to the teaching and delivery of these practices?
  -How would you describe the scenario in Mexico?
- Why do you consider it important to teach/train teachers on these practices?
- Which are the challenges that the spread of these practices pioneers and leaders are facing in Mexico (e.g. Catholic beliefs, economic pressure, political circumstances)?
- How do you see the implantation and expansion of mindfulness/*atención plena*/*atención consciente*/*plena consciencia* in relation to the international scenario?
  -What is the impact of Mexico at this level?
- How are these practices being adapted if so?

Before finishing the interview:

- Would like to share anything else in relation to
  a) The emergence and evolution of mindfulness and related practices in Mexico
  b) The progress and future of expansion of these practices in Mexico?
  c) Anything missing so far you wish we could have ahead?

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Interviews

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Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution

<u>Participant Information Sheet (Version I)</u>

I am a PhD student in Social Sciences at Cardiff University in Cardiff, Wales developing my research project under the supervision of Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine.

You are being invited to participate in my PhD research project, which has been funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT), Mexico, and approved by the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the research project and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a research participant.

The purpose of the study

The research project seeks to explore and understand how mindfulness and related practices (i.e. *atención plena, atención consciente, plena consciencia*) are being taught in different settings such as schools and universities, companies, indigenous communities, Buddhist centres, hospitals and clinical sceneries in Mexico. Particularly, I am interested in describing the emergence and evolution of these practices in the Mexican context; and comprehending the social and cultural aspects related to the implementation and transmission of these practices which have not been yet explored so far.

Due to the lack of literature on this topic, the understanding of the current scenario in Mexico requires a historical revision of how the acceptance of Buddhism and the development of psychology in Mexico might have intertwined with the spread of mindfulness practices in the country. Hence, my research will comprise interviewing key figures and pioneers who have been involved in the spread of Buddhism, mindfulness practices as well as the adaptation and creation of courses based on mindfulness, *atención plena, atención consciente* or *plena consciencia.* Also, I will conduct participant observation work in some of the settings where pioneers deliver

courses on mindfulness and related practices, with the purpose of studying the social and cultural aspects of the transmission and teaching of these practices in the Mexican context.

Why would I like you to be involved?

Little is known about the pioneers who started introducing mindfulness practices in Mexico. Therefore, your participation will be greatly beneficial to the historical revision of this topic by bringing your experience and professional knowledge which, eventually, will contribute to the understanding of the current Mexican context.

What do you have to do?

I would like you to attend an open-ended interview which will last between 30-45 minutes. The interview questions aim to know your perspective on what mindfulness is; your views about the implementation of courses and programmes based on mindfulness and related practices; as well as your professional background; your role as a mindfulness teacher or facilitator and the streams that have informed your teaching approach. These will be essential for understanding the development of the type of courses being offered in different settings in Mexico so far.

The invitation consists of arranging an online interview via Zoom at the time and date that is more convenient for you. The interview will be audio-recorded if you agree to do so. You will have the opportunity to read the transcript to certify the information being transcribed is accurate and depicts your opinions and perceptions truthfully and withdraw anything you think is not precise.

How will the information be used?

The data collected will be used to expand the historical understanding of the main landmarks and historical figures that facilitated the acceptance, adoption or appropriation of Buddhism and the development of mindfulness and related practices in the Mexican context, as well as the use of these practices in different settings in the country.

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. This research project attempts to contribute to the internationally emerging field of social perspectives on mindfulness studies (e.g. Barker 2014; Crane et al. 2015; Stanley et al. 2014; Wheater 2017); therefore, the information will be used for further research. For instance, in academic conferences, publications, seminars and workshops and eventually, it will inform teaching practices, curricula, and teacher training.

The data (i.e. actual interview recordings and transcripts) should be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in accordance with GDPR.

Confidentiality and anonymity

For this study, pseudonyms will be used in the transcripts written from the data collected during the interview, in order to keep anonymity, and personal information will be obscured in case the participant could be identifiable.

The data collected will be available only to the researcher and the supervisory team formed by Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine. Any personal information and the interview transcript will be kept confidential accordingly with the University regulations the Data Protection Act (1998).

Your rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to ask for further clarification to any question you feel uncomfortable responding to or refuse to answer it (e.g., questions related to religious or spiritual beliefs linked to Buddhist practices or any other religion, and the teaching of mindfulness and related practices). Also, you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. In this case, the interviewing process will cease, and any prior information collected will be destroyed immediately.

In case you wish to raise any concern or make a complaint, you might contact the researcher in the email account presented below, or the supervisory team Dr Steven Stanley (stanleys1@cardiff.ac.uk) and Professor Valerie Walkerdine (walkerdinev@cardiff.ac.uk).

Before moving forward, I would like to know if you have any questions at this stage. If you are happy and willing to consent to participate in my research, then please sign the consent form.

Thank you for your time, it is much appreciated.

Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero

PhD Researcher

IbinarriagaSolteroB@cardiff.ac.uk

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Participant Consent Form (Version I)

Research Project Title: Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution.

Name of Researcher: Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Please tick each box when in agreement with the statement:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet version _____ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand the purpose of the study, and I am happy to participate considering the confidentiality and anonymity statements.	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without adverse consequences or academic penalty.	
4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee.	
5. I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	
6. I agree with the interview being audio recorded and allow a transcript to be developed.	
7. I understand how this research will be written up and used.	
8. I agree to take part in the study.	

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of the researcher   Date   Signature

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participant Observation

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Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution

Participant Information Sheet (Version II)

I am a PhD student in Social Sciences at Cardiff University in Cardiff, Wales developing my research project under the supervision of Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine.

You are being invited to participate in my PhD research project, which has been funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT), Mexico, and approved by the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the research project and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a research participant.

The purpose of the study

The research project seeks to explore and understand how mindfulness and related practices (i.e., *atención plena, atención consciente, plena consciencia*) are being taught in different settings such as schools and universities, companies, indigenous communities, Buddhist centres, hospitals and clinical sceneries. Particularly, I am interested in describing the emergence and evolution of these practices in the Mexican context; and comprehending the social and cultural aspects related to the implementation and transmission of these practices which have not been yet explored so far.

Due to the lack of literature on this topic, the understanding of the current scenario in Mexico requires a historical revision of how the acceptance of Buddhism and the development of psychology in Mexico might have interviewed with the spread of mindfulness practices in the country. Hence, my research will comprise interviewing key figures and pioneers who have been involved in the spread of Buddhism, mindfulness practices as well as the adaptation and creation of courses based on mindfulness, *atención plena, atención consciente* or *plena consciencia.* Also, I will

conduct participant observation work in some of the settings where pioneers deliver courses on mindfulness and related practices, with the purpose of studying the social and cultural aspects of the transmission and teaching of these practices in the Mexican context.

While there is an increased awareness of the role of the teacher in mindfulness interventions at an international level (e.g. Aalderen et al. 2014; Crane et al. 2010; Crane et al. 2011); studies exploring the nuances of mindfulness and related practices teaching in specific contexts such as the Mexican, need to be carried out. It seems to be a rich diversity of mindfulness practices being delivered in Mexico which have not been documented in the scientific literature yet. Therefore, conducting this fieldwork will help to generate knowledge for a better understanding of this movement in Mexico.

Why would I like you to be involved?

Little is known about Mexican pioneers' teaching practice with regards to the dissemination of mindfulness and related practices in different settings. Therefore, your participation will be greatly beneficial to the historical revision of this topic and the empirical study of the transmission of these practices in the Mexican context; which will aid a better understanding of the content and type of practices being delivered on mindfulness courses and programmes.

What do you have to do?

The participant observation work will entail giving the researcher permission to take part in the sessions of the course or programme you deliver. While the focus of the observation remains in the way that mindfulness and related practices are taught, and the content disseminated (e.g. the streams that inform the teaching approach, the language used such as Spanish or English terms), this does not consist by any means an assessment of your work as a teacher or facilitator.

The invitation consists then, in agreeing to be observed during the course or programme and allowing field notes to be taken once each of the sessions has finished. Also, consent is being requested to audio record the sessions if you agree to do so. At the end of the research, you will have the opportunity to read a report of the data obtained during the ethnographic observation work. The findings of the present research will be essential for understanding the development of mindfulness and related practices being offered in different settings in Mexico so far, and the social and cultural aspects attached to its dissemination.

How will the information be used?

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. This research project attempts to contribute to the internationally emerging field of social perspectives on mindfulness studies (e.g. Barker 2014; Crane et al. 2015; Stanley 2014; Wheater 2017); therefore, the information will be used for further research. For instance, in academic conferences, publications, seminars and workshops and eventually, it will inform teaching practices, curricula, and teacher training.

The data (i.e., actual interview recordings and transcripts) should be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in accordance with GDPR.

Confidentiality and anonymity

In order to keep anonymity in this study, pseudonyms will be used in the transcripts written from the data collected in the audio recording of the sessions and the field notes taken as part of the participant observational work. Personal information will be obscured in case the participant could be identifiable.

The data collected will be available only to the researcher and the supervisory team formed by Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine. Any personal information and the interview transcript will be kept confidential accordingly with the University regulations the Data Protection Act (1998).

Your rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to ask for further clarification on any question. Also, you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. In this case, the participant observation work will cease, and any prior information collected will be destroyed immediately.

In case you wish to raise any concern or make a complaint, you might contact the researcher in the email account presented below, or the supervisory team Dr Steven Stanley (stanleys1@cardiff.ac.uk) and Professor Valerie Walkerdine (walkerdinev@cardiff.ac.uk).

Before moving forward, I would like to know if you have any questions at this stage. If you are happy and willing to consent to participate in my research, then please sign the consent form.

Thank you for your time, it is much appreciated.

Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero

PhD Researcher

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Participant Consent Form (Version II)

Research Project Title: Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution.

Name of Researcher: Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Please tick each box when in agreement with the statement:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet version _____ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand the purpose of the study, and I am happy to participate considering the confidentiality and anonymity statements.	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without adverse consequences or academic penalty.	
4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee.	
5. I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	
6. I consent for the researcher to take part in the course or programme I deliver.	
7. I agree to be observed teaching and a description to be written in field notes.	
8. I consent for the sessions of the course or programme to be audio recorded and a transcript to be developed.	
9. I understand how this research will be written up and used.	
10. I agree to take part in the study.	

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature
_____   _____   _____
Name of the researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix I

Description of Study Sample at the Time of the Fieldwork

Interviewee	Gender	Age range	Position in their organisation	Buddhist identity
Clara	F	S	Director	*
Nicté	F	Y	Leader instructor	
Yunuen	M	Y	Supporter	
David	M	Y	Self-employed	*
Lucía	F	MA	Project leader	
Pablo	M	MA	Director	*
Liliana	F	MA	Director	*
Elena	F	MA	Self-employed	*
Luisa	F	Y	n/a	
Manuel	M	MA	Director	*
Santiago	M	Y	Director	
Raquel	F	MA	Leader instructor	*
Antonio	M	MA	Director	
Gabriel	M	MA	Director	*
Samuel	M	MA	Director	
Mario	M	MA	Director	*
Rogelio	M	S	Director	
Mariana	F	S	Director	
Diego	M	MA	Co-director	
Julián	M	S	n/a	
Amalia	F	MA	Director	*
Ricardo	M	S	Self-employed	
Sara	F	MA	n/a	
Eduardo	M	Y	Director	
Vicente	M	MA	Director	*
Laura	F	MA	n/a	*
Ignacio	M	Y	n/a	
Félix	M	Y	n/a	*
Isabel	F	Y	Co-director	
Itzel	F	Y	Co-director	
Carolina	F	S	Director	
Katia	F	MA	n/a	
Carla	F	S	Co-director	
Rodolfo	M	MA	Director	
Lorenzo	M	MA	Co-director	
Ernesto	M	Y	Director	*
Romina	F	MA	Director	*
Olivia	F	MA	Co-director	*
Cecilia	F	MA	Co-director	*
Victor	M	MA	Co-director	*
Rafael	M	MA	Director	*
Emilio	M	MA	Director	*
			Total	20/42

Note. The category "Position in their organisation" in the table relates to the interviewee's positions within the associations specifically dedicated to disseminating meditative practices in Mexico. Seven of the interviewees who have "n/a" (non-applicable) under this category, did not belong to any of those organisations mapped in my sample. However, they have introduced meditative practices in the contexts where they work or in the larger institutions they belong to (i.e. private practice or universities).

Table Key

Gender

F = female

M = male

Age range

Y = young adult (20-40 years)

MA = middle age (40 -60 years)

S = senior (60 + years)

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for Attendees

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Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution

Participant Information Sheet (Version III)

I am a PhD student in Social Sciences at Cardiff University in Cardiff, Wales developing my research project under the supervision of Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine.

My PhD research project has been funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT), Mexico, and approved by the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the research project and provides a description of your participation as an attendee of the course or programme I will take part in, as well as your rights as a research participant.

The purpose of the study

The research project seeks to explore and understand how mindfulness and related practices (i.e., *atención plena, atención consciente, plena consciencia*) are being taught in different settings such as schools and universities, companies, Indigenous communities, Buddhist centres, hospitals, and clinical settings. Particularly, I am interested in describing the emergence and evolution of these practices in the Mexican context; and comprehending the social and cultural aspects related to the implementation and transmission of these practices which have not been yet explored so far.

Due to the lack of literature on this topic, the understanding of the current scenario in Mexico requires a historical revision of how the acceptance of Buddhism and the development of psychology in Mexico might have interviewed with the spread of mindfulness practices in the country. Hence, my research will comprise interviewing key figures and pioneers who have been involved in the spread of Buddhism, mindfulness practices as well as the adaptation and creation of courses based on

mindfulness, *atención plena, atención consciente* or *plena consciencia.* Also, I will conduct participant observation work in some of the settings where pioneers deliver courses on mindfulness and related practices, with the purpose of studying the social and cultural aspects of the transmission and teaching of these practices in the Mexican context.

While there is an increased awareness of the role of the teacher in mindfulness interventions at an international level (e.g. Aalderen et al. 2014; Crane et al. 2010; Crane et al. 2011); studies exploring the nuances of mindfulness and related practices teaching in specific contexts such as the Mexican, need to be carried out. It seems to be a rich diversity of mindfulness practices being delivered in Mexico which have not been documented in the scientific literature yet. Therefore, conducting this fieldwork will help to generate knowledge for a better understanding of this movement in Mexico.

What does the research involve and what do you have to do?

Little is known about Mexican pioneers´ teaching practice with regards to mindfulness practices in different settings. Therefore, my interest in participating in and observing courses or programmes where these practices are being taught.

As an attendee of this course or programme, I would like to request your consent, to be observed, allowing your data to be included in the field notes I will take after each session of the course. Also, if you agree so, that your voice could be included in the audio recording of the sessions as part of the participant observation work I will be conducting. The focus of the observation in my research remains on the way mindfulness and related practices are taught, and the content disseminated by the teacher or facilitator (e.g. the streams that inform the teaching approach, the language used such as Spanish or English terms). Nonetheless, your participation is important.

The data gathered for the present study will be greatly beneficial to the historical revision of this topic and the empirical study of the transmission of mindfulness and related practices in the Mexican context, which in consequence, will aid a better understanding of the content and type of practices being delivered on mindfulness courses and programmes in Mexico.

In case you decide not to agree to be part of either the observation or the audio recording during the ethnographic work, then your information will be deleted in the audio recordings, and no fieldnotes will be taking with regards to your attendance in the course or programme.

Confidentiality and anonymity

In order to keep anonymity in this study, pseudonyms will be used in the transcripts written from the data collected in the audio recordings and the field notes taken during the participant observational work. Personal information will be obscured in case the participant could be identifiable.

The data collected will be available only to the researcher and the supervisory team formed by Dr Steven Stanley and Professor Valerie Walkerdine. Any personal

information and the interview transcript will be kept confidential accordingly with the University regulations the Data Protection Act (1998).

How will the information be used?

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. This research project attempts to contribute to the internationally emerging field of social perspectives on mindfulness studies (e.g. Barker 2014; Crane et al. 2015; Stanley et al. 2014; Wheater 2017) therefore, the information will be used for further research. For instance, in academic conferences, publications, seminars and workshops and eventually, it will inform teaching practices, curricula, and teacher training.

The data (i.e. actual interview recordings and transcripts) should be retained for no less than 5 years or at least 2 years post-publication and then destroyed in accordance with GDPR**.**

Your rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to ask for further clarification on any question. Also, you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. In this case, the field notes and the audio recording of your data will cease, and any prior information collected will be destroyed immediately.

In case you wish to raise any concern or make a complaint, you might contact the researcher in the email account presented below, or the supervisory team Dr Steven Stanley (stanleys1@cardiff.ac.uk) and Professor Valerie Walkerdine (walkerdinev@cardiff.ac.uk).

Before moving forward, I would like to know if you have any questions at this stage. If you are happy and willing to consent to participate in my research, then please sign the consent form.

Thank you for your time, it is much appreciated.

Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero

PhD Researcher

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Participant Consent Form (Version III)

Research Project Title: Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practices in Mexico: Their Emergence and Evolution

Name of Researcher: Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Please tick each box when in agreement with the statement:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet version _____ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand the purpose of the study, and I am happy to participate considering the confidentiality and anonymity statements.	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without adverse consequences or academic penalty.	
4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee.	
5. I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	
6. I agree to be observed as an attendee of the course or programme and a description to be written in field notes.	
7. I consent for the sessions of the course or programme to be audio recorded and a transcript to be developed.	
8. I understand how this research will be written up and used.	
9. I agree to take part in the study.	

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of the researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix K

Social Research Ethics Committee Letter of Approval III

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

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21st February 2019

Our ref: SREC/3168

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Barbara Ibinarriaga Soltero
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Barbara,

Many thanks for advising the changes to the consent process for your project entitled *'Teaching Mindfulness and Related Practise in Mexico: Its Emergence and Evolution'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Professor Emma Renold
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Cc: Steven Stanley

THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
2013

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

QAA
UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

Registered Charity, no. 1136855
Elusen Gofrestredig, rhif 1136855

Appendix L

Ethnographic Sites

Table 1 Overview of the Ethnographic Sites

	Type of activity	Duration
1	4-day retreat of a Teacher Training Programme	Residential (>40 hrs) Approx. 12 hours per day.
2	Seminar	13 sessions (39hrs) 3 hrs each session (with 20 minutes break).
3	Course (Open only for women).	9 sessions (18 hrs) 2 hrs each session (no breaks), sometimes extended to 3 hrs.
4	Online course	8 sessions (16 hrs) 2 hrs each session (no breaks)
5	Public conference	2 hrs.
6	3-day retreat	Residential retreat (37 hrs).
7	2-day course	2 sessions 6 hrs each day (12 hrs).
8	One-day session	1 session of 2 hrs.
9	Public conference	2 hrs.
10	Online course	8 sessions (16 hrs) 2 hrs each session (no breaks).
11	Workshop	This corresponds to an ethnographic observation that did not happen which I reflect on as "Lost ethnography" (Smith and Delamont 2019) as I explain in Chapter 8.
Total hours spent in the field work		196

Appendix M

Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) Social Identity Map Used as Reflexivity Tool

Figure 1 Blank Template of Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) Social Identity Map
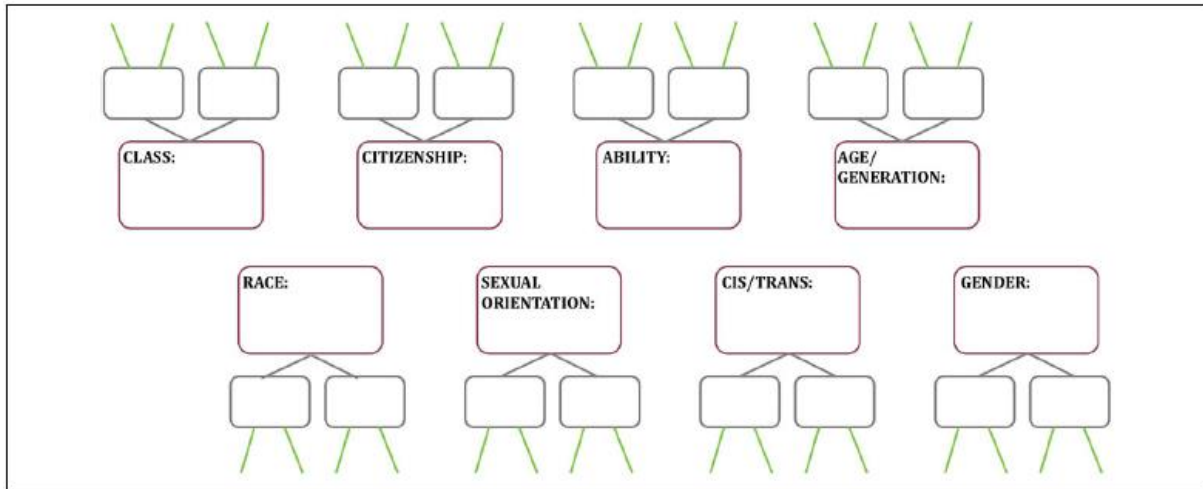
Source: Image taken from Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) blank positionality map (p.3).

I take 'gender' and sexual orientation as examples, following Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) guidance "to bear in mind that the facets of social identity, which are most salient at the time and place they are being reflected upon, are largely impacted by the social and political climate that the researcher is located in" (p. 3). In terms of the labels employed by the authors, I categorise myself as a cisgender[289], heterosexual woman whose gender and sexual orientation are aligned to what is more culturally accepted in contemporary Mexican culture. While LGBTQ rights have come to the foreground more recently in Mexican society, this is not the case for all the states in Mexico. There are differences across states since some tend to be more conservative than others since the presence of Catholicism is more salient in some places than other, or because in other cases, might be also influenced by regional socio-cultural practices such as by "*Usos y* costumbres" [Indigenous customary law]. Therefore, my position can be considered as being in a 'comfort zone', with privilege in not feeling excluded or not having to justify/explain to others, and not being stigmatised due to my sexual preferences. Regarding my study of meditative practices in Mexico, one of my participants considered themselves bisexual. While conducting my analysis, I realised that, in the context of the interview, I did not explore this topic further. I come from a conservative family, and although there was some openness to discuss the topic of 'sexuality' this was related to contraception methods and STIs prevention, all were framed in the context of heterosexual relationships. Retrospectively, I acknowledge being shy in following up the discussion on this as the participant was opened about it. Yet, this was also considered a sensitive topic that was not part of the interview schedule. Instead, I brought attention to the discussion of "suffering", "sustainable social fight" and "feminicides" which were issues my interviewee was also referring to when mentioning its sexual orientation. Importantly, those topics were salient in the context of the interview because the tensions were framed in relation to the 'male' heterosexual figure as the one being privileged and having more resources. This was an emerging theme worth exploring further in future research.

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[289] The gender identity matches the biological sex at the moment of being born.

Appendix N

Poster "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis"

Source: (Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis (IMPAC) Archives)

Appendix O

Definitions of Public, Private and Civil Society

Table 1 Definitions of Public, Private, and Civil Society Employed in the Study

Public Sector
The public sector involves the set of organisations and institutions that are managed by the government. In the case of Mexico, the public organisations can be centralised (compromising the jurisdiction of the three branches of Mexican government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial) or decentralised, which the main feature is that these organisations have specific faculties limited to a certain subject or territory (De la Paz Sosa 2017; Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores [SRE] 2020).
Private Sector
In contrast, the private sector entails organisations created to produce profitability and profit and are not operated or owned by the government. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2016) inventory of private sector terminology and typology, this sector is constituted by "financial institutions and intermediaries, multinational companies, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, co-operatives, individual entrepreneurs, and farmers who operate in the formal and informal sectors" (p. 1). In Mexico, the concept "*Iniciativa Privada*" [private initiative] is also popular to refer to this sector.
Civil society
The heterogeneity of Mexican 'civil society' (Verduzco Igartúa 2001, 2003; Olvera 2002; Mena 2003; 2019;) is taken as a premise for analysing the data of the present research. Therefore, an eclectic approach is adopted, which encompasses embracing the pluralistic nature of the sector in Mexico by recognising the distinctive historical influence of both the charitable organisations created during colonial times and the role of the Catholic Church in some of the philanthropic or voluntary social practices adopted by Mexicans (Mena 2003; Verduzco Igartúa 2003; Conde Bonfil and Oulhaj 2019) and the legal frameworks of *Asociación Civil* (A.C.) [Civil Associations]*,* and *Institución de Asistencia Privada* (IAP) [Institution for Private Assistance] also generally called 'non-profit' organisations. This also includes the less 'formally' constituted organisations such as Indigenous peoples and social movements often disregarded in the literature (Olvera 2019).

Appendix P

Poster of the "*Atención Plena* in Mental Health" Conference

Figure 1 shows the poster in Spanish disseminated for the conference "*Atención Plena* en la Salud Mental" [*Atención Plena* in Mental Health], held at the National Institute of Psychiatry, Mexico City, in 2014. The photo shows Matthieu Ricard, a well-known French Buddhist monk also recognised for his strong scientific background and having a PhD degree in molecular genetics. Above all, Matthieu Ricard is famous for being "the world's happiest man" (Touber 2007) and for participating in a series of neuroscientific studies of the measurement of brain changes due to his long meditation practice (Ricard et al. 2014). As mentioned in the text highlighted in the two violet boxes of the poster "Matthieu Ricard studied his PhD at the Institute Pasteur in Paris in the research group of the Medicine Nobel Prize, François Jacob" and "is currently participating in the scientific research of mental training and brain plasticity at the Universities of Madison-Wisconsin, Princeton, Berkeley among others". At glance, the title of the conference stated above, does not give a hint of the possible Buddhist background associated with the practice of *atención plena*. Besides, the photo of Matthieu Ricard portrays a rather enigmatic person, avoiding capturing his entire body which could have revealed his burgundy robes otherwise.

Below Matthieu Ricard's name on the poster, his definition of happiness is quoted: "as the state of inner fulfilment not the satisfaction of unlimited desires outward"; also with reference to his affiliation to Mind and Life Institute and his authorship of plenty of scientific work studying the effects of meditation on mood. In a way, all these scientific accreditations are appealing and relevant for the mental health institution and the higher education institution which have endorsed the conference. Nevertheless, at the left bottom box in the poster, it is explicitly that Matthieu Ricard "has been a Buddhist monk for 40 years, resides in Nepal and is a photographer and author of the best-seller books …" which could potentially cause controversy as for the secular nature of both institutions.

Figure 1 Conference Poster in Spanish

Source: (Posgrado Psicología UNAM 2013)