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The story of Mindfulness

*A cultural analysis of the translation and traveling of
an esoteric concept from the East to the organizational
realm in the West, specifically in Bogotá, Colombia.*

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Abstract

The story of Mindfulness: a cultural analysis of the translation and traveling of an esoteric concept from the East to the organizational realm in the West, specifically in Bogotá, Colombia.

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This thesis analyzes how mindfulness is translated into a business concept for the organizational realm in Bogotá, Colombia. How does an originally “mystic”, eastern esoteric concept like mindfulness manage to travel into and adapt to a material Western setting, specifically Bogotá? Previous research on mindfulness in businesses often analyzes it as an accepted tool for executives and organizations, but little research has focused on how mindfulness has actually ended up there, having been tailored by mindfulness companies to meet organizational interests. This thesis explores the identity-making process of seven mindfulness companies and their owners using cultural analysis and ethnographical methods. In focus are the tacit and explicit rules engaged in creating these mindfulness companies, their marketing strategies, their gender notions and the meanings they ascribe to the mindfulness experience. Similarly, the voice of Bogotá’s organizational realm is examined in order to comprehend their take and appreciations on mindfulness. The analysis is guided by Mary Douglas definition on cleanliness and pollution, Erving Goffman’s theatrical perspective on social interactions, Victor Turner’s delineation of liminality and Judith Butler definition of gender. The investigation indicates that shaping mindfulness for business purposes is a personal and intimate process for the mindfulness practitioners operating as business owners. Further, the work reveals that, due to the gender stereotypes embedded in Bogotá’s organizational realm, the mindfulness companies translate and market mindfulness as a prestigious enactment of womanness. The thesis findings can be used as a guide as they show how the successful travelling process and translation of mindfulness into a business concept for the organizational realm requires being aware of the specific local and geographic constructions of mindfulness including their national, gendered and sociocultural characteristics. Further, it reveals the significance of the individual perspectives on business and mindfulness that the women running the mindfulness companies adhere to.

Keywords: mindfulness; gender stereotypes; performances; liminality; business; cultural translation; New Age commercialization; Bogotá; Colombia

Abstract (Spanish)

La historia de Mindfulness: Un análisis cultural del proceso de traducción y viaje de un concepto esotérico del Oriente al ámbito organizacional en el Occidente el caso de Bogotá, Colombia.

Natalia Usme Manrique

Esta tesis analiza cómo el concepto de Mindfulness se traduce en una idea de negocios y se moldea para el ámbito organizacional en Bogotá, Colombia. La pregunta surge ¿Cómo un concepto que inicialmente se considera “esotérico” y del Oriente viaja y se adapta a un entorno Occidental en Bogotá? A menudo, las investigaciones que discuten la existencia y el uso de Mindfulness dentro del ámbito organizacional se orientan en presentar este concepto como una herramienta que *ya ha sido aceptada* dentro de la organización y que está al alcance de ejecutivos y colaboradores. Sin embargo, la academia no ha examinado la manera en que Mindfulness *llega* a las organizaciones y es *adaptada* por las compañías de Mindfulness para cumplir con las necesidades e intereses de los ejecutivos. Esta tesis se soporta en un análisis cultural y métodos etnográficos para explorar el proceso de generación de identidad de siete empresas de Mindfulness y sus propietarias. La tesis se enfoca en las reglas tácitas y explícitas que involucran la creación de una empresa de Mindfulness, sus estrategias de marketing, nociones de género y los significados que se le atribuyen a lo que aquí se denomina como *la experiencia de Mindfulness*. Del mismo modo, la tesis analiza las voces del ámbito organizacional de Bogotá, con el fin de comprender sus apreciaciones respecto a Mindfulness. El análisis toma como guía la definición de limpieza y contaminación de la antropóloga Mary Douglas, la perspectiva teatral del sociólogo Erving Goffman, el concepto de liminalidad del antropólogo Víctor Turner y la definición de género de la filósofa y feminista Judith Butler. La investigación indica que la generación de Mindfulness con fines comerciales es un proceso personal e íntimo para las profesionales que se dedican a esto y que operan como dueñas del negocio. Además, el trabajo revela que, debido a los estereotipos de género presentes en el ámbito organizacional de Bogotá, Mindfulness se traduce y publicita localmente como un prestigioso acto de femineidad.

Palabras clave: mindfulness; estereotipos de género; representaciones sociales; liminalidad; negocios; traducción cultural; economía de la Nueva Era; Bogotá; Colombia

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“The mind can go in a thousand directions. But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace. With each step, a gentle wind blows. With each step, a flower blooms” (Master Zen Thich Nhat Hanh, 2009, p. 13).

Lund, May 29, 2016

Natalia Usme Manrique

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1. Introduction

About a year ago, while preparing my breakfast, I first heard the word *mindfulness*. I was at home that morning, listening to a Swedish radio station. Suddenly, I heard some low-pitched bells and the radio host pronounced the word: *mindfulness*. I enjoyed the almost melodic sound of the word; the mystery that the bells evoked and I became curious to hear more; what was going to happen? As I remember it, the radio host started the broadcast section by saying that he wanted to know what mindfulness was, and thus he went on a phone call adventure to further explore the matter.

He started off by calling some mindfulness companies. Several women picked up the phone and they started to discuss the topic together. At first, most of them remained silent for a few seconds, not knowing how to explain exactly what mindfulness was. One of the women told him it was something he needed to experience. Another woman told him it was similar to being a monk, but not actually being one. This made the radio host sound as if he were confused, apparently still not able to completely understand what mindfulness really was.

After hearing this broadcast most of my morning revolved around thinking about the meaning of the concept and I decided to do a search on the word online. That moment turned out to be a definitive one: my investigative journey and thesis were born. My initial search showed that mindfulness had its roots within Buddhism as a meditative practice and way of living. The search also showed that, by traveling through time, this Buddhist idea had also become adapted to fit the business context. I found that there were *mindfulness companies* that offered mindfulness workshops, retreats and seminars for executives. I started wondering, how had this Buddhist idea transformed into a business opportunity? How did a mindfulness company come into being and why? These questions became the core of my investigation and the basis for a cultural analysis of how the concept has become translated into and by mindfulness companies and then promoted to the organizational realm in Bogotá, Colombia.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to produce an understanding on how mindfulness is translated as a business concept and understood for and by the organizational realm in Bogotá, Colombia. To understand this process of translation, I have developed an analysis of two main actors: the mindfulness companies that offer mindfulness services and their target audience, organizational-realm managers.

My cultural analysis of the mindfulness companies aims at understanding their identity shaping process, that is, their own constructs of mindfulness and the promoting tools they use to enter the organizational setting. Similarly, with the high-level managers, I aim at hearing their voices and thoughts on this concept. Hence, my central research questions are:

- What is the meaning of mindfulness for mindfulness companies?
- How do these companies market their services to the organizational realm?
- How do the high-level managers and the organizational realm that surrounds them understand mindfulness?

1.2. Contextualization and problem definition

My thesis unfolds a story of seven companies that offer mindfulness as a service for the organizational realm in Bogotá, Colombia. My telling of this story has been inspired by the concept of “travel[ing] ideas” as introduced by Barbara Czarniawska and Bernward Joerges (1996). For them “ideas are turned into things, then things into ideas again, transferred from their time and place of origin and materialized again elsewhere” (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 18). To them, translation explains the process that ideas undergo in order to become things. They do so, because they believe that, just as a translation, ideas can be understood differently depending on the reader (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 23). An idea always originates from somewhere; generally, a new idea is always an old idea disregarded at some point in history, and then readapted to make sense in a particular context (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, pp. 41-42). For an idea to materialize it has to “make sense” and be “recognizable” to people (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 28). Soon after materializing, the idea becomes “enacted” and shaped in a non-stopping process (See Figure 1 in Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p.26).

In this case, unveiling the cultural phenomenon of mindfulness through the concept of translation allows me to show how an idea that has traveled from Eastern geographies has landed in Bogotá and how the business owners of these companies have adapted it. Drawing on their concept, I understand mindfulness as an “idea” that at some point in history was acknowledged as valuable enough to be “turned into something” (i.e. translated). Then another idea came in and translated mindfulness into something else and so on and so forth.

Moreover, I approach this thesis by using a narrative method. I take as inspiration, Czarniawska’s (1997) narrative approach to organizational processes. She argues that when

looking at the internal and external procedures of companies, one is also looking at actors, plots, dramas and scripts. Her main line of argument is that by framing these processes in the context of a narration the researcher benefits. S/he is able to connect the points, understand what the different stories mean and achieve a proper analysis (Czarniawska, 1997). This is the aim of my narrative: looking at the construction of mindfulness companies as a story connected to other stories in the organizational realm of the city. This will allow a better understanding of the process.

1.2.1. So began the story of Mindfulness

How does the story of mindfulness begin? It begins miles and miles away from Bogotá. Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies Jeff Wilson argues that it begins in Asia in Buddhist religion (Wilson, 2014, p. 22). He explains mindfulness as a meditation practice that encourages awareness and consciousness of the present moment. This practice became popular in the 20th century amongst monastics who understood it as a “renunciation practice” used to achieve nirvana (Wilson, 2014, 26). However, in its early beginnings, the English word *mindfulness* did not exist. Instead, what these monks were practicing was known as *sati*. *Sati* meant “...a kind of attentiveness that ...is good, skillful or right...” (Thera, 1962, p. 10). This kind of attentiveness was achieved through a rigorous and disciplined meditative practice (e.g., Thera, 1962 & Bodhi, 1994). As Wilson tells the story, this situation changed in 1910 when British Thomas Rhys Davis decided to translate the word *sati* into the English word *mindfulness* (Wilson, 2014, p.18). This decision started to transform the idea of mindfulness into a meditative practice available to an English-speaking audience (Wilson, 2014, p.18). And so it began, mindfulness’ journey into the West.

More time passed, and North Americans started to realize that *mindfulness* was something of interest. How did this happen? Wilson highlights that, amongst other historical processes, mindfulness became available for Americans via the New Age concept (Wilson, 2014, pp. 36-37). The New Age concept emerged in the 19th century and is connected to the theosophical doctrine and notions of esotericism and neo-paganism¹ (Hanegraaff, 1998, Chapter 5). New Age usually represents the notion that happiness, success in life, and finding one’s true destiny does not lie outside the individual, but within one’s “self” (Tucker, 2002, p.47). Hence, the individual continuously has to work on this inner self to achieve what s/he wants in life. Moreover, New Agers tend to belief in a higher force that lies in the Universe, decentralizing key ideas in traditional religions e.g. Catholicism (See Hanegraaff, 1998, p.

329; Tucker, 2002). What does this have to do with mindfulness? Wilson argues it has everything to do with it. The New Age movementⁱⁱ grew in the United States in the 1950's (Hanegraaff, 1998, p.95). By mid-1960's it became popular among counterculture youth and by the 1970's and early 1980's it had found a niche in the country (Hanegraaff, 1998, Chapter 5). At the same time, counterculture youth in North America had started to look for new ways to develop their spiritual paths, and mindfulness was, in a figurative sense, right down their alley (Wilson, 2014, p. 29). They perceived mindfulness as a meditative practice that was not attached to the western religious institutions that could help them work with their inner self. Soon, some traveled to Asia to bring mindfulness into the United States. They created the first mindfulness centers, which made the idea available for New Agers and others interested (Wilson, 2014, p.30). However, mindfulness was still considered esoteric by non-Buddhist and non-New Age practitioners.

Then something *clicked* for one American: Jon Kabat-Zinn. In the late 1970's he developed an idea that would make mindfulness available even for people who did not believe in Buddhism or New Age (Kabat-Zinn, 2012/2013, p.35). He organized the concept for application in the medical field with an eight-week program: the Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction Program (hereon MBRS). This eight-week program is based on meditation practices, yoga and a set of group exercises (Lutz, Jha, Dunne & Saron, 2015, p. 635).

Kabat-Zinn's translation made a lot of sense to a lot of people and it opened the doors to the scientific field (Wilson, 2014, p.35). But, as Czarniawska & Joerges (1996) put it, once the idea is "materialized" and "enacted" the idea travels once again in order to be shaped by other contexts (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). This happened with mindfulness, years past, and it became more and more popular. At that point mindfulness also stopped being just "mindfulness" and it started to transform into *mindful breathing*, *mindful eating*, *mindful parenting* and *mindful work*. All of these constructs were generated to promote the idea that the right way of living was through being conscious of everything that one did, staying in the present moment (Wilson, 2014, Chapter 4, p.104).

Now, with the words *mindful work* the idea had traveled from Buddhist religion, into the medical field and then reshaped and materialized to fit the organizational realm. Buddhist monks started to promote mindfulness as a way of living and a meditative practice that could be used at the workplace and organizational scholars started to create new meanings for the concept. For example, in his book *Work*, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (2008) portrays mindfulness as the ultimate tool for enjoying work. He argues that sitting, holding meetings, walking and eating at the business place improve when one pays mindful attention to each of

the movements, thoughts and feelings that arise when conducting such actions (Hanh, 2008, Chapter three). In the academic world, the translation of mindfulness moved further away from its Buddhist notion. Academics did not necessarily connect it with meditation. This version was defined and promoted by psychologist Ellen Langer (1997) as a cognitive practice that encouraged people to act and think through "... (a) openness to novelty; (b) alertness to distinction; (c) sensitivity to different contexts; (d) implicit, if not explicit, awareness of multiple perspectives; and (e) orientation in the present" (as cited by Sternberg, 2000, p. 12). That is to say, through this translation, a mindful person is encouraged to consider the different possibilities he has to respond to a situation, before acting as he normally does. This makes him more aware of the present moment. Drawing on this last translation, some of the main arguments are that organizational leaders can use mindfulness as a way to regulate their emotions (e.g., Kinsler, 2014) and use it as a key tool to be actively aware of their decision-making process (e.g., Fiol & O'Connor, 2003). The idea of mindfulness at the workplace has also been translated as a concept that solves problems regarding gender inequalities at work. Kawakami, White and Langer (2000) argue that a woman who is a mindful leader, which they define as a "genuine leader" that acts in "novel ways" (Kawakami, White & Langer 2000, p. 52), is able to break gender barriers and stereotypes between men and women and thus perform well in a leadership role.

But, this is still far away from a Latin American country named Colombia, and its capital city, Bogotá. How did the idea of mindfulness land in this geography? Well, the story in Colombia, at least the one told by the media and government, starts in 1991. On July 4, Colombian citizens were introduced to their national constitution. In the *El País* online article "*Los 20 grandes cambios que generó la constitución de 1991*" [The 20 biggest changes that the 1991 constitution produced], it is stated that this moment "changed the political history of Colombia" (Redacción El País, 2011, para. 1). The article argues that this happened because it gave citizens the opportunity to have rights and duties and to express their opinions. But then again, how is this related to the story? It is related because one of the rights that this constitution introduced was *freedom of worship*. According to the article this right allowed for religions other than Catholicism to be legitimized and accepted in the public eye (El país, 2011, para.2). According to anthropologist Alhena Caicedo Fernández (2009) and sociologist Sandra Marín Barón (2009), this freedom of worship allowed for the New Age construct to officially enter the country. And as I stated above; mindfulness is one of the tools that New Age believers and other groups used to pursue their spiritual interests. I cannot of course claim that as soon as the constitution changed, New Age and mindfulness appeared right

away in Bogotá. Time had to pass, the idea had to make sense to people in the city. First New Age shops made their entrance in the mid 1990's (Marín, 2009). These stores gradually introduced mindfulness literature. For example, the store “*La Era Azul*” [The Blue Age] has an online section with “*grandes obras sobre el mindfulness*” [Masterpieces on mindfulness], (La Era Azul, 2016). Thus, New Agers and people interested in inner spirituality came into contact with mindfulness. But, how did this concept became a business idea and move into the organizational realm in Bogotá? Local media helped.

In an online article in *Revista Semana*, “*LOS POSEIDOS DE LA NUEVA ERA*” [The New Age possessed] the magazine portrays the New Age concept as “esoteric and mystical”. This quality is hinted to by the word game in the title that connects New Age with being possessed by Demons (*Revista Semana*, 1994). However, the article's main goal was to show how, at the time, local philosophers, scholars, lawyers and journalists aimed at producing “a silent revolution” (*Revista Semana*, 1994). This revolution wanted to frame New Age practices as innovative tools that could help businesses solve organizational issues.

This type of press along with the progression of the New Age movement indicate how “esoteric” concepts were possible to bring into the local organizational realm. But when did the word *mindfulness* first appear and how? In 2007, the term *mindfulness* made its debut in the local newspaper *El TIEMPO*. Its first appearance was rather modest; the online article “*Meditar para controlar pensamientos negativos*” [Meditation to control negative thoughts] introduced the English word *mindfulness* as a new and unknown practice to enhance wellbeing. However, the author asserted that “the benefits were yet to be proven” (*El TIEMPO*, 2007), so it seemed that although the translation of mindfulness had started in the public arena, there was still some hesitation towards the idea; it still needed to make sense.

By 2011 this had changed, the benefits that the previous article was dubious about had been scientifically tested. In the online version of the local newspaper *EL ESPECTADOR* the English term *mindfulness* was re-introduced in a stellar way. The article “*Meditación para reprogramarse*” [Reprogram yourself through meditation] aimed at persuading the reader that mindfulness was not “esoteric and transcendental” and apparently distancing itself from these concepts, the article mentioned that it was a scientifically approved method, a concept circulating in Europe and North America for centuries that was being used by universities like Harvard (*EIespectador.com*, 2011). In a sense, mindfulness was now saying its “byes” to its long-time friend “New Age,”- or not? It seems to be what media conveyed; this was not the last or only online article that translated mindfulness this way. After a while more and more articles promoted mindfulness as: a great technique for business people to use at

work and a scientifically tested technique (*Los Beneficios de la meditación Mindfulness, Revista Semana*, 2015). Mindfulness was even integrated into leadership forums around the city (e.g., *Foros el espectador, foro de liderazgo*, 2014). These articles made sure to highlight the translation made by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the 1970's to show their business readers that mindfulness had nothing to do with the esoteric. Further, they reinforced their intentions by portraying businessmen relaxing in their offices, quoting local “mindfulness experts”. The idea of mindfulness had landed in Bogotá. Local media helped make sense of it to business people and this is whence the story of my thesis proceeds.

How is this story going to continue? What is its main plot? For now, I will share that this story is about how, what the local media coined as the “mindfulness experts”, *the main characters of this story*, seven women to be more exact, materialize the idea of having a mindfulness company, their marketing strategies and how their target audience, that is to say, the business executives, *the supporting characters*, understand this concept. Are the intentions of these business owners to promote and introduce this concept within the organizational realm going to be successful? Or is mindfulness going to be seen as something rather inappropriate for the organizational realm and, thus face a transformation in the process? At this point in the story, I am not giving any definite answers to these questions. Instead, I invite the reader to join me on my journey as it took place in Bogotá, Colombia, both on the online setting and the off-line, and allow for the story to reveal itself over the remaining pages of my thesis.

1.3. The story's outline, limitations and sequence

Before continuing with how the story unfolds and to better understand the story constituting this cultural analysis it is important to note the theoretical incursions I made, the limitations of the story and what the reader should expect from each chapter.

I make incursions into the fields of anthropological, sociological and gender studies. Through the lenses of anthropologist Mary Douglas and her concept of cleanliness and pollution, I explain the order, rules and structure of the mindfulness companies that I studied. Moreover, I use Judith Butler's understanding of gender performativity to show how these women translate the idea of mindfulness. I take the theatrical conceptualization of sociologist Erving Goffman to explain some specific interactions that emerged during the process. Finally, in order to unveil what the women mean by a “mindfulness experience” and how it should be shaped, I draw on the concept of “liminality” as put forth by Victor Turner

It is also important to note that just as every story has its limitations, this cultural analysis is not the exception. My work analyzes the specific cases of seven mindfulness companies based in Bogotá. The information is gathered from five high-level managers, my own experiences in mindfulness sessions and a seminar in the city. I do not take into consideration the packaging of mindfulness for the medical, educational or the psychological industry in Bogotá. My analysis does not aim at being a conclusive definition on what mindfulness is neither in Colombia nor in a organizational setting. Furthermore, the concept of mindfulness is fairly new in Bogotá and susceptible to changes, and my thesis cannot contemplate all variations and adjustments that this construct might have now or in the future.

How is this story told? The story is organized into nine chapters. Chapter two introduces how this story relates to the previous academic work on mindfulness related topics. Chapter three illustrates and discusses the shaping of this story via methodological tactics. Chapter four outlines the theoretical perspectives that I used in order to understand and explain it.

Chapter five introduces the meaning that mindfulness has for these companies, the order that is being developed and problematizes the rules that are embedded within their system. Chapter six singles out one case to discuss the marketing strategies that the mindfulness companies use in the online setting, and explains how it is enmeshed with certain constructs of gender. Chapter seven moves into the offline world and discusses the meaning that the organizational realm and the high-level executives attach to mindfulness, and validates the outcome of chapter six. Chapter eight analyzes how, via a two-day mindfulness seminar, the idea of mindfulness is presented as a reasonable practice for the organizational realm in Bogotá. Finally, chapter nine concludes the story, reflects on its main plot and provides suggestions on how to apply it within the business and cultural context of the city.

2. Positioning my story in relation to other academic research

In the previous section I began to introduce one of three academic works that have been of great relevance for my thesis, that of professor Jeff Wilson on the development of mindfulness in North America (2014) and will continue positioning my work in relation to it. Here I introduce the other two who are 1) Ethnologist Thomas O'Dell's analysis of Swedish spas and 2) Sociologist Sandra Marín Barón's study on New Age stores in Bogotá.

Wilson's *Mindful America: The mutual transformation of Meditation and American Culture* (2014) exemplifies, from a religious and historical perspective, the translation that mindfulness has gone through in a specific geography. His historical approach reveals how, through a mystification process, it has been transformed into a tool for upgrading Americans' everyday life. He criticizes the Americanization of mindfulness for having alienated it from its original Buddhist meaning. Differently from Wilson, my work focuses on the mystification processes of mindfulness companies and the enactment of gender that the owners of these companies use which he does not analyze.

O'Dell's *Spas: The cultural economy of hospitality, magic and the senses* (2010) offers an analysis on how immaterial and ethereal concepts such as wellbeing and serenity become commoditized by businesses such as spas by using the concepts of the "experience economy" and Marcel Mauss' definition of "magic". He reflects on how these businesses connect with their clients through sensuous experiences embedded in a set of rituals. He also discusses how they use material evocations of New Age beliefs to promote the idea of calmness and serenity. His work serves as inspiration as I also, although with different theories, analyze the ritualistic aspect of mindfulness and how materiality helps shape the concept, and focus on the connection between mindfulness and the body. However, while he does this by attending to the senses, I take a slightly different approach analyzing how the enactment of gender shapes the body, and how it is offered, by these companies, as a way to experience the world.

Barón's *La Nueva Era: Mercado y crisis de sentido* (2009) [New Age: market and identity crisis], examines how New Age is perceived and constructed by the owners and clients of three New Age shops located in Bogotá. Her work focuses on the emotional aspect of these businesses and how the products and services they offer serve to "reconfigure the meaning of life" of both owners and clients (Marín, 2009, p.48). She claims that the business owners opened their stores because their previous jobs did not fulfill their emotional and intellectual needs. As soon as they had started their New Age businesses, Marín shares, they started to feel complete; they saw them as a tool to help people (Marín, 2009, p. 38) Moreover, from a customer's perspectives, she argues, the New Age products help customers address "existential problems" related to health, personal and professional issues they have not been able to solve in other ways (Marín, 2009, p.46). My work does not have the same focus, but Marín's analysis is relevant since it illustrates how business owners understand New Age related businesses as a tool for helping people. This supports a conclusion I draw in the first chapter of the analysis. Moreover, in referring to the customer's existential problems

she also highlights that New Agers and customers alike tend to have a privileged economic position (Marín, 2009, p.41). Marín's reflection on the economic means of such customers resonates with what I also hold true in this thesis, that New Age related services are not economically accessible to all socio-economic groups in Bogotá.

3. Shaping the story: The field, methods, the characters and ethical considerations

This part of the story introduces the field in which I did my research, the main methods that were used to uncover the story and the material gathered with their help. I reflect on the methods and discuss ethical issues involved. When going through methods and material, I discuss how I approach the *main* and *supporting characters of the story of mindfulness that I relate in this thesis*. These include the seven women who own mindfulness companies, and their business audience, five high-level managers that hold positions within human resources and organizational wellbeing. I also discuss the contact and interviews held with three ontological coaches and one motivational coach to find out if mindfulness could enter through other lines of business. I also contacted twenty-eight business employees through a survey that I conducted to investigate, and widen the context and my understanding of what they thought about mindfulness and organizational wellbeing. However, the main focus was on the executives and managers in charge of hiring and introducing such services into their companies. Their thoughts resonate in the analysis, but are not given primary voice. Nevertheless, they are reconsidered in the applicability section. In order to protect the privacy of the interviewees I decided to change their names. All names of people and mindfulness companies have remained in Spanish to give the reader a sense of the local, Colombian context.

3.1. The field: Bogotá

The geography in which this story unfolds is Bogotá, my hometown and the capital of Colombia, a country that is located in the northwestern part of South America. As the reader might remember the story of this thesis began with a radio broadcast in Sweden, where I at the time was studying for my Master's degree. However, I knew that just as mindfulness had traveled to Bogotá, I needed to go there, where the idea was being developed. Hence, for a four-month period (November 2015, March, 2016) I went back to my city and initiated the

fieldwork. A few facts about Bogotá will locate this analysis and story in a broader context. First let me address the issue of social class. Bogotá is divided into six socio-economic strata that go from one to six. Number one indicates the lowest and number six indicates the highest one. In the most formalistic aspect, these numbers are used in order to inform citizens how much they have to pay for their monthly utilities and the amount of taxes they have to return to the government according to their housing location. In everyday life these numbers carry additional meaning; they are used to divide the wealthy and higher class from the lower one. When one speaks with friends and acquaintances it is not uncommon to hear the question, “what strata are you?” There is a tacit rule that a person from high strata would not want to be socially mixed with a person from a lower oneⁱⁱⁱ. This is relevant to the story because I will show how the construct of social prestige and mindfulness intermix within the city and how the first one is use by mindfulness companies for marketing purposes.

The reader should also know some common assumptions about men and women in Bogotá. According to *Fucsia* magazine (2016), on January 2016, when Bogotá’s current mayor took office, he stated, “We want a Bogotá without machismo” (*Fucsia.co*, 2016, para. 1). Many women in the city would include themselves in this “we”. Bogotá is a city in which gender stereotypes are noticeable; women suffer from domestic violence (e.g., Lafaurie, 2013), they are constantly objectified and are not offered the same treatments and conditions as men (see Alegre, 2016). Two studies highlight this problematic: Reuters (2016) has indicated that Bogotá is the most dangerous city for women in which to use public transportation because it is not unusual for men to sexually attack women either verbally or physically in its public setting (as cited by Bruce-Lockhart, 2016). In the workplace, the situation is similar as the Aequales consultancy (2015) has showed; only 34% percent of Colombian women are offered high-level positions within corporations (as cited by Escorcía, 2015, *publimetro.co*). What does this mean? The mayor’s statement and the results from the studies show a persistent public notion of men and women as different in the city. This is extremely important to this story, as my investigations came to show that gender stereotypes are intricately bound to the meanings that high-level managers and the organizational realm attach to mindfulness and how the mindfulness companies promote their services.

3.2. Netnography

The word “Netnography” derives from the term “ethnography” which is defined by anthropologist George E. Marcus as the analytical practice of paying attention “...to the everyday, and intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups” (Marcus, 1995

p.99). What the scholar means with this is that an ethnographic study locates the researcher in the community she is studying. This helps her understand the cultural nuances that develop around it. A netnography intends to do the same, but focuses on the cultural phenomena of the online world. I was interested in observing and analyzing how the mindfulness companies promoted their services, as well as, the public idea that the business audience had about this construct, I thus began by conducting a netnographic research of the seven mindfulness companies directing my attention towards their social media and their official websites. My initial investigation showed a consistent aesthetic and linguistic pattern in use on these websites. All of them used light colors, delicate images and introduced mindfulness through the evocation of scientific terminology. This was a pattern that turned out to be consistent in their social media. However, although this method allowed me to get an impression of their online messages, I felt I could not rely entirely on these online performances and information of the mindfulness companies; as it has been noted that an online presence and persona can often be manipulated and the information regulated (e.g., Papacharissi, 2002, p.644). Hence, I further validated my findings from the netnography complementing them with interviews and fieldnotes from mindfulness informative sessions, as well as the experience from the two-day seminar I participated in. To conclude, I want to highlight that, for ethical reasons, I contacted one of the website owners, requested and obtained her permission to make use of the images that she had posted on her website. I decided to follow such procedure because my analysis included images with people who were her clients and were unaware of their participation in the visual ethnography that I will describe in more detail below.

3.3. Visual ethnography

To complement the netnography, I conducted a visual ethnography analyzing online images and videos that the mindfulness companies had published on mindfulness. In the netnography I specifically paid attention to the general layout and language, but with the visual ethnography I aimed at engaging into a more visual dialogue. By the same token, I performed a visual and content analysis of seventeen national and international online articles. The analysis comprised thirteen national online articles, three blog entries, nine online newspapers articles and one article from a business university, which had key words such as “meditation”, “mindfulness”, “occupational health” and “work breaks”. The last two key words were considered assuming that two of the mindfulness companies offered meditation services for occupational health departments, providing work-break services and

this proved to be relevant to better analyze the way in which organizations understood mindfulness.

Likewise, I took into consideration international articles to observe if there was any difference in their use of images and approach to mindfulness. I analyzed: a *Time* magazine cover from 2014 which treated “the mindful revolution” (*Time*, Feb 3, 2014); one article in the American newspaper *Huffington Post*, which explained “15 Practical Ways To Find your Zen at Work” (Confino, 2016), and two blog entries from European bloggers (De Juana, 2014 & Ratner, Nghiem, Stains, Nghiem, 2015). One of these (De Juana, 2014) explained the relevance of mindfulness in the workplace and the other one discussed the practice of mindfulness within the Buddhist context (Ratner, Nghiem, Stains, Nghiem, 2015).

In order to do the visual and content analysis I gathered inspiration from Marcus Banks and David Zeytlin (2015) who claim that when visual methods are included in a study, the researcher is “tuning in to conversations between people, including but not limited to the creator of the visual image and his or her audience” (Banks & Zeytlin, 2015, pp, 28-30). This means that images can be of use by the cultural analyst as a way to understand the stories she is trying to unveil. One can analyze the setting, the colors, the people and the story within the text and the images. Hence, following Banks & Zeytlin proposal in regards to this type of analysis, I wanted this conversation to address the type of visual storyline that companies, coaches and media were approaching to investigate the meaning-making processes around mindfulness (Banks & Zeytlin, 2015, pp. 30-31).

My analysis of the articles showed that, when the local media wanted to market mindfulness to the organizational realm, they would use images of men at work. All of them disregarded the Buddhism background or would refer to it at the end of the article. Further, they prioritized the scientific results that mindfulness offered. Likewise, when mindfulness was not for business purposes, the local articles would show women in sports outfits and locations such as beaches. Differently, the article from the *Huffington Post* made sure to mention Master Zen Thich Naht Hanh as one of the precursors of mindfulness, thus acknowledging the Buddhist connotations of this idea. What *Time* magazine coined as “the mindful revolution” was portrayed by the image of a blond woman in a sports outfit and a smile on her face. This indicated to me that there was something in regards to gender and to the kind of language that the local media in Bogotá used to understand mindfulness. This type of language is discussed in chapter 6 in which I discuss the marketing strategies and the online performance of mindfulness companies.

Moreover, I collected two videos from national television. One of the videos was from a well-known morning show, which introduced a woman that they referred to as a “happiness expert,” which explained that happiness was for everyone, “even for business people”. (Bravissimo, February 27, 2016). The other was an informative video clip that presented and explained the recently modified “decree regulation N.1072”. This decree concerns work normativity and discusses organizational wellbeing (VideoParaTodo3, November 16, 2015). The decree forces all Colombian companies to make important changes within their health and safety at work strategies. Although neither of those videos presented *mindfulness* as their topic, they came to be significant for the research. The first one showed how New Age related topics were thought to be inappropriate for the organizational setting and mostly female oriented. The second allowed me to understand how, as part of their business strategy, two of the mindfulness companies interpreted the recently modified regulation in order to offer what they referred to as “mindful work breaks”. This is an adaptation of what is locally known as “*pausa activa*,” which means fifteen-minute work breaks aimed at promoting a healthy body and mind for employees. Within this timeframe, employees are instructed by a designated person to perform a series of physical exercises. Following recent changes in the regulation, companies are now advised to be more rigorous in the implementation of such breaks in order to fulfill their legal requirements.

3.4. Interviews

In order to follow up on the historical background, my personal curiosity, and the press, net and video analyses that provided the beginnings of my story of mindfulness, I felt I needed to interact with its main and supporting characters and understand their own constructs about mindfulness face-to-face. In order to do so I conducted semi-structure interviews. This method allowed me not to interfere with what the characters needed to express, as I would not stop the rhythm of the conversation nor their ideas. Instead, I could focus on listening at them and hearing their side of the story, which is what Ethnographer Charlotte Aull Davies (2002) recommends. She argues that one should focus on the “variety of interpretations” that the participants could provide, not on an objective uniformed answer (Davies, 2002, p.98). Thus, with this method I was not seeking to find one stable idea of what mindfulness was in Bogotá, but the characters’ own readings and shaping of the concept.

The main reason however, was to conduct these interviews in order to observe the various types of “performances” (as described by Goffmann, 1956) carried out in front of me,

their audience. I was particularly focused on the tensions, bodily gestures, and silences that the characters expressed when asked about important and provoking questions. I wanted to see what made them comfortable or uneasy when speaking about mindfulness, that is, the manner in which their bodies revealed their own interpretations around the topic.

I interviewed eight females from mindfulness companies, and one of them deviated from the others in terms of her “storyline” and I have excluded her from this story. Although interesting, considering her version of mindfulness, would consume more space than this thesis has to offer, and will have to be left for another text. I also interviewed four coaches, two men and two women. From the targeted business clients, I interviewed five individuals who held high positions within three different companies two of which were human resources managers. In regards to the other three, I made contact with one local insurance company and interviewed the company’s main organizational psychologist (in this text also considered as a high-level manager), the organizational wellbeing manager and the occupational health manager in the company’s headquarters located in Bogotá. Interviewing the women of the mindfulness companies I aimed at acquiring knowledge about their personal backgrounds and stories and discuss what mindfulness was for them and how it was being constructed for/by them in Bogotá. Similarly, with the group of coaches, I was interested in hearing their personal stories and their own understanding and uses of mindfulness.

In conducting the interviews with the coaches and the women, I let them choose the meeting venue in order to make them feel more comfortable and open to socialize. Meeting them proved beneficial in many ways; I was able to observe what place and clothes they chose, for meeting with a stranger like me. For example, five of the women wore business outfits that contrasted with the sport and casual image they wanted to portray on their websites. Six of them selected hip cafés and expensive restaurants for us to meet. Only one of them invited me to her house, which was located on one of the wealthy sides of the city. This was in line with the idea of prestige and class divisions that I mentioned earlier which will be discuss in the following chapters.

By interviewing the high-level managers I wanted to form an initial understanding about how they perceived their own companies and their positions within them. I was also curious about the main topic of this story, what did they understand as mindfulness? Had they implemented it in their companies? These interviews were performed within their own business space and contrasted with the relaxed atmosphere I experienced with the seven women. The interactions were tense and rigid. For example, I realized that all of the high-level managers looked constantly at their watches seemingly wanting to end the meeting and

they seemed to be uneasy talking about mindfulness when their employees were in the room. The interviews actually revealed that only two out of the five high-level managers knew the English word *mindfulness*, and both of them felt unease because they thought others would relate this word to esoteric practices that were not accepted in the organizational realm. The three high-level managers that did not know about the concept lost interest once I used the translated version *consciencia plena*. On the other hand, three of the coaches knew about mindfulness as a meditative practice and thought of it as extremely related to their business area. They stated that they used mindfulness as part of their coaching program, but had to present it differently before their clients. They claimed that if they did not do this, high-level managers and employees would think of it as a concept that would not fit the business setting. I will return to discussing these conclusions in chapter 7.

To conclude, they were informed about the purpose of the thesis and a confidentiality agreement was signed. The agreement stated that the information was going to be used for academic purposes and that, if quoted; their names and the names of their companies were going to be changed in order to protect their identities.

It is important to note that not all of them agreed to sign it. Only two of the seven women accepted to sign the agreement, neither of the coaches signed it and only the three high-level managers from the insurance company requested it. The ones who did not sign it claimed to believe in my good faith. They told me it was not necessary for them to have a legal paper that would confirm our agreement. However, as I believed the information had to be treated with reserve, a verbal agreement was made and a hard copy of the agreement was left at their disposition. Finally, most of the interviews were conducted personally, nonetheless two of them took place via Skype and consequently the confidentiality agreement was sent via email.

3.5. Survey

After having met with the main and supporting characters of this story, I wanted to know, despite the lack of information that high-level managers had around the topic, the employees' point of view about the topic; were they open to practicing mindfulness? In order to engage in a dialogue with several employees and due to time constraints, I created an online survey that consisted of seventeen questions around the topic of *organizational wellbeing*. The general topic was decided after noticing that some of the high-level executives had hinted at the possibility of including mindfulness as part of their wellbeing programs.

The questions focused on finding out how non-managers (here defined as employees) understood organizational wellbeing, how they understood and enacted work breaks, and if they knew what mindfulness and meditation were. I was particularly curious about their answers towards their notion on *work breaks*, because as mentioned earlier, two out of the seven-mindfulness companies offer what they coin as *mindful work breaks*.

The survey was sent via Facebook to my personal contacts, taking as requirement that they worked for a national company at Bogotá and were Colombian citizens. It was open for responses from January 24, 2016 to February 24, 2016. No discriminations were made in terms of gender or age. Likewise, the survey aimed at receiving answers from employees within different fields and holding different positions at their companies. Initially it was sent to a group of fifty people, from which I received thirty responses, but due to incomplete answers two of them were not included. Hence, a total of twenty-eight answers were analyzed. Fifteen men and thirteen women answered the survey and the ages varied from 22 to 50. The twenty-eight employees answered in an extremely rigid manner when asked to define organizational wellbeing. Their answers seemed to be taken directly from a dictionary or even scripted. By this I mean that they used an extremely formal language to describe wellbeing, for example: “the set of activities that a company develops to create an appropriate environment for its employees” (Male participant # 22, survey results, January 29, 2016). This led me to believe that besides these rather generic constructs, their notion of organizational wellbeing was institutionally defined, rather than personally. It was as if they thought this was something they had to say because they were fulfilling their role as employees.

Further, when asked about the work breaks that national companies promote, twenty of them shared that their companies had them, but eleven of them did not participate. The results showed that the nine employees who claimed to participate seemed to feel uncomfortable doing so. There were three main reasons for this sensation. Firstly, they felt pressured by their managers to work instead of as they asserted, “wasting their time doing these exercises” (Female participant #24, survey results, February 4, 2016). Thus, although they seemed to have a personal intention to participate they did not want to contradict management. Secondly, they asserted they simply did not care about these breaks, as one of them put it “I really don’t care about that, I make good money and that’s all that matters” (Male participant # 12, survey results, January 25, 2016). Thirdly, it was also stated to be uncomfortable because, although their managers preferred that they focus on work, they forced them to participate because they needed to have participation lists checked off to show

in case of a governmental inspection. They needed to demonstrate that they were following national safety and security laws. The remaining eight argued that their companies did not promote such spaces, but they felt it was something they needed not to feel psychically and mentally sick.

Lastly, the survey showed that twenty-one of these employees did not know the English term *mindfulness*. Nineteen of them wrote, “I have no idea”, one of them wrote that it could be “to feel tired” (Female participant # 23, survey results, January 29, 2016). The last participant answered he thought it was a phone application (Male participant # 6, survey results, January 25, 2016). The remaining seven just wrote “atención plena” [complete attention]. In contrast, twenty-three of the participants knew what meditation was and wrote they would “be happy” to do meditation during work breaks. The remaining five argued not to like meditation because they thought it was esoteric and wrong. These results resonated well with what the high-level managers thought about the application of the concept within the organizational setting and I will return to it in chapter 7.

To conclude, it is necessary to highlight something in particular about the term *survey*. I am aware that the use of a survey turns problematic in the sense that, as Bourdieu claims “...a survey tends to isolate features- for example by dissociating the things said from the way they are said-...” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 174). In this case I knew that their construct of organizational wellbeing and work breaks had developed under different experiences and different companies. Hence, I could not place the answer under one particular context, and the answers turned the risk of “isolating” such concepts. For such reason, to gain a deeper understanding of some specific themes I held face-to-face interviews with two of these employees about these topics.

3.6. Autoethnography

When I became interested in doing a cultural analysis of mindfulness, I started to read about the topic and wanted to discover everything I thought someone was supposed to learn about mindfulness. After doing this I felt ready to discuss the topic, but according to the group of women I interviewed I was not! All of them shared that I would not be able to understand what mindfulness was if I did not experience it. How could I experience mindfulness? I had to position my body, emotions and perspective right at the center of a real life mindfulness experience in the city. Departing from myself and writing of my experience, is sometimes known as performing “autoethnography”.

Professor of ethnology Billy Ehn (2011) defines this technique as “...a method of cultural research where you use your own experiences as starting point or as examples of more general conditions. You are both the subject and the object of observation” (Ehn, 2011, p. 53). This means that I needed to know and analyze what they thought mindfulness was, by becoming their audience and connecting with the experience, and I also needed some personal preparation or training in mindfulness. Thus, I decided to begin a personal meditative practice that would allow me to understand this concept better. In order to do this I undertook a weekly online meditation program for three months (January-April, 2016), attended a one-hour informative session that one of the seven women offered and I was kindly invited by another of these women to take part in a two-day mindfulness seminar (20 hours).

Within the informative session the attendees, five women and I, were taught what mindfulness meant via the use of graphics, scientific studies and brief body exercises. This session took place in the building of a financial institution located in the wealthier part of the city. These types of strategies (the use of graphics, scientific information and the use of physical locations thought as “exclusive”) will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

The two-day seminar involved listening to several power point presentations, doing body exercises such as yoga, walking meditation, body scan (a form of meditation), and group exercises. This experience was a particular emotional part of the research. It required for me to connect deeply with myself, to be vulnerable in front of thirty-three people and to connect with them on a personal level. The other thirty-three people and I had access to each other’s emotional difficulties and current personal and professional problems. That is why, after a certain point in the session, I felt I was no longer just the “guest-researcher”, but I was becoming their friend. When this happens scholar Carolyn Ellis (2007) argues that the cultural analyst should follow what she refers to as “relational ethics”. This means realizing that I hold an important amount of private information about others and, if used incorrectly, could affect my interviewee’s lives in several ways (Ellis, 2007). Hence, when writing about this story I had to ask myself what type of information did I want to include and what were the professional boundaries I needed to consider. For these ethical reasons and to protect this group of people, I do not mention in detail any of their personal and professional issues in the story. Instead, I focus on the things we experienced together and on how we were guided by the instructor to understand what she meant by a *mindfulness experience*. In order to do this and, as the group remains in contact after the experience, I decided to ask for their permission to use our experiences to which they agreed^{iv}.

Finally, it is important to address my position as a Colombian researcher and how this affected my investigation. When referring to the interview process, Davies (2002) asserts, “the task of the interviewer is to... avoid unduly influencing [the] narrative. ...this is accomplished by adopting a neutral position...” (Davies, 2002, p.96). What the author means with this is that the cultural analyst should not hint the answers to the participants, nor should she guide them to a specific answer within an interview. Nevertheless, the neutrality that Davies highlights was obstructed by my origins. Being from the same country made the main and supporting characters believe that I understood what they were trying to say. For example, during the interviews they would not develop their ideas, but would end their sentences with the expression “well you know what I mean right?” This taken for granted notion was problematic because, although I believed I knew what their idea was, I could not be sure about their premise.

Moreover, companies did not seem interested in talking with a native student. Several of them argued they did not have time or that it was not interesting for them. After discussing this with an executive, she recommended to get past these issues by introducing myself as a researcher that lived and studied overseas. This proved to be beneficial both for the treatment I received and the amount of interviews I was able to conduct. The companies seemed to be more open and interested in talking with someone that was studying abroad. They treated me differently and felt intrigued by my position as a traveler and my thesis. For example, some even thought that I did not know Bogotá and delivered detailed explanations about the simplest things to me, such as street directions and interesting places for me to visit. Further, in the case of the high-level managers from the insurance company, they made sure to change their rhythm of speech into a low-paced Spanish. They did this so I, the researcher “from a different country”, would understand them. Seeing the astonishing effects of reframing myself this way, I strategically employed this tactic in order to position myself, still as much as possible, within a neutral space that would not affect the outcome of the interviews.

4. The story gets a set of theoretical perspectives

Soon after hearing the side of the story from the main and supporting characters I knew that, as a cultural analyst, I could connect the points by framing their story within some theoretical perspectives. Likewise, I realized that the story belonged to what I will refer as a *cultural system*. This section explains the term *cultural system* and illustrates the significance

of the theoretical perspectives from Mary Douglas, Judith Butler, Erving Goffman and Victor Turner.

4.1. A word on the term *cultural system*

After having conducted the methodological task I realized that the main characters, the seven women of this story of mindfulness, which I saw unfolding, were generating a specific order and understanding about what mindfulness was, and how they wanted to present it to their supporting characters, the high-level managers. That is why in order to refer to this group of women I have taken Clifford Geertz' definition of a *cultural system* as my point of departure. Geertz (1983) explains that a cultural system is,

....an interpretation of the immediacies of experiences historically constructed and...subjected to historically defined standards of judgment. It can be questioned, disputed, affirmed, develop, formalized, contemplated even taught, and it can vary dramatically from one people to the next. (1983, p. 76)

Although in Geertz's case he is referring to "common sense" as a cultural system, which is an intangible concept, I observe the group of women as a structure that has defined certain guidelines surrounding mindfulness and its application in business settings. This means that they have created their own "interpretation of the immediacies of experience" (Geertz 1983). Further, I believe they are creating the historicity that Geertz highlights when translating this idea into the organizational realm of the city. Further, as their translation of mindfulness is part of many others, I consider the term "cultural system" to be appropriate to this case as, I highlighted in the contextualization section, mindfulness can be interpreted, questioned, and formalized in its Buddhist, non-Buddhist, scientific and organizational form amongst others.

4.2. Order

One of the central themes that I discovered and wish to discuss further is the set of rules and order that the mindfulness companies were in the process of creating. To do this, I followed Mary Douglas's ideas on dirt and pollution. Her main argument is that whenever pollution is present, or is thought of as dirty, it is because it is disturbing the expected order of things (Douglas, 1966). Her premise is that pollution and its opposite cleanliness function

as a means to structure the world around us. They become excluding forces that organize and classify what is accepted.

Douglas brings into attention that pollution rules reinforce the moral gaze. She argues that morality is an elusive concept that depends on the symmetrical and asymmetrical interactions between individuals. According to her, morality does not entirely achieve the purpose of generating an order whereas pollution rules do (Douglas, 1966, p.131). In this context, I take Douglas's lead and aim at explaining how although sometimes mindfulness is thought of as something esoteric and filled with sparks of Buddhist morality, (as highlighted by Wilson, 2014); mysticism and morality are only one part of the story. Douglas's theory is pivotal to understanding how what these women refer to as moral or ethical actions are in fact a set of pollution and cleanliness rules that help them maintain an organizational and inner-work code. This code is set to help them produce a specific public image amongst their clients.

From Douglas's theory I specifically draw on what she refers to as "internal lines" and "external boundaries". Broadly, internal lines can be understood as the set of internal rules that a cultural system creates and accepts as their main functioning device (Douglas, 1966, p.131). These rules are supposed to be respected and followed. External boundaries are the ones that the society outside the cultural system creates. Due to the fact that the external boundaries are shaped by a higher social structure the internal lines become dependent and affected by them (Douglas, 1966, p.115). To the reader, the above should be understood as the way in which the Buddhist background of mindfulness (the external boundaries) affects the way in which the rules of the mindfulness companies and their owners (the cultural system and its internal lines) are shaped. Hence, in examining both concepts through the lenses of Douglas's theory I aim at having a critical discussion of "the borders" of mindfulness in Bogotá. I do so based on Douglas's claim that one has to look at the demarcations that societies make amongst concepts; because it is within them that they intend to create the so call order (Douglas, 1966, p.4).

4.3. Gender performativity

As the story unfolded in me, with me and around me, I found that gender stereotypes played an important role in it. In order to better grasp how, I use gender theorist Judith Butler's (1990) writings on how gender is "performed and enacted" according to a general notion on what gender "should be". The "should" relates to what patriarchal societies determine as being proper for men and women, and how these societies delineate how and by

whom the masculine and feminine qualities should be enacted (Butler, 1990, p.35). Butler refers to this as “the heterosexual matrix”. Accordingly, the heterosexual matrix is shaped when a male undertakes the enactment of “masculinity” and a female undertakes the enactment of “womanness”. In defining gender and questioning the legitimacy of this matrix, Butler (1990) argues that one should not understand gender as a stable and pre-established notion that has been granted from birth. Gender is not a “natural” idea or something that one “is”; individuals do not “make” gender, rather gender makes them through “repetitive acts” and “gender performativity” (Butler, 1990). In simpler terms, Butler claims that there is no owner of gender, instead it is the *performativity* of several actions, body movements, language and manners that construct *genderness*. Then, for Butler, there is no “I am a woman” or “I am a man”, but “womanness is doing me”. This “doing me” is produced so the person can be part of the heterosexual matrix and the predominant construct of the patriarchal society. Butler’s theoretical perspective is relevant to this story of mindfulness because it allows me to analyze and exemplify how the cultural system markets mindfulness as an enactment of gender and how business executives are supposed to understand this concept.

4.4. Performances

I believe it is appropriate to discuss the type of performances that are taking place in order to make the translation of mindfulness possible, as well as discussing the front stage that is being developed within such process. In order to do so, I use sociologist Erving Goffman’s theatrical approach. His theory on “impression management” delves into how interactions are shaped to respect the social moral order of society. These interactions are generated by the self-representations that individuals produce when in the presence of others and consequently the ones equally shaped by these others. In other terms, an individual (the performer) “performs” as is expected of him; he then expects others (the ones who are observing the performance and become the audience) to respect this performance. Through this process, people are able to shape an understanding of a particular situation, which, at the same time, allows them to act according to what they think is appropriate (Goffman, 1956, p.3). What is appropriate or not is also determined by the place in which these interactions occur. This is what Goffman refers to as the physical setting of the “front stage” (Goffman, 1956, p.17). This stage might also determine how the performer and the audience are expected to look in terms of clothing and general appearance, the “personal front” (Goffman, 1956, p.14). I use Goffman here to illustrate how some of the women in the cultural system

perform in front of their audience, the online and offline settings that they use for their performance, and the type of message they intend to send to their business clients.

4.5. Liminality

In order to explain what a *mindfulness experience* is and how it is presented to high-level managers and to executives and employees in Bogotá, I draw on the analytical perspective of anthropologist Victor Turner and his definition of the “liminal” stage within a “rite de passage” (Turner 1964). The central aim of a *rite de passage* is for individuals to go through a state of transformation that allows them to acquire a new, in Turner’s words, “state” in society (Turner, 1964, p.47). In that scenario, the liminal stage is the one in which people undergo a set of steps, practices and rituals in order to achieve a desired change. For Turner (1964) this process has certain characteristics, for example, the liminal stage defines the ritual setting making, on the one hand, authorities, that is to say, the individuals in charge of leading the process, and on the other, what Turner refers as “the liminal personae”, the ones undergoing the process (Turner, 1964, p.50). During the ritualistic experience the liminal personae are guided to receive information that their guides provide, and to reflect upon it and accept it. It is by doing so that they achieve the desired transformation (Turner, 1964, p.53).

In this analysis I take his concepts to describe and analyze the specific interactions at the two-day mindfulness seminar that I participated in. This means that I discuss how the instructor becomes the authority, the methods that she used, the ritualistic experience that the liminal personae underwent and the outcomes of the experience.

In the section below the story continues by introducing the reader to the women that brought together this thesis. The reader will hear their voices and, with the help of the theoretical perspectives, I will guide her/him into understanding how mindfulness is translated by this cultural system.

5. Setting the rules

*“Rather than stopping to chop definitions, we should try to compare people’s views about man’s destiny and place in the universe”
(Mary Douglas, 1966, p. 29)*

“You do not teach mindfulness because it is trending, you teach it because you are ready” (Monica, Transcendental, personal communication January 22, 2016)

In Bogotá I observed how mindfulness companies created an order, a cultural system. In order to talk about these companies, I must address the women behind them. This story depends on them; they are its main characters. They are: Monica who owns the company that I will refer to as Trascendental [Transcendental], Patricia owner of Esencia Despierta [Waking Essence], Andrea the representative for an international group that shares mindfulness with people around the globe, Tatiana, the owner of Construye [Building], Laura the marketing director for Arcangeles, [Archangels], Viviana from Centro Sanador [Healing Center] and Diana the owner of Empresa de Mindfulness [Mindfulness Enterprise]. Some of these voices will be heard more often than others, but the reader is to remember that they all belong to the story of the translation of mindfulness traveling into Bogotá.

5.1. Rule number one: Be on a quest

On the day I held the interview with Patricia, the owner of Esencia Despierta, she seemed very agitated, her movements were extremely rapid, her eyes were wide open and she was talking very fast. It seemed as if she wanted me to receive a lot of information. When I asked her if she thought that companies and high-level managers in the city were interested in hiring mindfulness services, she looked at me, paused and shared,

I think that the first question that we need to ask is not about the companies, but about ourselves, are we going to be the guides of this people? Can they trust us? To guide people, you need to be prepared. (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016)

What did this statement mean? At a first glance it seemed as the trusting that Patricia referred to had a personal and emotional connotation. But one has to know her story to understand that to her “taking advantage of someone” was serious. She shared that after having worked for many years as a teacher, she realized that she did not want that life for herself. She was feeling sick and stressed and thought her bosses were taking advantage of her. She told me it was not good for her wellbeing to stay in that situation. Thus she quit her job and decided to spend her time learning yoga. In 2013, while practicing yoga, she was first introduced to the concept of mindfulness. She argued that mindfulness could not have come at a better time of her life. She explained that after having started what she refers as her “spiritual and personal transformation” (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016) mindfulness made her feel renewed, happier and her life changed. She highlighted that this

transformation was not over; she was in constant personal training because she needed to “work on herself”. Only after three years of this process did she feel ready to share mindfulness with others.

Patricia was very clear in emphasizing that if a person were to offer mindfulness services they would *need* to live and be trained in mindfulness the same way she had. Which, as she expressed, meant going through tremendous personal change and acquiring a different perspective on life. To her, this sort of renewal was a requirement because she thought of mindfulness as an emotionally complex practice. The person taking on such a practice would need a personal connection with it. She illustrated this by telling me how, on her first mindfulness session, one of her participants started crying after the first 10 minutes. She claimed, “that’s when it hit me, this is something very deep and emotional...and that’s when I decided to create a personal program” (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016). Saying this, she seemed to imply that mindfulness could not be mass-produced by a business. In fact, Patricia led me to think that this type of preparation was related to a *personal quest*.

Before continuing, I would like to point out something about the word *quest*. After hearing Patricia’s statement and, as the reader shall observe in the following paragraphs, I assumed the word *quest* rather than *search*, would define what the story of mindfulness was about. Czarniawska (1997) explains that a search is rather limiting. In speaking of the identity making process of Swedish companies in the public sector, she asserts that if one thinks of this process as a search then one “...assumes that such an identity already exists and is waiting to be discovered” (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 160). However, “A quest ...never ends; it alternates between striving for resolution and immediate relaunching, between the certainty required for action and the demolition of certainty that results from reflection, between the very human dreams of sitting still and moving forward fast” (Czarniawska, 1997, p.160).

I take her words to mean that a quest is flexible, and unlimited (Czarniawska, 1997), and much as her definition on traveling ideas (Czarniawska, 1996) a quest is constantly renewed and transformed. In a quest a person sets out on a journey that does not necessarily care about the final goal, but it is more interested in the actual process and on how to manage this process. In this case, I would like for the reader to take this word into consideration to understand what, for them, is indeed a quest.

Following the story, I became intrigued by the idea of the personal requirements that seemingly were needed in order to “do” mindfulness with and for others. In my following interviews, the story of Patricia’s quest reoccurred. For example, Monica, the owner of Transcendental, shared that she was a lawyer that had started to practice yoga in her free time

in order to find emotional wellbeing. However, she felt that this was not entirely fulfilling for her. Instead, she decided to become a fulltime yoga instructor and after a few years she was introduced to mindfulness (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016).

For her, that point was definitive because, she says, it allowed her to develop a deeper and emotional understanding of her own life; she established that living mindfully was about connecting with what she claimed was her inner self and with spirituality. Monica also let me know that she felt this process was not near finished; she needed to continue her personal process and live mindfully everyday if she were to be able to share her knowledge and experience with others. She argued that this was necessary because she did not want to “hurt” anyone (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016).

According to Monica, the process of doing/learning/sharing mindfulness involved a lot of personal and professional ethics. It was not to be understood as something one stumbles upon, nor something that one does, but something that one “becomes” over time. When speaking about the possibility of people, who had not undergone such quest, teaching mindfulness, she made sure to sum up this premise by saying “one does not teach mindfulness because it is trending, but because one is ready” (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016). In her eyes, it was extremely wrong to teach mindfulness without knowing what it really was and it would be a “malpractice” that would put participants at risk.

Then, I got to talk to Diana, the owner of Empresa de Mindfulness. Diana shared how she had got to know about mindfulness and how her quest began. After a very successful career, Diana felt something was wrong. “I kept thinking about moving up the professional ladder, but then I realize I did not want that, so I quit” (Diana, personal communication, February, 11, 2016). After quitting she started studying spiritual matters relating to her quest and after a while decided to take one year to practice professional dancing. In one of her dance classes she found mindfulness. “A few years ago I was at the studio and I saw this poster promoting a meditation class and I went...and it was there I tasted that which people call mindfulness”, said Diana (Diana, personal communication, February, 11, 2016). Her expression “tasted” actually meant that she had a brief encounter with mindfulness at a meditative session, which she felt did not completely reveal to her what mindfulness was. That is why she explained the need to refine what she referred to as a mindful way of living. Which, according to her, meant being conscious and emotionally connected with every moment.

I found this story to be the same in all seven cases, women who at one point of their lives were successful business executives, now were on a personal quest due to their intention to live in what they defined as mindfulness. At the same time, they all thought that mindfulness needed to be taught by someone who followed their definitions on mindfulness. A pattern was starting to emerge. Their explanations suggested that I was facing some kind of order. This “pattern” may be looked at through the theoretical notions of cleanliness and pollution that Mary Douglas offers. If the reader recalls, Douglas asserts that every cultural system^v or subsystem develops a specific order that needs to be followed. When things are not within such order, then they are polluted, or wrong (Douglas, 1966). In this story, the order of the cultural system was forged around a personal quest that was presented by what seemed to be a moral code, but in practice this emerged as a solidification of pollution and cleanliness beliefs. With this I mean that for them “the order” or “the clean thing” to consider around mindfulness, was to think of it as having guided them to shape their companies, not the other way around. The opposite, wrong and polluted course of action was teaching, or sharing mindfulness without having embarked on a personal quest. Hence, rule number one in this cultural system, for one to have a mindfulness company, one has to be on a personal quest.

In order for these women to make the polluted “disappear”, they have to create guidelines to support and delineate the order they expect out of mindfulness (Douglas, 1966). They need these types of strategies because what they present as a moral code can often be “fragile”; Douglas explains this fragility by claiming that while a moral code often accepts certain deviations from the rules, pollution rules are not as tolerant. They are strict, set and respected above all and that is why they are used when order is required (Douglas, 1966, p.134). The reader and I already know that what is presented as an alleged moral code by these women is based on their personal quest, but how are they going to manifest their “inner lines”? That is to say, how are they going to portray their need to keep the cleanliness within their system? How are they going to include and exclude other women or people when it comes to their understanding around mindfulness? Well, there is something I have yet to share, as from the reader’s point of view it might seem as the interviews above were conducted without any problems or deviations. However, that is not entirely the case. There were two opportunities in which my own experience with mindfulness made pollution beliefs evident.

Let me return to when I first meet Diana to explain this. I remember feeling very nervous on the way to the café in which I was going to meet her. I had read about her wide

experience of mindfulness and about her affiliation to a renowned New Age center that worked with mindfulness, so I did not want to make any mistakes or seem unprepared. However, my nervousness was only exacerbated when, as soon as I took a seat, the first thing she asked me was if I was a practitioner of mindfulness. I told her I had recently started to meditate, but I was still a beginner. Somehow Diana seemed disappointed and, looking directly into my eyes, she said

From my perspective, talking about mindfulness is just babbling, because that is exactly what mindfulness is not about...mindfulness is not something you can trap in a concept or just read about...mindfulness is about being here, in the moment... if you are going to talk about mindfulness you have to experience it, otherwise you will talk about mindfulness, but you will not understand it...but well I guess you are meditating, that's a start. (Diana, personal communication, February, 11, 2016)

I felt very inadequate after hearing her answer and observing the discomfort on her face. I did not know what to say next or how to act, but was this a setback in the interview? I do not consider it to be one. Instead, this first encounter and her disappointment exemplify the pollution beliefs of this cultural system. Right from the beginning of the interview she led me to understand that our conversation made no sense because I was not on a quest myself. I had not taken a detour in my professional life to acquire experience of mindfulness, consequently I could not be “one of them”.

This did not happen just once. I had a similar experience with Monica. At one point in our conversation I made a mistake regarding an important mindfulness concept. Her facial reaction and silence guided me to feel in the same way as I did in the café with Diana. Although Diana and Monica had agreed to speak with me, and we were sitting next to each other, as soon as they realized that something was wrong, it was as if they felt forced to continue a senseless conversation with someone they felt would not get what they meant. A certain distance and difference was created between us on each end of the table at which we were seated. I am not referring to the physical distance, but the distance that they made sure that I understood lay between what was right and what was wrong in these scenarios.

But what was wrong? It was I. Douglas's theory can be used to explain how come I was wrong. She argues, “a polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone” (Douglas, 1966, p. 114). So, by letting Diana

know that I was just at the early stage of practicing mindfulness meditation and by using the wrong terms in the conversation with Monica, I had crossed the line that Douglas mentions. I had, quite unintentionally, intended to cross the border between the ones who belong to the cultural system and thus obey the internal line (rule number one) and the ones, who just like me, were not. In other words, when in front of them, I was polluted.

There was one case in which the distance that they wanted to create between the polluted ones and the clean ones was evident even before my face-to-face meeting with one of the women. This allowed me to understand the impact of their pollution beliefs. In pursuing my interest to get into contact with all of these women I called Andrea. Andrea is the representative of an international group that teaches mindfulness. When she answered the phone I told her that I was investigating mindfulness and wanted to request an interview with her. After hearing my proposal, she said “ok, but let me know if I understood it correctly, you are a practitioner right?” (Andrea, personal communication, February 16, 2016). With some hesitation I gave an affirmative answer that was accompanied by a relief sound on the other end of the line. This was followed by the sentence “Oh great, ok...so what is it that you want?” (Andrea, personal communication, February 16, 2016)

What would have happened if I had answered that I was not a practitioner? I can only speculate; from her relief I assume that a negative answer would not have allowed me to meet her in person. Why exactly? According to Douglas, there are harmful consequences when others consider that you are polluted. She asserts, “when action that is held to be morally wrong does not provoke moral indignation, belief in the harmful consequences of a pollution can have the effect of aggravating the seriousness of the offence...” (Douglas, 1966, p.134). What Douglas’s quote means here is that, although these women and here Andrea, thought that speaking, teaching and sharing mindfulness without being on a personal quest and an active practitioner was morally wrong they still needed a strategy to make this obvious to outsiders, by going as far as emphasizing its harmful consequences.

In the phone call case, I did not provide Andrea with any evidence of whether I knew about this wrongness and its consequences. This made her doubt of my own awareness of the moral indignation I could be causing. She needed to manifest this in some way, so she used her question as a strategic means to point out that, at that point, it did not matter if I knew that a non-practitioner who wanted to talk about the application of mindfulness within the organizational realm was essentially wrong. What was important for me to know was that I would not get into physical contact with her if there was a possibility of me being polluted, and consequently jeopardizing her own state of cleanliness. This might also explain the

attitudes of Diana and Monica answering me at the cafés. Their faces and words changed, not only because I was polluted, but also because I was polluting them.

To summarize, the cultural system made clear that if I an individual was not on a personal quest s/he could not join them. As Diana asserted, the ones who were not on the path were just “babbling” and there were harmful consequences if one did not obey rule number one. Moreover, this rule also transcended into the business setting as Monica and Patricia mentioned that if an inexperienced or polluted person were to teach mindfulness, they would damage another human being. Hence, it was clean to be on a quest, whilst it was polluted to address mindfulness and not living it.

5.2. Rule number two: You can use mindfulness only if you are on a personal quest, and most of all, if the other members of the group validate your quest.

5.2.1. The system above us

Douglas (1966) explains that the external boundaries in any cultural system are the ones that are shaped by the society in which such system lays. These boundaries provide stability and support to the internal system. She claims,

The idea of society is a powerful image. It is potent in its own right to control or to stir men to action. ...Its outlines contain power to reward conformity and repulse attack. There is energy in its margins and unstructured areas. For symbols of society, any human experience of structures, margins or boundaries is ready to hand. (1966, p.115)

What Douglas means by this is that the cornerstone of any cultural system is the idea that something greater exists and this “something” makes everything function according to “a plan”. In short, she claims that there must be something above us to reassure us of our own existence and doings. This means that in order to understand the internal line that was set within rule number one, one needs to examine the whole context, as the internal is interdependent, and even based on the happenings of the external. In my cases, the inner lines and the pollution beliefs of rule number one depended upon the historicity of mindfulness. As well as what they claimed was the respect for ancient Buddhist traditions.

Thus, giving continuity to the story, in the interview with Patricia, she was very specific in regards to the training part of the process. She told me that if a person was to offer mindfulness services they also *needed* professional training. In order to do “what was needed”, she went on a worldwide learning experience that covered France and India amongst other countries. During this experience she stayed at Buddhist monasteries and trained with well-known institutions and mindfulness “personalities”^{vi} such as Master Zen Thich Nhat Hanh and an organization named “Mindful Schools” (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016). Similarly, Monica claimed that after having heard of mindfulness she became very interested and ordered books on the Internet to learn about the topic. But then she said that she did “what one needs to do”. Just as Patricia, Monica initiated a quest to learn and train in mindfulness. She was trained in the tradition of Master Zen Thich Nhat Hanh and went to the United States to receive training within MBRS (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016).

Amongst this group of women, it was common to find that they had had contact with the Buddhists teachings of Master Zen Thich Nhat Hanh and that they had received training within the MBRS program. Nevertheless, they placed the Buddhist training first because they argued that it allowed them to truly connect with their consciousness. As Patricia asserts “some of the mindfulness training programs think of mindfulness as complete attention [atención plena] whereas Thich Nhat Hanh focuses on conscious awareness [consciencia plena]...and that’s different you know?” (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016). That was completely different for them, they explained that to pay attention did not involve an emotional connection with the surroundings, but to be conscious was to achieve a deep level of connection with one’s “self” and others. Which according to their beliefs, helped to attain a wide and “loving” perspective towards daily life. In the business area, they translated this importance and made it visible for their audience.

To mention one example, during the two-day seminar that I attended, the teacher made sure to reinforce how the Western view of the world was essentially mistaken. She argued that the “Western system” reinforced the idea of treating everyone as if they did not matter. It made “Westerners” feel constant stress, it shaped an unnecessary division of time between work and home, and it reinforced gender differences. Instead of following this system, she suggested one should follow the mindfulness model that Thich Nhat Hanh proposes. These teachings include shaping one’s spiritual path, initiating a personal quest, working on developing kind relationships, and being in contact with nature (This experience will be further discussed in chapter 8) (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

In this context, Douglas definition of the external boundaries is useful: “the idea of society is a powerful image. It is potent in its own right to control or to stir men to action” (Douglas, 1966, p.115). The powerful image that Douglas mentions is in the women’s case the Buddhist system. The system that was “above them” allowed them to revalidate their personal quest as the “right” way to do mindfulness. Because, in their eyes, the Buddhist system did not aim at damaging human kind and this was in line with what they thought about mindfulness. This validation had an impact within and outside the group and demanded that anyone interested in offering mindfulness services or having a company of such type follow, to some extent, Buddhist notions.

5.2.2. Being versus using: the group’s approval

How did these women achieve the inner group validation of their understanding of mindfulness? Andrea’s explanation of how she thought about “unprepared” individuals hints at an answer to this matter. She claimed,

If someone teaches mindfulness but is not conscious it is like someone who teaches cooking because they have all the recipes, but not because they are chefs...but that’s happening and what can I do? But anyhow that process will purify itself with time...I know it. (Andrea, personal communication, February 25, 2016)

What Andrea meant by her answer is that it was one thing *being* mindfulness and another *using* mindfulness and in this scenario there was no two before one; I mean there was no such thing as a *mindfulness teacher* without a process of *becoming a mindful individual* that involved spiritual training in Buddhism. Furthermore, although Andrea reflected, in what could seem like a disheartened tone, “what can I do?” as if she had no control over the exclusionary force of these boundaries. She made sure to share with me that if people were not able to take rule number one serious, then they would not appreciate their professionalization and *use* of mindfulness training tools for business purposes. Here, when telling me about an individual she had attempted to work with, she shared her thoughts on this topic,

We started to work together, but it did not work, that person wanted something from the aseptic perspective that Jon Kabat-Zinn’s program offers and I was not going to

dishonor the monks in such a way, after all...it's *their* movement. ([my emphasis]Andrea, personal communication, February 25, 2016)

Note how she refers to the American program as something that is being offered while, the expression “their movement” indicates that mindfulness is something that the Buddhist system owns. Thus, the individual that Andrea is referring to is wrong (polluted) because he is taking something that does not belong to him. In their eyes, this person would always remain as the “fellow who has the recipe”, but he would never be a “chef”. This was not the only time this was pointed out to me. The other women referred to a specific case in which a mindfulness company and its owner were not thought of as being part of this cultural system because she had not undertaken a personal quest. This other company was thought of as an outcast, a threat and thus polluted. They asserted that the owner was only using mindfulness, but knew nothing about it. They told me how they had previous contact with her, but now had decided to ignore her. Their only hope was that she would not hurt anyone and that their business clients would realize that she was not offering “real mindfulness”. They asserted that they wanted to let “life take care of it” or as Andrea put it let “the process purify itself”. However, the mere fact of ignoring the other company and casting it as an outsider was an exclusionary act.

Here it is possible to see how these women created an external boundary that was based on what they claimed was the cleanliness of Buddhist mentality. As Douglas expresses it (1966), these “framings” are what keep these women inside a certain “order”. They facilitate and reinforce prescribed understandings, assist, if not create, the shaping of specific constructs. Within a larger context, these framings are thought of as essential in the meaning-making process of their cultural system. However, these boundaries are not invulnerable, they do have weak spots. Douglas (1966) claims that one of the dangers is the generation of “...internal contradiction[s], when some of the basic postulates are denied by other basic postulates, so that at certain points the system seems to be at war with itself” (Douglas, 1966, pp.123-124). This means that if someone that has been accepted in the cultural system were acting in contradiction with these beliefs, the inner workings of the system would face chaos. Douglas’s notion is relevant here because none of these women wanted to see or perceive that there were any internal contradictions in terms of the training process, all of them wanted to keep their order, the cleanliness. To provide an example, Andrea told me about the story of one of the other six women who had been accepted as part of the cultural system, but had

broken the rules. As this was problematic for the workings of their system, the situation had to be amended. Andrea explains,

She did the training in MBSR and then she went to Plum Village [the Buddhist monastery of Master Zen Thich Nhat Hanh], she did it backwards, but she always goes to the retreats with us because she knows that this is the way to go. (Andrea, personal communication, February 25, 2016)

Her reasoning, and the process that she refers to, is what Douglas might call a “rite of reconciliation”. Such rites “...enact the burial of the wrong have the creative effect of all ritual. They can help to erase memory of the wrong and encourage the growth of [the] right feeling” (Douglas, 1966, p.137). By joining them in the retreats and making clear that she was not creating any internal chaos, the other woman was erasing the memory of her own wrong doing. She was eliminating the fact that, at some point, she was perceived as polluted and that she was risking the definition that they wanted to attach to mindfulness.

Based on this assumption, it is possible to indicate that for this cultural system, mindfulness was about *being* and providing a tangible validation of this being. When the validation was successfully made, the other women would catalogue this as being a “truthful” translation of mindfulness. On the contrary, a mindfulness company became polluted, uncontrollable and out of “what mindfulness was”, if the person behind the company was not able to adhere to the ritual. In what follows I introduce the last rule of this cultural system. Rule number three is: we are not businesswomen; we are women who help others.

5.3. Rule number three: we are not businesswomen; we are women who help others.

Before explaining rule number three, I believe it is beneficial to integrate another analytical view. Goffman’s theory of stage performances will complement the analysis of the order that is being generated here. I also note that I am aware that the theoretical combination of Douglas and Goffman could be seen as problematic as they differ in their takes on how the world is organized. For Goffman the theatrical conceptualization is vital in order to understand how social interactions communicate and validate the social statuses of individuals. These interactions are attached to right and duties; people become readable signs during their performances. While, as it was discussed earlier, for Douglas the rights and

duties only acquire complete form when a pollution rule supports them. This difference in their approaches has been problematized by Douglas herself (1966, p. 101). Nevertheless, I argue that Douglas' and Goffman's approaches can be used simultaneously in order to understand both the order of the system and the communicative feature of performances. That is to say, in analyzing rule three I do not wish to disregard the order that this system is acquiring, but I wish to complement the explanation by integrating the theatrical features of these performances.

Back to a special scene within this story that can be understood with Goffman's perspective. He claims that a scene or interaction is divided between front stage, performances, performers and audience. Here the scene is a hip café in the wealthier part of Bogotá, which is what Goffman refers to as the physical "setting" of the front stage in any performance (Goffman, 1956, p.13). This physical setting is what normally creates an atmosphere around the performances that are enacted within it. The sunny morning, live music and smell of café made the atmosphere of the place feel calm and casual. Why was I there? I was at that café having breakfast with Monica and we were playing our roles.

I was playing my part of the interviewer interested in Monica's company, which made me her audience. By the same token, my position made her have control over the situation and, as Goffman (1956) argues, "...pla[y] the more dramatically prominent part in it, or se[t] the pace and direction [of the conversation]..." (Goffman, 1956, p.58). Goffman's quote means that as Monica was the focus of attention and the one who was allowed to talk longer, she was playing the role of the main performer. These were both roles that required effort, I needed to appear interested in her and her story, and she needed to give me the performance I was expecting. That is to say, to share with me her background and process.

Playing my part, I asked Monica about her marketing strategies and the expectations she had about the future of mindfulness in Bogotá. This is when she first felt the need to clarify an important topic I was dismissing:

Natalia: What kind of strategies does your company use?

[Long silence, Monica frowns her eyebrows and looks confused]

Monica: I am not really thinking about that [laughs loudly]...I don't know I feel that the work that one does with mindfulness is so deep that the only thing one has to do is to do it right. Besides, I am not a businesswoman, you know? I mean *I have the company, but I am not a businesswoman* ...I don't waste my energy thinking about

how to beat the competition. [My emphasis] Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016)

What was happening here? Goffman emphasizes that within any performance the performer has to present a personal front that corroborates the position that he holds within a specific system (Goffman, 1956, pp. 14-15). This means that Monica's speech and bodily movements were in fact trying to articulate how she wanted me to understand her position within the cultural system. How did she do this? Goffman asserts that this can be done through features such as physical gestures and different types of action such as a polite or hostile "manner", that according to him serve "...to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play..." (Goffman, 1956, p. 15). In this scene, by frowning her eyebrows and giving me a gaze, that made her look confused, she was telling me that I was out of place. I was misinterpreting what she wanted to signify in front of me, her audience. By laughing unusually loud, she used her expressions as a "manner" to communicate that my question was inappropriate for someone like her. This was further emphasized when she asserted, "I don't waste my time thinking about how to beat the competition." I interpret this statement as Monica wanting to convey to me that to her a businesswoman is someone who is trying to win someone over. She wanted her audience to understand that she was different; Monica could never *be* business, for business "wanted something out of something" and she did not. Moreover, by claiming, "I have a company, but I am not a businesswoman" she indicated her intention to distance both her persona and her company from the idea of business. In this case her "front" and manner helped her reinforce her position within the inner lines of their cultural system, to *play the part*.

This was not the only example of this "roleplay" that I came across; I had similar experiences during some of the interviews with the other women. Five^{vii} of them played the same part as Monica; they would remain silent or appear shocked when I assumed they were businesswomen. This was followed by them correcting my mistake and arguing that they were "facilitators", or "helpers". They would do so because, as Diana asserted, according to them, "businesses were cold places where there was a lot of pain and the human aspect was lost" (Diana, personal communication, February, 11, 2016). Further, as Patricia asserted, they would argue that businesses made people "go crazy" because they forced people to lead meaningless lives (Patricia, personal communication, March 10, 2016).

Why did they want me to understand this? Being their audience, their assertions and physical reactions meant that, for them, being catalogued as a business was the opposite of

what they were doing. They did not associate business with helping, for them business was about ambition, competition, or the need for something else. Observing this as a cultural analyst, I understood this to mean that if these women were to obey rule number one and number two (being on a personal quest characterized by Buddhists traditions), they could not instantly translate their work in monetary terms, especially not in front of their audience.

Moreover, the fact that most of the women had quitted successful business careers in order to follow their personal quest reinforced this performance. It implied that they had resolved to quit a “meaningless life” in order to embark on a spiritual path which, in their eyes, corresponded with a “meaningful life”. Hence, the performance of this cultural system was to be perceived as something that was above the “cold” and “inhuman” nature of a corporation, perhaps, something higher and sublime. The cultural system was then shaping what Goffman refers to as “mystification” (Goffman 1956).

Goffman explains “mystification” as a process that is employed by performers in order to generate a certain “social distance” between them and the audience (Goffman, 1956, p.44-46). In his view, mystification evokes the intention that the performer has to control the situation and delineate his act. In order to do this, Goffman asserts that the performer may employ certain actions that evoke an aura of mystery around him. This aura is to be taken as something special, something perhaps unachievable by the audience. Something they can dream about, but not have (Goffman, 1956, p.44). Hence, by “mystifying,” the performer communicates to his audience that he is different from the rest. He distances himself from others. This distance and differentiation should be respected and acted upon based on certain specifications (Goffman, 1956, p. 44)

Following Goffman’s explanation, the distance that they were creating was intended to tell the audience that although they had companies to *do* business they *were not* business. During the interview with Andrea I had the opportunity to talk with Sebastian, Andrea’s associate, here he illustrates this mystification, as he speaks about the business world:

Western culture has prioritized the patriarchal mode of production. I mean it reinforces instrumental rationality, it makes people think that they can treat themselves as things...and that’s where productivity, competition and profit are born...all of which are attached to the business world. (Sebastian, personal communication, Feb. 25, 2016)

His statement reinforces the differentiation between *being within* the business world and *helping* the business world that the cultural system is creating, but he also brings into

consideration that which was analyzed in rule number two: the external boundaries. The idea that the Eastern system is above them while the Western is not makes it seem as if they cannot be regulated by it. Perhaps, through this mystification they were also presenting themselves as foreigners from a faraway land. By being foreigners they would bring different and interesting new constructs to share with their Western audience, which would make them special (I discuss the reasons and implications on presenting “foreigner” notions to the “Western audience” in chapter 7 and 8). Sebastian’s argument also brings up another important aspect of mystification. According to him, they were outside of the “patriarchal mode of production”. If I look at it through Douglas’s concepts, the patriarchal mode can also be seen as dirty and a concept that they did not want to be associated with. As he saw it, this mode did not adjust to the rules and mystifying process they were intending to emanate. However, I will not dwell further on this topic here, as I discuss it in more depth in the next chapter. Before going on I will summarize what I have tried to illustrate.

In this chapter I have noted that the mindfulness companies are developing a cultural system around internal rules that make them perceive what is good (clean) or what is bad (dirty) to do. Rule number one (1) was perceived as the necessity to be on a personal quest. The women found it to be fundamental to be on a personal, spiritual or transcendental quest in life since this was the only way they thought people could comprehend mindfulness and teach it. Hence, for rule number one, the polluted act would be *not* to be on a quest, and thus damaging their internal order and their image in front of their audience.

Rule number two (2) was highlighted as; you can use mindfulness only if you follow rule number one, and if the other members of the group validate your quest. If a mindfulness company did not comply with this, then it would not be acknowledged as part of the work ideal they wanted to portray. Thus a company breaking these rules would be ignored or referred to as being/doing something quite different than mindfulness. Finally, rule number three (3); we are *not* businesswomen; we are women who help others. Within this rule, the cultural system was trying to shape a distance between what they asserted as the “business world”, which for them was about competition and productivity and not about helping. With their affirmations they intended to show that cleanliness was about helping others, while pollution was about thinking as business people, which in turn was associated with the patriarchal mode of society. This final rule opens questions about gender and how they see this as an important aspect of their companies and the overall message that they are trying to portray. Could it be possible that they were performing gender as a strategy to promote

mindfulness? How does one “use” gender in such a case? These questions will be answered and discussed in the next chapter.

6. Translating Mindfulness for the organizational realm

In this chapter I bring another layer to the story by discussing the online strategies of these companies and what they have to do with gender notions.

6.1. Touching people’s “mind” in the online setting

“We need to have an online presence, we need to touch people’s mind by reaching them through our websites and social media, otherwise it would not make sense...” (Tatiana, owner of Construye, personal communication, February 2, 2016)

“I would go online and search for what people were advertising as mindfulness, I would take a look at their websites... but it is risky I would have to see if they have proper qualifications...because here, in Colombia, we get a lot of people saying “yes, I do this or that”, but they are really doing something else...so I would have to see if what they offer is in line with the interests of the company” (Carlos, Human Resource Manager, personal communication January 19, 2016)

One thing that became clear while conducting the interviews is that it was vital for the companies that were offering mindfulness services to have a professional website. They claimed it was important because through their websites and social media they could “touch people’s mind”, as Tatiana argues. While for high-level managers such as Carlos, it was an opportunity to have a first impression without necessarily hiring their services. This suggests that the messages that were to be communicated within the online world were an important marketing strategy for the mindfulness companies. To analyze these strategies, explain what “touching people’s minds” means, and adding material to the story, I argue that the online messages that the cultural system sends are related to the patriarchal topic that Sebastian had mentioned in my interview with him. His argument was that their companies were “outside the patriarchal mode”. I suggest questioning his assertion via Butler’s concept of the heterosexual matrix because what Sebastian takes for granted is exactly what Butler problematizes. She argues that this mode is not true; it is just, what she refers to as, “the story of origins” which is a story of how men and women are supposed to act (Butler, 1990, p. 36). By recognizing the patriarchal mode and positioning their role as *women that help others* they were actually following the guidelines of that story. Legitimizing certain stereotypes and

enacting womanness, or in Butler's terms, letting womanness enact them. Questions that emerge here are then, how are the rules going to be portrayed within the online world? Are they going to be followed or broken? How would their enactment of gender take place in that setting?

Before entering into the next step of this story, I want to note that I bring in Goffman to theoretically support the notion of the heterosexual matrix. However, his definition of performance is strictly different from Butler's definition of performativity. For Goffman people are conscious of their performances; they know how to act and what to say because their social statuses depend on it. For Butler, gender takes the center of attention and there is no performer. In this case then, I follow Goffman's understanding of performance in terms of the stage that is set within the online world, but I acknowledge that gender has already shaped the people acting on that stage.

The story continues on this online stage. Monica was very emphatic about how people/women who taught mindfulness in Bogotá should be very respectful of their audiences. As seen in my previous chapter, she asserted that they needed proper training and to use mindfulness as a way to help others, not to profit on them. During our interview she constantly mentioned the word ethics and she emphasized that this was a job that one had to do "right" (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016). That made her a rigorous follower of the rules within their cultural system. She also mentioned that in the organizational realm it was useless to do a marketing strategy that did not put people in touch with the actual experience of mindfulness. She explained to me that when she first tried to do some internal marketing in a company, she realized that the employees did not have the time to look at the emails advertising her mindfulness sessions. Therefore she concluded that they had to experience it (Monica, personal communication, January 22, 2016). Her explanations made me wonder how her idea of the "right mindfulness" would then be *translated and staged* online in order for business people to "really understand" what it was about. I employ the expression "staged" here because it has been suggested that the online world also serves as a mean to develop the "front stage" that Goffman refers to, that is to say, a scenario that allows for performers to act (e.g., Robinson, 2007; Papacharissi, 2002). In the offline world and according to Goffman, this front stage has a setting, "involving furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery..." (Goffman, 1956, p.13). In the online world this is usually of no difference since the websites are mainly decorated with words and images to produce a message. They allow manager's such as Carlos to record a good or bad first impression of mindfulness companies such as the one that Trascendental's

website, Monica's company, provides. Monica's online website allows her to remain in control of what she wants the company to display. She is able to organize and select every detail to be published. Goffman explains that this type of control provides the performer (in this case Monica's online performance) with a sense of security about how their audiences are to read him (Goffman, 1956, p.59). If this is taken into account, one has to examine closely the message and information that Monica is trying to send with her site.

Trascendental's stage has several sceneries, that is to say, different options that direct the visitor around the website. "Homepage, about us, services, benefits, activities and gallery". Within the homepage scenario, the first thing one notices is the display of delicate colors and one flower. Then one sees a sentence that states, "Stress reduction, revitalize your body and mind" which is followed by an image (Trascendental website, 2016). In order to understand what this means, I believe, one has to read the image that follows the text. Banks and Zeitlin (2015) assert that when looking at an image one has to ask about what they refer to as its external and internal narrative. With the external they assert it is crucial to know "why does this image exist? who created it? what is its biography?" (Banks & Zeitlin, 2015, p.155). Within the internal narrative one has to investigate the context and the story within the picture. They explain this as "the social context that produced the image, and the social relations within which the image is embedded at any moment of viewing" (Banks & Zeitlin, 2015 p. 30). That is, that when looking at this first image, one also "looks at" the woman behind its online stage, the reasoning behind it and the social context in which the website is fitted. Just below, one sees five medium sized pictures of people practicing mindfulness.



Fig.1. Trascendental's homepage

Source: "Homepage", by Trascendental, 2016. Adapted with permission.

Within image (1) in figure 1 it is possible to appreciate a group of people in casual outfits and what seems to be a group exercise. Following that, in picture (2) one sees three women with their eyes closed. Similarly, picture (3) portrays a group shot of people who, at first glance, look like they are performing some kind of exercise. Then, in picture (4) one observes a man lying down with his eyes closed and arms wide open. In picture (5) one observes another man in a meditative position also with his eyes closed. As I see them, these images aim at evoking intimacy and emotion. See for example in picture (2), (4) and (5) there is not a lot of distance between the photographer and the photographed. When I look more closely at these pictures, I get the impression that Monica or the person taking the photo have been sitting next to these people. It is almost as if there are no personal barriers between observer and the observed. The people behind the camera and the site-visitors are allowed to share what seems to me to be a very intimate moment. Likewise, in the photos all participants have their eyes closed which indicates to me that the images are used to articulate that there is nothing to be afraid of when practicing mindfulness, that in these sessions one is allowed to be both vulnerable and at peace.

Moreover, if one observes the manner in which picture number (1) and (3) were taken, one can see that the distance between the photographer and the group is greater than in the other images. This distance allows the observer to appreciate how Monica organizes these people, how they enter into a collective. Perhaps they show how participating in one of her programs allow people not to feel alone and that the activity involves support and guidance. Moreover, the décor of these images deserve noticing; the flower that is in the right corner is the logo of the company. It is set gracefully displaying an amalgam of colors complemented by a light purple background, which evokes a sense of delicate touches. As I interpret it, the story of her website here conveys some important aspects. First, she is interested in transmitting that people can be vulnerable, that this experience is personal (people are portrayed outdoors in casual not business outfits). This supports the fact that Monica and the women who were shaping this cultural system have stated that mindfulness is *not* a business, but an instrument to *help* others who are also on a personal quest. By the same token, by not actually being in the photos, or at least not in a noticeable manner, she lets her online audience know that her central concern is supporting and helping others; *she* is not the center of attention.

If I analyzed this through the theoretical prism of Butler's theory of the heterosexual matrix, a certain spectrum of gender is generated by these images. Butler's main line of argument is that gender is not a fixed notion, but the enactment of a stereotyped construct

(Butler, 1990). This construct is enmeshed within a set of polarities that are built, accepted and repeated around the patriarchal system in order to protect it. Such polarities are listed as “men” and “women”. The repetition of what these polarities represent (the masculine and the feminine) outline the individual “in and through the deed” (Butler, 1990, p. 142). This means that they give certain rationality to how a person should act according to their gender position in the system. Following these labels generates the question, what is prescribed within these polarities? How are women supposed to act feminine and how are men supposed to act masculine in order to belong to the heterosexual matrix? In her analysis of the rhetoric of gender and genre surrounding the masculine discourse that has been shaped within the mainstream image of road trips, Dr. Jessica Enevold (2003) provides an answer to this question, as she analyzes and illustrates these polarities by referring to a list of “typical “ or stereotypical traits associated with masculinity and femininity discussed by feminist theorist Toril Moi in her book *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Moi 1999),

MASCULINE	FEMININE
aggressive	affectionate
ambitious	cheerful
analytical	childlike
assertive	compassionate
athletic	flatterable
competitive	gentle
dominant	gullible
forceful	loyal
independent	sensitive
individualistic	shy
self-reliant	soft-spoken
self-sufficient	sympathetic
strong	tender
	understanding
	warm
	yielding

Table.1. Source: “The Daughters of Thelma and Louise: New? Aesthetics of the Road” by Jessica Enevold, in her dissertation *Women on the Road: Regendering Narratives of Mobility*. (2003, p. 135).

Table 1 lists what the feminine stereotypically is associated with, and if the images' order are read against this list as a text, then it is possible to discern a premise that represents something like this: "*you can feel comfortable here as we are a big group, you can close your eyes, be vulnerable and open yourself, there are others like you doing this, and look it is acceptable for men to be sensitive and vulnerable, just like women are*". Thus, it is possible to interpret the images in Figure 1 and its décor as set to transmit specific "deeds" that portray the enactment of gender. It is also possible to claim that the images are framed so as to fall into the feminine category that the heterosexual matrix fosters. That is to say, the image of a woman being vulnerable, sensitive, compassionate and, by the same token, promoting emotional connection and intimacy. Hence, Monica's control over the stage is enabling the audience to put this first image into an identifiable gender category, that of a woman.

Additionally, at their most general level, these images are about bodies. Butler (1990) refers to the interaction between body and the construct of gender as she argues that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990, p.33). This means that if a woman were to fit the matrix, she would have to look, move and act as a woman. So that the womanness produced by this type of performance emanates from what is expected of her. In this way other actors within the matrix can tacitly understand that she is in fact a woman. In this case, the bodies are being articulated to fit the tender, gullible (their eyes closed suggest a sense of innocence or trust), and yielding matrix (their body positions suggest they accept Monica's control over their bodies). These are all characteristics that as Table 1 illustrates as a norm fall into the feminine category and are understood as what a woman ought to perform if subordinated by the heterosexual matrix. Thus, "feminine" is playing "in and through" the body of these people. Hence, the first impression that an observer gets from *Transcendental* is that which fits the notion of womanness, which, according to the cultural system also is the "right" mindfulness. In addition, the images are accompanied by a small text that reads as follows:

Release your body and mind from stress with the *world's renowned* Mindfulness
course.

Mindfulness *strengthens the mind's* natural ability to pay attention to the present moment. This course introduces awareness practices *validated by neuroscience*. *Cultivate emotional, concentration and stress management skills* today and let them join you for the rest of your life. (Trascendental website, 2016 [My italics])

This text is more than just a text. As the text is located just below the photos then it is supposed to be the interpretation of what the photos are actually trying to communicate. Although it says it is validated by neuroscience it does not explain, at least not in this section, why is validated by science. In this case then, the validation that Trascendental and Monica are trying to transmit is not of “the science”, but a semantic validation. This means, that mindfulness is validated here merely because it is stated in such manner, but not because the text is particularly presenting any evidence. This semantic validation is supported through the rationalization of things. A rationalization that, if looked at through the heterosexual matrix, pertains to the masculine side. Why, the reader may ask, is this the masculine side?

Here I will allow myself to introduce German psychoanalyst^{viii} Erich Fromm's (1976) explanation of “being” as feminine and “having” as masculine as an answer to this question as he seems to be accepting the heterosexual matrix that Butlers questions and further relating such dichotomies with the division of the Western and Eastern societies that mindfulness business owners reinforce within their discourse. In his view there are two ways of living; one can live either by *having* or by *being*. According to Fromm, living through the “having mode” is merely an act of desire to and interest in possessing the things that surround the world. This, he says, leads men into undesirable vicious circles in which their desires are not met. Then, if men are only focused on having external things they are not able to understand their purpose in life (Fromm, 1976, p.63). Contrary to *having*, Fromm asserts that *being* is purely interested with the essence of things, with experiencing the humanness that each individual has inside and experience the inner and outer world through a deeper and emotional gaze (Fromm, 1976, Chapter V).

Seemingly accepting the matrix that Butler questions, in Fromm's view these modes of existence are directly related to the dichotomy between men and women illustrated in Table 1. He explains this with an analogy of the history of Western and Eastern civilization and two types of heroes, the pagan and the martyr. He argues that the Western world is a “pagan hero” because such heroes are set to master, to obtain, to succeed, to take advantage of something, thus they live in the “having” mode. (Fromm, 1976, p.115). For him, “these values coincide with our ideal of “manliness”: only the one who can fight and conquer is a

man; anyone who is not strong in the use of force is weak, i.e. “unmanly”” (Fromm, 1976, p. 116). On the other side, Fromm describes the characteristics of the Eastern civilization as the martyr. This type of hero is all about, in the scholar words, “giving”, “loving”, “sharing” and having a rather “naïve”^{ix} nature, all of which makes him as possessing female characteristics (Fromm, 1976, p. 115). Taking the polarities in Table 1 and Fromm’s explanation, I argue that the semantic validation that the website uses within this text is following the pattern of the heterosexual matrix and consequently the patriarchal mode. On the one hand, by turning to the masculine discourse and stating that it is validated through neuroscience this evokes a sense of prestige and status that the “Western” observer could aim at *having*. On the other hand, the images support the idea of the emotional experiences of *being* that which in the patriarchal mode is attached to womanness and, according to Fromm, to the Eastern society, which is the notion that the cultural system supports. Hence, I suggest that, as the language (male oriented) supports the images (female oriented), then the message is that of the strong helping the weak. This turns the attention of the observer from the *being* of the bodies, that is the womanness, to the rational, the taken for granted of scientific results, that is the *having* of the bodies, the masculinity.

However, the image and the text do not evoke a “business aura” in the sense that the images take place outside the office setting. That is why, this stylization of the body was further reinforced within another setting in Transcendental’s website. The “gallery” setting portrays several photos of the experiences that employees and executives can have when in a mindfulness session. Below are two cases that help to reinforce the point I am highlighting here.



Fig.2. Print screen of photos in the gallery section

Source: “Gallery”, by Transcendental, 2016. Adapted with permission.

The first picture in figure 2 is a demonstration on what Monica denominates as “essential^x work breaks”. This is her own version of the “pausas activas” which, as mentioned earlier, are fifteen-minute work breaks that, according to the law, companies need to offer to their employees so they will not become physically or emotionally ill. The website explains these breaks as

...ideal for companies that want to implement a mindfulness and yoga program. These breaks involve simple and practical exercises that aim at clearing the mind, releasing tensions and helping the body to acquire a good posture during working hours. These short sessions can be performed within an auditorium or at the workspace.
(Transcendental website, 2016)

Within this image, one observes Monica at the front of her audience with a white t-shirt. Her body position suggests her role is that of the guide, the teacher. The participants are following Monica’s body in a coordinated and obedient manner. None of the participants is seen as doing something else or different and although their faces are not visible in this version, in the original photo they are looking directly at Monica’s body. All of them have their mouths closed and all seem concentrated on the task.

When I analyze these images I find it valuable to revisit the term “patriarchal”. In referring to the development of gender ideology Susan U. Philips explains (2003) “the term ‘patriarchal’ was used to refer to ideologies that either assumed or asserted that men should dominate women, have authority over them, and tell them what to do” (Philips, 2003, p. 254). Following this definition, the domination of men is achieved only if women enact a presumably docile role, a role that is described by Robin Lakoff (2003) as “silent and obedient” to men’s orders (Lakoff, 2003 p.162). If Philips’ and Lakoff’s claims are taken into consideration, the non-verbal language of obedience, silence and subordination enacted in these images could be interpreted as the enactment of womanness.

In the first picture they are being taught to be the “dominated ones”. This is explained because here Monica is not just the teacher or guide; instead Monica holds a special subject position, her position as woman. If this position is revisited within the heterosexual matrix, the stylization of her own body is enacting womanness,^{xi} she is performing delicate, slow movements in front of these people. What is more, she is teaching them to do the same. She is guiding them to connect with their bodies, sensations and emotions. Retaking Fromm’s

explanation, she is teaching the *being* which at the same time is interpreted as womanness in this matrix.

Hence, what is highlighted in the first picture is the transferal of feminine qualities into bodies that, although at first glance seem to be enacting businessmen and businesswomen, end up enacting womanness. By the same token, if the language that introduces these is brought into this context, phrases like “ideal for companies” and “simple and practical”, aim at telling the organizational world that womanness is ideal for companies, womanness is simple and adjustable to the workspace.

Furthermore, the second image in figure 2, the man hugging himself, is a male body that is being stylized in a feminine form. He is connecting with his emotions a task that according to the matrix is set to women. In my interpretation this image says that businessmen are projected as, allowed to feel, to love, to connect with their inner self. Then as, under the matrix, the masculine body validates womanness, mindfulness is translated into the business world as a valid concept for (male) executives to use.

This dialogue between womanness and masculinity can also be discerned in other contexts. For example, in paragraph 1 of “about us”, Monica describes herself as “founder and director” of Transcendental. She complements this information by stating that she graduated from one of the most prestigious universities in the city. In paragraph 2, she explains her personal experiences with monastics, and legitimizes it by writing that she was “initiated by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh”. Similarly, paragraph 3 states that she has worked for “the best yoga schools in Bogotá”, and ends with a list of her clients. Next to this text is a large black and white photo of Monica. The photo shows Monica in a sport outfit, looking directly at the camera wearing a broad and expressive smile (Transcendental website, 2016).

Here it is possible to revalidate the translation analyzed in the image, and observe how Monica organizes it for the organizational realm. The language of paragraph (1) and (3) is purely “male” oriented, which enables her to express the qualifications that for example, managers such as Carlos might want to see when searching these types of companies. Then paragraph (2) evokes the feminine and emotional side that speaks about her personal quest. This then serves to reinforce the mystification process they intend to portray before their business audience and it serves to legitimate her position before her colleagues. This is complemented with her photograph, which, due to her smile, and the fact that it seems as if she were making eye contact with the person that is looking at this section, accomplishes an emotional and affective connotation. A connotation that is associated with how she is portraying this womanness.

Hence, Monica's translation is guiding her concept of mindfulness as a dialogue enmeshed within the masculine economy, for her company's role seems to need validation from the masculine discourse. This is in line with the core concept of the heterosexual matrix, which according to scholars Melissa Tyler and Laurie Cohen (2008) "...positions men and women according to a bifurcated and hierarchical configuration of the relationship between sex, gender and desire..." (Tyler and Cohen, 2008, p.121). In the text analyzed above exists such a hierarchy and the juxtaposition of female and male is reenacted paragraph after paragraph. Perhaps, this was Trascendental's (Monica's) strategy to reassure those within the organizational realm that the being (the feminine side) and having (the masculine side) may co-exist when practicing mindfulness and thus defuse potential unease from connotations such as "mystical", "esoteric", or "feminine"? But given Monica's perspective on business and on mindfulness and life, why did she feel this need? Why did she want to be included in the "masculine" economy? As I came to find out, this had to do with her listening to the audience, the high-level managers, to which I turn next.

7. Mindfulness as womanness and womanness as prestige

7.1. Their fears

While conducting the interviews with the high-level managers and coaches, I asked them if they knew what mindfulness was. I used the English word because that is what the mindfulness companies did on their websites. As mentioned in the methodological section, only two out of five high-level managers knew the English concept. The other three lost interest once I explained the Spanish version. In this chapter I analyze these cases, an online article that addresses a topic related to this issue and end this part of the story by reflecting on the marketing strategies that the cultural system has shaped.

The two high-level managers who knew about mindfulness in its English version associated the term with practices that they knew were considered to be esoteric. According to their versions, this was a concept that they knew others thought as inappropriate within the organizational realm. For example, when speaking with Lina, a human resource manager, I asked her what she thought about mindfulness and the idea of implementing it within companies. She said,

Well meditation and yoga don't really work in the organizational realm, I mean...this doesn't have to do with the interview, but I used to practice meditation with a group of people and we ended up doing spiritual channelings, spirits were talking to us...they were guiding us to our destiny...[stops speaking and looks at me] you probably think I am crazy [laughs].... but that's why I told you that we graduated from X university...we were normal people... but that's....I mean that sort of thing doesn't fit within an organization. (Lina, personal communication, December 21, 2015)

She was very serious about how these things did not “fit within an organization”. In fact, Lina shared an episode in which, three of her employees quit their jobs after the company had hosted an event that addressed these topics. They argued it was not what they wanted to see in a company (Lina, personal communication, December 21, 2015). To the impact highlighted by Lina's declaration, one also has to add what I observed happened in our interaction: her need to clarify that she was not “just crazy” and her pause indicating that she had said something that was not supposed to be mentioned. Her facial expression reinforced this; I could see a scared look on her face. She felt uncomfortable and tried to counteract this by characterizing herself as “normal” by stating that she had graduated from a high-status university.

Why did this happen? Analyzed through Goffman's definition of performance, one can see that something was broken in this scenario. What was it exactly? To me, it was her performance as “the high-level manager”. Goffman offers a way to explain this. He asserts that there are social scenarios that are “institutionalized” and force the performer to act in a specific way (Goffman, 1956, p.17). In this scenario this means that the company in which Lina works, physically and tacitly, shape how “a human resource manager” should perform when meeting the audience in the workplace. Her discomfort represented hesitation and concern, because she had revealed something of herself that did not pertain to her role as human resource manager, specially not when at the office.

This was not the only time this happened. Carlos, another human resource manager, told me that when he was trying to promote a mindfulness session in his company, some of the employees showed unease. He claimed, “they told me it was not in the bible to do this...I practice hypnosis, yoga and such things in my free time, but I mean I cannot do that at the office...with my employees it is different” (Carlos, personal communication, January 19, 2016).

Just as Lina, Carlos thought that mindfulness and, what he thought were practices related to this, did not belong in the organizational setting because of the impact they could have within it. He felt this made him different from his employees and he did not want that, as this would break his performance. His audience (employees) would think that Carlos was doing something that was “not in the bible” and perhaps it would make them think he was, as Lina asserted, “crazy”. In his world, a human resource manager could not allow that to happen.

Lina and Carlos’ assertions indicated a pattern, initially that they were worry because they did not want to bring what they knew others would catalogue as “esotericism” into their companies because their performance as “managers” would be lost. But was the esotericness of it all what they feared? No, it was not. They were also worried about the emotional connotations of mindfulness; something they thought was frowned upon in the business setting. Carlos illustrated this by explaining that mindfulness was “a space to recognize that I exist, that I feel, that I am here, but I mean it sounds silly I know...even ridiculous...I mean you don’t do that in a company right?”, as Carlos stated (Carlos, personal communication, January 19, 2016).

Here Carlos expression “sounds silly, I know even ridiculous” implies he does not want to disappoint the audience by acting that way. Perhaps while performing as “the high-level manager”, he cannot “recognize that he exists”, because if he were to exist, if his emotional side were to be shown, the organizational scene would fall apart. Could there be any damaging consequences to the “call to unperform” that Carlos problematizes within mindfulness? Martin, an ontological coach whom I interviewed, provided an answer:

In a company you cannot look vulnerable, you cannot show your emotions you don’t want your boss to see you crying...or for your colleague to know that your husband is mistreating you. You have to take care of your image because your job is at stake, that’s why I don’t use mindfulness within companies or I aim to sell it differently.
(Martin, personal communication, March 9, 2016)

Martin’s explanation highlights the problem faced by Lina and Carlos. According to his declarations, the office is not the “appropriate” place at which to be emotional. Being emotional is being weak. This notion is what keeps him from using mindfulness with his corporate clients or promoting it differently. These statements speak volumes about the appearances and prestige that they think they need to have within the business world. But is

this really only about *performance* in a Goffmanian perspective? Is there perhaps something else in their claims, more like *gender performativity*?

It is significant how Martin associates weakness with the image of a woman being mistreated by her husband. In Bogotá's organizational realm, esotericism and emotionality are often associated with the feminine. In an online article titled, "The feminine essence within organizations" Guiovanna Fuentes Barbosa (2016), a Colombian executive coach, explains how local companies "need" to validate what she refers to as "the feminine essence" within organizations and illustrates my point.

The text starts with a story about how the president of a national company asked her how he could put into balance the masculine and feminine energy within his company. Fuentes then clarifies to the reader that the man is not asking her how to be gay, but how to manage the "hard" and the "soft" skills (Fuentes, 2016, para 1). She makes an almost revolutionary reflection that invites the feminine reader to feel as if Fuentes were fomenting "women to raise their hands", and show male managers how their human capital depends on the feminine essence, the soft skills. She explains:

For years the corporate world has *highlighted the rational, the masculine, competition, the immediate results... from the most primitive part, the 'reptilian brain'*, which is responsible for the **basic instincts of survival**.... *Ignoring the essence or the strength of women's leadership, the fundamental essence that originates within the esoteric and develops within the emotional and spiritual domain* (Fuentes, 2016, para 2,3[my emphasis].)

Let me take a closer look at what Fuentes is saying here. In the article, Fuentes uses a prose that is entirely based on appealing to the dichotomy between men and women under the heterosexual matrix. From the start she appeals to using a male protagonist that is supposedly embedded with power because he is not "just any man", he is the president of a company. According to her narrative, this has certain relevance as it suggests that the article does not exist because of the feminine essence *per se*, but because a man, a president is making a reflection about this. Further, by clarifying that the president has no sexual preferences that, according to her, "deviate" from the norm (being gay) she implies that men who ask about feminine "stuff", maybe gay. Why does the reader need to know that the president is not gay? Because this is what happens when one is within the matrix, one thinks that one needs to, protect and, in Butler's words, "police" the gender order (Butler, 1999, XI). This means that

in order to reassure her audience that everything was “okay” in the matrix, she made sure to stress and support the idea that one has to be a *manly man*, to be a president. Simultaneously, this supports the notion that men are the ones carrying powerful and prestigious positions.

Moreover, by encouraging women to “raise their hands”; she reinforces the notion that men subjugate women, that they currently have no voice. She claims that men need to be “put to reason” and she does so by highlighting that which the high-level managers know the organizational realm considers taboo (the emotional, esotericism and spiritual domain), which she attaches to the feminine side. By seeing their claims through this angle, it is possible to state that the actual taboo for high-level managers such as Lina and Carlos and consequently for their employees, is about the enactment of womanness. See the “call to unperform” that Carlos problematizes around mindfulness has two sides.

Through the performance gaze, their fear about “being crazy”, when suggesting esoteric practices, was a fear of not being able to meet expectations attached to their institutional roles. However, when one sees what mindfulness really means to them and the emotionality aspect is brought into context, this reveals that what they truly feared was about not being able to *enact masculinity*. If they were to stop the enactment of masculinity, then their own performances as “the high-level managers” would not make sense. They would lose their prestige. Why was prestige so important for these high-level managers? Well, this brings yet another layer to the story that helps to truly understand what is happening here.

7.2. Starbucks brownies and Hollywood theme parties: The “show and tell” scenario

In Bogotá prestige, both in and out the workplace, is something extremely valuable, explains Rafael, a coach in the making:

In Bogotá low-level employees work because they need money, I mean you know Bogotá is such a difficult city...no one has money, everyone is struggling to survive...but that’s not the type of people that can move up the corporative ladder, the winning type of people are the ones that have graduated from X universities, the people with money, “la gente bien”, you know what I mean right? (Rafael, personal communication, February 26, 2016)

Yes, I knew what Rafael meant with “la gente bien” (The okay people). In Bogotá the

Spanish expression “la gente bien” is used to refer to people with monetary means that it is almost idealized. They are the ones that have graduated from the top universities in the city, the individuals that know English as a second language or even more than two languages. La “gente bien” are the ones that become high-level managers at prestigious companies. How do I know what Rafael means? Because, being born and raised in Bogotá, this knowledge has come to be embedded within my “habitus” (Bourdieu 1984).

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu claims, “the habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions...” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). What Bourdieu means with this is that by being born in Bogotá, I have shaped and internalized a set of practices that have been *offered* by the social structure that organizes the workings of this city and its people. I have learned to generate certain views about the world around me. Being a native I was taught to feel anxiety if I was not accepted by a prestigious university. My parents insisted that I learn English and other languages so I could have “more opportunities”. I was taught that I needed to hold down a well-paid job if I wanted to “survive” in the city. Further, I was taught to “show and tell” my acquaintances and friends that I was working on achieving these things. This made us all feel a sense of reassurance because it validated that we were around “gente bien” and that we were on the right track. If I did not accomplish this then I would not be able to classify myself as “gente bien”, I would lose prestige within the social sphere, which, according to the social standards of Bogotá, was wrong. This “show and tell scenario” became highly visible in one of the interviews with a high-level manager who did not know what mindfulness was, but certainly “the show and tell” mode of acting. Let me address the scene.

It was nine o’clock in the morning and I was in the building of an insurance company in Bogotá. I was there to meet with Sandra the organizational wellbeing manager. When I arrived to her office she was sitting at her desk, staring at her computer. She did not make eye contact with me nor did she move her body to react to my presence. Instead, she merely said, “hi, take a sit please” (Sandra, personal communication, December 3, 2015). Feeling a little bit nervous because of how this interaction was developing, I pulled up the chair next to me and moved my body so as to sit down. However, as I was doing this she asked me, “So, what do you want to know”, to which I replied that I was investigating mindfulness within organizations. Before I had moved my body completely into a sitting position, she looked at me as if I were out of place and told me “oh no but my boss didn’t tell me you were here for that...we don’t work with what is that you said? Mindfulness...mmm...sounds interesting (pauses)” (Sandra, personal communication, December 3, 2015).

Following her pause and thinking I saw an opportunity to get her attention, I tried to explain the concept to her using the Spanish word [*consciencia plena*], but once I did this, her interest was lost. After my intervention she remained silent, but then she added, “oh...but I cannot talk about that... I can talk about our wellbeing programs” (Sandra, personal communication, December 3, 2015).

So she did, and during our meeting she addressed topics such as how they had been previously considered as one of the best places to work in Latin America, which according to her was because of the money they spent on developing wellbeing strategies. She showed me graphics and data to illustrate this. She shared that, amongst their strategies, they did things such as buy brownies, from the recently opened Starbucks across the street, to greet their employees on special days such as Valentine’s Day. She explained, with excitement on her face, that they were about to throw a Hollywood theme party for New Year’s Eve. She claimed that these things were what employees liked to receive because they felt pampered and she argued she felt very proud of this (Sandra, personal communication, December 3, 2015).

What was she trying to articulate here? Goffman (1956) claims that interactions tend to be, in his words, “idealized”. With this he means that, in social exchanges, it is often the obligation of the performer to deliver a performance that is “moulded and modified to fit into the understandings and expectations of the society in which it is presented” and the performer “will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society” (Goffman, 1956, p.22-3). Sandra incorporates Bogotá’s social values because she knows that she has to live up to the expectations that the locals attach to the idealized image of a *manager*, which in turn is what Rafael and I know as “la gente bien” and the “show and tell” performance.

In Sandra’s case, and in the organizational realm this “show and tell performance” is about having hard proof (data and graphics) of the high amounts of money they spend on their employees. By having these proofs they can argue in front of their audience (me) that they are doing things “correctly”. What does this mean? For them, being correct is about helping their employees achieve (an imagined or perhaps real?) sense of prestige via “mini” American experiences such as “the brownie from Starbucks” and “the glamour from Hollywood”. This makes high-level managers feel proud because it allows them to fulfill the demanded “parts”.

If one connects the dots here, high-level managers thought of mindfulness as a dangerous concept that could make them lose their position as “gente bien”. It would position them as the opposite, “gente mal” (Not so okay people), because it would make them

emotionally weak and “crazy”. Thus, the fears surrounding mindfulness in Bogotá’s business world are based on three central ideas; *masculinity*, *socio-cultural position* and *prestige*.

This means that, according to their answers, losing one’s “organizational performance” hinders their enactment of masculinity. At the same time, this reduces the socio-cultural position of the person and this results in the loss of prestige. In contrast, “mini” American experiences that did not threaten the order of things were much appreciated. Such experiences would only reinforce the ideals that locals have in terms of prestige. Eating a brownie from Starbucks does not stop an executive from enacting masculinity right? This is an extremely important part of the story as it reveals how the traveling and landing of mindfulness is actually being shaped around the fear towards keeping the heterosexual matrix functioning, if the matrix were to be broken, if prestige were lost, then, as they assert, the business place would “not make sense” (Which in Lina’s case was literally demonstrated when her employees resigned from the organization).

Hence, Monica’s website is not sending an arbitrary message by positioning the company services within the masculine economy. In fact, this was something that all of the other women from the cultural system knew. They knew that if they were to promote something that did “not make sense”, they needed to connect mindfulness with something that “made sense” for their clients. To conclude this chapter, it is possible to state that these women “play” with the use of masculine language and hints of what people from Bogotá understand as social prestige or as I have explained it here, the enactment of masculinity, to convince them that it is okay for them to enact womanness in the workplace. Therefore, the story, to their audiences is that mindfulness (the enactment of womanness) was prestigious.

8. Touching executive’s bodies: the mindfulness experience

For the cultural system, touching people’s mind meant using what they thought were “rational” strategies to attract high-level managers and convince them that mindfulness had sense (e.g., promoting mindfulness in English, making allusions to their overseas experience in prestigious institutions and using scientific proof). But while this metaphor is valid, one does not really *touch* people’s mind, one convinces them or persuades them about something. The word *touching* evokes something material, as for example bodies. In this chapter I discuss how the cultural system materializes their intention to touch the executives.

In his analysis of how spa staff aims at engaging with their client’s body and achieving a connection through the senses, professor of ethnology Thomas O’Dell (2010)

highlights the importance of this “sensuous” interaction. He asserts that the body is a direct way through which people engage with the world. He claims, “consciousness is, consequently, always an after-the-fact construction. However, the body and senses work in present time...” (O’Dell, 2010, p. 97). O’Dell’s premise resonates in this case because the mindfulness women claim that it is only through experience that one can really know what mindfulness is. Hence, if they want to explain mindfulness, then they cannot rely on an “after the fact” construction. They cannot only trust the visual and cognitive experience they offer on their websites; they need to “touch” the executives. According to the story that the women and the business people shared it seemed difficult to get access to the corporate world, but, as Monica’s photos illustrated, there was a way to get inside the companies, to touch the bodies. How was this done?

A few years earlier, a few local universities had made contact with some of the women to create continuous learning programs focused on mindfulness seminars. Andrea’s course was one of them (Andrea, personal communication, February 25, 2016). Since 2014 she had been offering these programs in one of the most prestigious universities of the city. She offered two-day and monthly mindfulness seminars. They were called “mindfulness for managers” (First image, figure 3) and “mindfulness: Taller de plena consciencia” [mindfulness: complete awareness workshop] (Second image in figure 3).



Fig.3. Print screen of advertising images for Mindfulness seminars at a local University

Let me take a closer look at these images. The first image introduces two young men and one woman. As one can see, the woman is standing in the center of these two men while they are sitting. Their bodies are positioned together and directed at a computer, which to me suggest two things. Firstly, that she is the leader, the guide and secondly, judging by their outfits, that this is a “casual” business setting. This can be analyzed as a prelude, *a taste of*

womanness if you may, of what managers and executives could acquire when attending this first seminar. A taste that is prestigious because of the leadership connotations that the woman in the image holds.

The image is followed by the sentences “mindfulness for managers” and is labeled as a “seminario” (seminar). What do these words mean? The English words are set to evoke the enactment of gender. See, the American culture (associated with masculinity) is helping mindfulness (which is associated with the feminine through the local gaze) to be translated into the Colombian context. The second one says that these are not to be thought of as, for example, “mindfulness retreats”, at least they are not marketed as such in these images, they are mindfulness seminars, and who goes to seminars? Managers, business people as I will reveal above, it might seem that, due to the price, they are aimed at “gente bien”.

Also one has to note the difference between the two images, although the second image in figure 3 is also labeled as a seminar the picture and the title are entirely different. In the image one cannot observe faces, but only the body of a woman dressed in a white t-shirt, and other bodies holding the same position. As the image is very blurry it is not clear if the other bodies belong to men or women.

Putting these two images into parallel, they seem to be reinforcing the polarities of masculine and feminine, business and non-business. Image number one portrays heads (two of them belong to bodies enacting masculinity), and computers, which belong to the masculine and rational notions attach to the organizational realm. While the second image illustrates and exposes bodies that are set to express calmness, serenity and a sense of *cleanness* evoked by the white t-shirts. Following the heterosexual matrix, these are qualities attached to the feminine side and lead to the enactment of *womanness*.

Then, the rationality seems to be that, through these seminars, there is an open invitation “for managers” *to work* with mindfulness and another invitation to a wider audience *to feel* mindfulness. But one is to be remembered that this is just what the marketing strategy is trying to sell. Thus, one has to wonder if, in practice, they are truly that different? The story goes on.

Another layer to these seminars is their prices. The first program is nine hundred thousand Colombian pesos [2477 SEK/304 USD] and the second has a price of six hundred thousand Colombian pesos [1647 SEK/203 USD]. This price range says something about these programs. Currently, in 2016, the minimum wage in Colombia is \$ 689.454 Colombian pesos [1898 SEK/233 USD]. A salary that, according to the public and negative reactions illustrated by the newspaper *El Heraldo* (2016), in the online article “*Salario mínimo en*

Colombia para el 2016: \$689.454” [Minimum wage in Colombia for 2016: [\$689.454] is not enough to cover the most basic needs of the lower and middle classes as people argued that “an American laborer could make that much in only three days” (Del Río, 2015).

Further, in informal conversations with acquaintances and friends it has been highlighted to me that if a person is to live with no economic pressure in Bogotá, then one should have a salary that exceeds 5.000.000 Colombian pesos [13.576 SEK/ 1691 USD]. Therefore, the prices support the idea that these seminars are not something that every person from Bogotá could have access to, but something for the more privileged.

In fact, this was confirmed within the first two minutes of the seminar, as several of the attendees claimed that they were there because they were allowing themselves a little “gift”, a treat. The fact that they thought of mindfulness as a gift or a treat to themselves is an initial confirmation that “the enactment of womanness (mindfulness) as prestige” made sense for them. After all, it was something that very few could take part in, it was something that came from a well-known university, it made sense, and as I pointed out earlier in the thesis, an idea has to make sense in order for people to use it, transform it and shape it (Czarniawska, 1996).

But I am getting ahead of this part of the story; the reason why I know this is because Andrea was kind enough to invite me to one of these seminars. So I now invite the reader to join me in sharing some scenes of this seminar. They illustrate how mindfulness, that is to say, the prestigious enactment of womanness, is being promoted as a practice that cannot “damage” the managers’ macho socio-cultural position.

8.1. Our first morning

It was six o’clock on a Saturday morning. I was at the “entrepreneurship and innovation” campus of the university located in the outskirts of the city. Soon as I arrived to the campus the openness and natural feeling of the atmosphere surprised me. One could see green trees, smell the grass, and feel the rocky texture of the brown floor tiles. Surrounding this natural aura, I saw some brown rustic houses at a distance; they were used as classrooms. According to Andrea’s instruction I had to get to room L-405 in which the seminar was going to take place.

The day before my arrival, Andrea explained me that she had spoken with the logistics personnel at the university so I could have access to everything within the process. This meant that I would be able to ask questions and move around the area without problems

(Andrea, personal communication, February 19, 2016). As I held this position I felt I could not wait to ask questions, so while walking towards the classroom I could not think about anything else. I only realized that my body was crossing the door of room L-405 when I sensed the smell of lavender incense. I was intrigued by the smell, so I decided to ask the logistics people, who were right outside of the door, why they had decided to light incense. They imparted to me that Andrea had requested for them to do this in order to “clean the energy of the room” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). Their explanation immediately caught my attention. The room I was about to enter had black school chairs, a blackboard and a teacher’s desk. It looked like a classroom to me and I felt like a student. It certainly did not look like one of the places where it is customary to “clean energies” (like a yoga studio or similar). I realized that this was what the smell of the incense was trying to convey. It was trying to counteract the regular impression that an audience usually would get, and expect, from a physical, pre-established setting such as a university lecture room.

Goffman (1956) explains that the audience “...expect[s], of course, some coherence among setting, appearance and manner” (Goffman, 1956, p.16). In this case, Goffman’s quote mean that it was “natural” for me to feel like a student in the university setting, I was expecting the external environment to be consistent with what was coming, with the queues it gave me so I and others could play our roles; that of teacher, staff or student. My visual impressions confirmed that this was the case, but my olfactory sense argued that I was wrong. The incense in the classroom could also be understood as gender performativity and performance enmeshed. If this was interpreted through the heterosexual matrix, then one could say that the enactment of delicacy and softness through the smell of incense was inviting the guests into a feminine atmosphere, almost encapsulating it from the beginning. But this was also a performance in the sense that the incense, a material object, was arranging the setting to be perceived as something completely different, to provide or provoke an introduction to the mindfulness experience. But what was “the mindfulness experience”?

This mindfulness experience was, as I will illustrate, a *rite de passage*. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1970) explains that a rite de passage is a state in which a person or group of people are transformed in order to achieve a new status than the one they are currently holding. Turner claims that such rites have three stages; “separation”, “liminality” and “aggregation” (Turner, 1970, p.94). Turner (1970) explains that the separation stage is the one in which the individual is removed from the rest of his “cultural condition” so the ritual can take place (Turner, 1970, p.98). This means that the person is taken into a different and isolated place that creates a physical, but also metaphorical distance between the person’s

normal surroundings and the ritualized event that is to take place. Turner explains that this physical and symbolic displacement takes place because, in the eyes of the rest of the community, these individuals have not acquired a real identity, they are yet to enter into the liminal stage, but they have already agreed to leave their old status behind. This makes them unidentifiable and thus polluted (he uses and reinforces Douglas's meaning)(Turner, 1970, pp 97-98). The liminal stage is the phase in which the individual experiences the ritual. That is, the stage in which he is transformed and acquires a new status. Finally, the aggregation stage is that in which the person returns to his cultural condition as a transformed self, meaning that he has acquired a new and higher status and thus it is considered different from before (Turner, 1970, p.94).

In this case, the separation stage that Turner mentions had already taken place. The fact that the seminar took place outside of the city indicated that I had already been removed from my normal surroundings, I was not with my family or friends, I did not know anyone and no one knew me. If I take Turner's symbolic meaning of "separation", the encapsulating essence of the incense had taken me further away from the educational institution as illustrated above; it was encircling the participants and me in a feminine atmosphere. At the same time it was detaching us from the sense of identity that we had outside this setting.

But back to the scene, after having sensed the lavender I decided to sit and wait for everyone else to arrive. Out of the thirty-three people that arrived, only four were men. Three of them were accompanying their spouses, while one of them seemed to be alone. Participants held corporate positions. Everyone started talking with and greeting each other, smiling. We were all trying to be friendly by discussing our excitement about the seminar. For example, one could hear sentences like "oh yeah I could not sleep last night thinking about this, did it happen to you too?" and "the weather is so cold, what is your name again?" (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016) We were trying to interact, to have an initial connection and bond.

What did our early intentions to bond mean? Turner (1964) explains that the "liminal personae", have a tendency to create strong emotional bonds, thus generating a "community" because of the shared experiences of the ritual (Turner, 1964, p.50). A sense of community is shaped because no one outside the group will know and experience what the group has.

In fact, Turner claims that what happens in the liminal period of the ritual is more than "just" knowing, he claims that the ritual is "a change in being" (Turner, 1964, p. 51). This means that the steps and experiences that were taken to "change this being" remain inside the ones who lived it. The other fellow participants are the only ones who can treasure

these experiences, so they become an important validation tool for what this change of being means. Hence, our *small talk* was the initial step towards developing our community, our sense of belonging. We were saying, ‘Hey’, as Turner puts it, “‘each for all, and all for each’” (Turner, 1970, p.101). We were putting at ease our expectations and we were letting ourselves know that we were all going through the same and that we were together on this.

This type of bonding was further extended when we shared our fifteen minutes breaks to talk about the things that had happened in there. Further, after the seminar, the group created a WhatsApp chatting group in order to stay in touch. In fact, as I finalize my thesis, the communication is still ongoing. This is characteristic of what Turner calls the shaping of a community, and we were in the process of it. But, what happened after we started bonding?

After the first five minutes of small talk everyone remained silent, I did not notice why until I turned my head and saw that Andrea had arrived. She was wearing a white loose t-shirt; she had a *mala*, a Buddhist rosary, around her neck and grey sweatpants. Nothing in her outfit seemed extravagant or expensive. Why were her clothes important? They were important because they were part of the performance. By not wearing any noticeably expensive accessory or even bright colors, her clothes indicated that she did not want to put her appearance and body at the center of attention. We, the participants and our bodies, were the ones that mattered. It seemed as if the only physical item that Andrea wanted for us to notice was her mala. She wanted for us to know (as the rules I talked about earlier demanded) that she was recognizing the historicity of mindfulness; she was acknowledging the Buddhist system above her.

Andrea started by introducing herself and as such the ritual, performance and gender performativity were about to be officially enacted. After someone from logistics listed Andrea’s monastic experience and her professional experience overseas, the first words out of Andrea’s mouth were “ok, this is the first day of your life, I encourage you to trust me and the program” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). As part of the audience I could not help feeling a shiver when I heard these words. I thought to myself “What does this mean? What have I been doing for the past 25 years of my life if not living?” Apparently I was not the only one, everyone around me looked confused, but everyone remained silent and no one dared to question her assertion.

Why did this happen? Well going back to Turner (1964) in the liminal stage, the authorities (Andrea) are expected to have complete control over the situation and the liminal personae (the rest of us) are supposed to assume a submissive role, to accept and embrace the knowledge. This is mainly because we expect Andrea, to be in the high position since she is

the only one who knows what mindfulness is, and thus knows better (Turner, 1964, p.50).

If these submissive and authoritative roles are seen as a Goffmanian performance, I have to confess that as audience I was expecting this kind of statement from Andrea (the performer). Just by seeing her mala and thinking about what she would present as *mindfulness*, I was somewhere mentally prepared to be surprised. In Goffman's terms I was feeling this way because the performer evoked drama "to become significant"(Goffman, 1956, p. 20). This means that if Andrea had entered the room and merely started writing on the blackboard, she would not have made an impression on me. I would have felt as if at a conference or course. However, with dramatization, she made herself significant to the participants and me. She was the authority, and our silence made us the submissive.

After Andrea's assertion, she asked us to introduce ourselves. At that point one of the men exclaimed "[nervous laugh] ok I've got to admit I was pretty scared when I saw the participant's list... I only saw three other men...I am worried about this [all participants laugh]" (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). What was he saying here? I see that he was saying that he was worried he could not enact masculinity within a feminine-dominated environment. The encapsulating lavender aroma, its invitation to enact womanness, Andrea's evocation to Buddhist themes and powerful statement, were possibly preventing the enactment of his "traditional" gender. How would Andrea "play" with the masculine discourse, I wondered. How would she (would she?) recall the idea of prestige in order to calm him down? How would she make it reasonable for him to be a "man" and to be there?

In the beginning Andrea did not seem to care so much about putting the man's anxieties to ease. In fact, the first topic of the day was about how "the patriarchal system was of no good". She stated, "this socio cultural structure has taught you that to be strong is to act with violence, but this is not true, you should act with love and kindness". At that point I felt very confused. I started to rethink my whole "socio cultural structure" as she suggested (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). She had me and the others reconsider completely how we were raised. We started to reflect upon "the patriarchal system" and how we had been living in this structure without reflecting on what it meant. What was happening to us? We were all going through what Turner (1964) refers to as the "reduction" process of the liminal stage. In this phase Andrea (the authorities) is supposed to show us every detail about our own system. She is supposed to separate the pieces, making them visible and understandable to us. That is to say, she was supposed to know the "truth" about the world around us and to make this truth available to us (Turner, 1964, p. 53). It was only by reducing this truth that we were going to be able to experience a new sense of being.

I believe Andrea let the anxieties of the man grow even more. She was already disarticulating all which we all believed in, so his anxieties must have been reinforced. If the patriarchal system was of no good, how could he possibly enact masculinity? After the first two hours Andrea started to use *the masculine language* in order to calm him down. She started to go back and forth between the Buddhist connotations of mindfulness and validating this through the “rational and masculine” discourse that Jon Kabat-Zinn had promoted with the MBRS program (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). To substantiate her ideas she made use of power point slides with what she thought were Zinn’s and other mindfulness personalities’ most important quotes. As I perceived it, this was done strategically, as she used images of men being violent and women enacting the opposite, serenity in order to make some of her points clear. She made us understand that enacting masculinity was wrong, while enacting womanness was highly appreciated. To send this message and highlight the contrast between these and the strong and violent images, she used light pink and purple colors with some butterflies as décor (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

Returning to Goffman’s approach on the importance of the setting of a performance, the fact that her presentation was packaged in a power point presentation made it seem *reasonable*. The technology was used to present “unquestionable quotes” to be taken by the audience as facts. Additionally, speaking with Butler’s, the design and images were shaping gender performativity. The butterflies, the images of men *being men* and women *being women*, the letter with pink fonts and delicate forms, were still saying that while the form (the power point) was masculine, the essence was feminine.

Following that, we did some exercises that taught us how to feel, and basically how to act *mindfully*. How? Below I present a particular moment with one of the men in the audience that showed us that, as the cultural system had expressed, acting mindfully was actually a prestigious enactment of womanness.

8.2. “Usted no sabe quién soy yo” or the situation with Diego Velazquez

At the beginning of the seminar Andrea had given us nametags so she could identify us, she encouraged us to write our nicknames or the way in which we liked to be call. She said, “Im not really good with names, but please write the nickname or form by which you love to be called”. I wrote “Nati” on my nametag. Everyone followed the instruction, everyone, but Diego Velasquez. He was one of the three men in the group and apparently he

liked to be called Diego Velazquez. Not a short nickname, or anything different, but his complete name and last name (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

This was not the only thing that made him different from the rest of us. Diego was the only man who, after a while, started questioning Andrea, almost rejecting her ideas. He was not able to understand why the patriarchal system was so wrong, why men were said to be violent, rude and everything that one should not be, while women were being portrayed as delicate amorous and everything one should aspire to be. For Diego, being a man within the patriarchal system meant being right. How did he show how he really felt? He acted as he thought a man should act. He showed us that he had the power to interrupt and used a loud tone in his voice when addressing Andrea. He would not care about what she was saying and he would move his body almost aggressively when doing the exercises (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

During one of these exercises Diego Velazquez was asked to step at the center of the room. Andrea told him that it was time for him to open his heart. She wanted him to show his “true feelings” and to speak about a difficult emotional topic. The atmosphere got tense at that moment; our silence was a different kind of silence, our bodies did not move and our eyes did not blink. We were not sure if Diego Velazquez would follow Andrea’s instructions. We were almost scared, but also interested in observing what was about to happen (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). Using a tender voice and looking directly into Diego’s eyes, Andrea told him, “ok you need to start talking, imagine that the situation is happening right now, what would you say?” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). As the rest of the audience had imagined, Diego seemed reluctant to do the exercise. A manly man does not follow a woman’s instructions, right? Instead, Diego started to talk about the origins of his family. He started to tell us why “Velasquez” was an important and privileged last name in the country. He mentioned how he had shared cocktails with presidents and important personalities from all around the world. In his eyes, his family had changed the political sphere of Colombia and he thought we needed to know this (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

What was Diego doing? He did not want his privileged position as man to be lost; he did not want to be perceived as *the weak* (feminine/woman). He acted in line with what people in Bogotá and other parts of the country know as a case of “usted no sabe quién soy yo” (Do you know who I am?). Which is an expression that has popularized in the public eye over the years. It is used in public scandals when people, who are acting illegally or are caught driving drunk, want to stress the fact that they have a high socio-economic position, a well-paying job or a governmental position and thus think of themselves as more important

than anyone else^{xii}. In short, Diego did not want to stop enacting his masculinity, because in his eyes this would make him lose his prestige. How did Andrea handle his opposition?

Hearing what Diego was talking about she said, “you are not doing the exercise, you need to address the topic I am suggesting. We are here to open ourselves, to learn how to feel”. Diego looked at her with the most threatening gaze, his body was extremely rigid and screaming at her, he said “OK, BUT I DON’T WANT TO DO THAT LET’S SKIP THIS EXERCISE AND DO THE NEXT ONE” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016).

In order to explain how Andrea responded to Diego’s anger, I need to share what we had learnt earlier that morning. At around ten o’clock in the morning, Andrea had requested us to go outside the room and make a circle in the green area that was right outside. She told us she was going to teach us how to act and feel mindfully when facing what she called “difficult situations”. To recreate one of these situations she put herself as an example by doing an exercise in which she moved via aggressive movements, frowned and pushed someone (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). This meant that for her and for us a difficult situation was supposed to be understood as handling violent and angry people. And, as I mention early, she had taught us that “the angry people” were... men. She said that when someone was angry one should not say anything, but one should hug the person and “channel the bad energy” until that energy was gone. She even said that it did not matter if the person showed some resistance. She explained that there was resistance because the person “desperately” needed love and we needed to hug him (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). This corresponded with what Andrea had taught us that women did, they acted sensitively and with love. So that morning we were given instructions on how to act according to an assumed dichotomy of men and women. But, I shall continue with the story to emphasize exactly how we experienced this.

As mentioned above, Diego, who was sitting at the center of the room, had just screamed at Andrea. She was sitting right next to me. She did not say anything or react badly to his attitude. Instead, she stood up walked up directly towards him, put her body in front of his body and asked him to stand up. Diego stood up with some reluctance and, as soon as he did it, she hugged him. However, he did not hug her back, so Andrea whispered something into his ear (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). I wish I could share with the reader what she told him, but we could not hear it. However, immediately after hearing her words, Diego put his arms around Andrea, closed his eyes and said “ok you are right, I will do it...yes I should not be like this” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016), to which Andrea replied “you see, it is all good, you are safe...try and connect with your heart” (Fieldnotes, February 20, 2016). And so he

did, he continued the exercise, as Andrea wanted. We were extremely shocked by what had happened and I must confess that I could not believe what I was seeing. What exactly were the participants and I seeing and experiencing at that moment? I argue that at that moment we were seeing how Diego Velasquez had stopped being Diego Velasquez and thus we were seeing Andrea's (and the cultural system) definition of mindfulness in action.

Revisiting this scene through Turner's liminality definition, what we had just witnessed with Diego had been the steps of what the author refers to as the "recombination in fantastic and monstrous shapes" and the "recombination in ways that make sense with regard to the new state and status that the neophytes will enter" in a *rite de passage* (Turner, 1964, p.53). The first one is a technique of exaggeration that the ritual authorities (Andrea) use in order to generate an intense awareness about the current course of action of the liminal personae. Turner (1964) explains this process with one simple, but interesting example; he says it is like putting "...a man's head on a lion's body and you think about the human head in the abstract" (Turner, 1964, p.53). This means that, by recombining the things that people know and are closely related, one's head, with some other things that would make them nonsensical, the lion, and even, as Turner would say, look "monstrous", the liminal personae are capable of disarticulating the way in which they take things for granted. This allows for a different perspective on things and directs the person into a new way of *being*, which is the main goal of the ritual. Consequently, that phase opens space to the second recombination phase. According to Turner (1964) the second stage is about reorganizing knowledge in new ways that correspond to the new status that the person is in the way of earning (Turner, 1964, p. 53).

I claim that, in our case, the "recombination in fantastic and monstrous shapes" was embodied in Diego. With this I mean that, due to his initial behavior and manifestations, he had become a representation of the belief that prestige was about enacting masculinity and having power. Consequently, that being manly was about being violent and aggressive. How is this "fantastic and monstrous"? Well in a literal sense it is not, as this has nothing to do with "lions and heads". However, if one takes a closer look, the fact that we experienced a vivid representation of everything that we had been taken for granted within the patriarchal system and that, according to Andrea, was "wrong" or I should say "polluted" Diego's enactment became a good exaggeration technique that she use in order for us to reflect upon it.

Once we were able to grasp, in real life, what the patriarchal system had made out of us, that is, violent men and loving supporting women, we were able to enter into a new way

of being. Enter into the mindfulness experience. How did we do this? Because after Diego became a tool for the “fantastic and monstrous”, he also became a tool for showing us how we should reorganize our knowledge.

What I am saying here by “Diego Velazquez stopped being Diego Velazquez” is that when Andrea touched Diego’s body and consequently when he reacted positively to this, Diego decided to accept mindfulness and rethink his knowledge about the world. That is to say, Diego accepted the enactment of womanness. His expression “I should not be like this” meant more than just “being angry”, it meant that at that moment he realized he should not enact that which he thought to be masculine. Instead, he realized that mindfulness was also *prestigious* (As Andrea reassured him that everything was ok), that he could let his guard down and “open his heart” as Andrea had advised.

Further, although it was Diego who had the immediate sensuous experience, the scene had a large impact on the rest of the group. The moment that this happened, a unanimous “wow” was heard across the room. We were feeling this sensation together, as a community; we were reorganizing the knowledge and taking yet another step towards our new status. Diego’s subordination and acceptance of delicate movements and emotional connection were “changing our being” (As Turner highlights, 1964, p.51). Their “on stage” interaction was *stylizing our bodies*, as Butler might have put it, and reinforcing the idea that being mindful was good, in fact it was the goal. I mean if Diego Velazquez could decide to embrace mindfulness, then any man could do it without losing prestige. In fact, winning prestige was achieved through the enactment of womanness in the community’s eyes and, as I have illustrated earlier, in the women’s cultural system.

To conclude, it seemed that together with the power point presentation, the physical exercises and particularly the situation with Diego Velazquez, Andrea was successful at dissolving the anxieties of the man who said he was feeling “scared” because he could not be a man in the “girly atmosphere”. As I have tried to illustrate, this two-day ritualistic experience taught us that we were neither women nor men; instead we were bodies that were being transformed into the enactment of womanness. I felt it and so did the other participants; they all asserted that this had changed their way of thinking and acting. We all thought that this transformation made a lot of sense and that the enactment of womanness was something to appreciate. In fact it could provide the prestige that Bogotá people value.

9. The story concluded and applied

This chapter summarizes my ethnographic and analytical work, the conclusions drawn in my thesis and how they can be applied.

9.1. Summary

This thesis is a story, written with the aid of cultural analytical tools, of seven mindfulness companies and their owners, seven women. It illustrates their understanding of mindfulness and how they shape their companies. My analysis unveiled the rules behind owning a mindfulness company, the marketing strategies and what its owners call a “mindfulness experience”. Mindfulness is thought of as something rather personal. Mindfulness let these women start a business, not the other way around. Due to their emotional connection with the concept, they thought of it as something they needed to protect and shape according to their own ideals, almost as if they were protecting their own personas.

As the seven women shared this notion they came to shape what I refer to as a “cultural system”. By using this term, I label this group as people who share a common understanding of a concept. They create the historicity of mindfulness in Bogotá. Using Mary Douglas’s theoretical perspective on order, pollution and cleanliness, I revealed and analyzed three rules of this system. Specifically, I drew on her concept of internal lines (the rules), external boundaries (the Buddhist system) to do this. Rule number one was to “be on a quest”. This rule explains the most important prerequisites for belonging to this group. These women had to undergo a quest, which was defined as a continuous personal process that meant changing the way in which they were experiencing the world. For them this meant quitting their corporate jobs and pursuing something that they believed was more meaningful. If a person did not experience such a change in paradigms, then the others inside the cultural system would think of her as polluted.

Rule number two was shaped as “you can use mindfulness only if you are on a personal quest, and only if the other members of the group validate your quest”. This rule showed how the pollution beliefs reinforced rule number one, and the consequences that an outsider could face trying to ignore or exceed the limits of the system. Likewise, it addressed the importance that they attached to Buddhism in their personal quest, and the significance of having the group’s validation. These two were thought of as the only “accredited” ways in which people would be able to have a mindfulness company and do what was thought to be “clean”.

Rule number three was that “we are not businesswomen; we are women that help others”. Following the Buddhist guideline and their own ideas about what is right and what is wrong, they mystify their positions as business people and choose to portray their roles as “helpers”. This was in line with how they thought they needed to articulate their performance in front of their business audience. At the same time, it was a self-generated notion that helped them protect the coherency of their system.

I then analyzed the marketing strategies of the women and their companies and revealed how they are enmeshed in a masculine economy. This economy protects what Judith Butler calls the “heterosexual matrix”. This matrix explains how gender stereotypes support the notions of a patriarchal society. The analysis was made by juxtaposing what high-level managers express as the notion that the organizational realm in the city thought about mindfulness and the measurements that the women took in order to deviate from the “misconceptions” around these definitions. This showed that, in the organizational realm of the city, mindfulness was defined as the enactment of womanness, which high-level managers knew their employees and co-workers could consider as taboo and thus they could not use if they wanted to maintain a certain prestige. Consequently, the thesis discussed and illustrated the strategies orchestrated to change these taboos and market mindfulness as the prestigious enactment of womanness.

Finally, via Victor Turner’s liminality definition, the thesis discussed how, what these women coined as a “mindfulness experience” was actually a *rite de passage*. Based on my ethnographic investigation and experience of a two-day seminar, I described the ritualistic steps and experiences that were used to change the “being” of people in the organizational realm and stylize their bodies into a “prestigious” enactment of womanness, that is mindfulness.

9.2. Concluding discussion

As the reader might remember, this piece of the story of mindfulness continued after I traced what the local media in Bogotá labeled as “mindfulness experts”. A set of interesting questions was set, were the intentions of the business owners to promote and introduce mindfulness for the organizational realm going to be successful? Was mindfulness going to be accepted by the organizational realm? Or was it going to be thought as something inappropriate within this setting? Would it have to face any transformations?

Based on the main findings, it is now possible to answer such intriguing questions; the idea had to be transformed and translated in order for mindfulness to be accepted by the organizational realm in the city. This then was a story of transformation. What kind of transformation was it? Perhaps it serves to look at this story via an old and famous fairy tale, that of the Ugly Duckling by Hans Christian Andersen. As the fairy tale goes, the little duckling was not accepted by its own sociocultural context (his brothers, mother and other ducklings) because he did not look like them. Not happy with his situation, he embarks on a long journey trying to find some answers about his own appearance and the way he feels about it. One day he stumbles with a herd of swans and realizes that he is not a duck, but a swan. What is more, he discovers that he is not just any swan, but he is the most beautiful and elegant swan amongst the herd. Let me revisit some conclusions to illustrate how this story of transformation makes out of mindfulness the Ugly Duckling.

Mindfulness first traveled as an idea from West to East. Within this process it was transformed from mystical to material and received its first translation as a personal quest by each of the mindfulness business owners. At that point of the story the original version of the Ugly Duckling goes into an adaptation as, by seeing its potential, it could be said that they did not perceive mindfulness as the Ugly Duckling, but as the elegant swan that deserved to be transformed from a non-material idea into the legal existence of mindfulness companies.

However, perceiving that others within the organizational realm thought of the swan as the Ugly Duckling and did not want to spend time with it, the idea of mindfulness had to be translated so it could navigate the patriarchal system and the socio-cultural workings that guide the organizational realm in Bogotá. With a set of tools, the plot of this story reveals how these business owners translated what was thought as the ugly and inappropriate duckling (the preconceived ideas around womanhood) within the organizational setting, as the prestigious enactment of womanhood, which gave it its new status as the new and elegant swan in the city.

To conclude, the analogy I make between the fairy tale and this story points out that mindfulness should not always be considered as a “ready-made” notion (the elegant swan) that has not suffer any transformation. That is to say, my story illustrates that an idea such as mindfulness depends on socio-cultural nuances that are to be examined when an idea is traveling in “time and space” as Czarniawska & Joerges (1996) argue. Hence, the analysis highlights the importance of questioning the “taken for granted” that the academic work has illustrated when addressing mindfulness both as meditative practice and as cognitive process that can be used by business people. It destabilizes the notion that mindfulness, as defined in

this work, is a tool (the swan) that is brought into the organizational realm through a linear process and packaged as a generic product for executives to consume. Likewise, by focusing on mindfulness companies, my work sheds light on a concept that, to date seems unrecognized in much academic work, and highlights the extremely gendered connotations of mindfulness in a city such as Bogotá.

9.3. Applicability

Apart from adding to the body of academic research on mindfulness, my work can be of use also in business settings. Mindfulness companies that plan to offer their services to the organizational realm in Colombia for example. I suggest that these companies use my work as an analytical guide to help them understand their target audience and, above all, the wider system in which they are enmeshed in order to develop efficient marketing strategies. For example, they could create innovative means to reach their audience preempting resistance from and destabilizing pre-established gender stereotypes. They could develop informed slogans, shapes and images that could be perceived as gender neutral and present the feminine and masculine discourse in a more balanced way within their websites.

The outcome of my work is also beneficial to the business sphere as it presents a reflection on the pressures that high-level managers attach to their managerial roles. It could be the case that such managers have not reflected upon this situation nor considered the socio-cultural system that pressures them into accomplishing this. In this scenario, my thesis can be helpful for them to understand why it is that they have to “act like managers” and perhaps develop a strategy that does not stop them from what one of them report as “not being able to be” in the organizational realm.

Finally, as I consider my text to be a cultural production dealing with local nuances, this thesis could be of interest to the Colombian Ministry of Culture. Particularly to their department “Grupo de Emprendimiento Cultural” [Cultural Entrepreneurship Group], which promotes local cultural research focused on the economic impact of cultural entrepreneurs in the country. My work can be helpful for this group via two aspects. Firstly, it could help them understand how these seven entrepreneurs develop a concept such as mindfulness that tends to be related with a New Age economy, and how they translate such understanding into Bogotá’s organizational realm. Secondly, as was hinted throughout this work, drawing on the national decree 1072 from 2015, that directs companies to change and enhance their health and safety work strategies, and is to be executed by every national company by January 31, 2017. These companies are preparing (two of them already are) a

strategy to offer a “mindful” version of what is commonly known as “pausas activas” [Work breaks].

Currently, companies hire or use the services of workplace insurance companies to provide these breaks, they have an approximate length of fifteen minutes and within this time employees are instructed to perform a series of body exercises. They are normally guided by young women between the ages of 24 and 30 years old who hold professions within the medical field such as physiotherapists and are outsourced by the insurance companies, It can also be the case for the companies to distribute such responsibility amongst their employees.

Although this was not the main focus of the investigation, the results from my “organizational wellbeing” survey, showed that this is a problematic and uncomfortable practice for employees as it is currently being practiced. There are noticeable discrepancies between what they think they need to do, what their bosses want them to do and how the work breaks are legally handled. The two interviews I conducted as a follow up also showed that these work breaks carry an immense significance when it comes to gender stereotypes. The instructors are constantly objectified via the use of sexist jokes that the male employees address when doing these exercises. As my investigation revealed, the mindfulness companies package mindfulness as the enactment of womanness, whilst it has been hinted that the “pausas activas” are shaped around the enactment of masculinity. Then, if mindfulness companies become the companies’ allies and develop “mindful pausas” [mindful workbreaks] this would mean that several national companies would be facing a direct change in paradigms. Thus my work can be use by the “Grupo de Emprendimiento Cultural” as an initial insight to understand a direct cultural phenomenon that, in the medium to long term, could have a larger impact in the workplace. A setting that, in Bogotá, is understood as the basis of a masculine economy.

9.4. The End?

As this is the last paragraph of my thesis, it would seem to you, the reader, that we have reached an end, but have we really? Perhaps it is a temporary end concluding my text, but it is not a definitive end in the mindfulness universe. As was highlighted by Czarniawska and Joerges (1996), an idea such as mindfulness will continue to travel and be open for new transformation. So, I say good-bye, for now. I thank you for having read and thus joined me on my quest, a journey that belongs to a much longer history of mindfulness, a story that never ends.

10. References

Ethnographic material:

a) List of figures:

Fig .1. Trascendental's homepage

Fig .2. Print screen of photos in the gallery section

Fig .3. Print screen of advertising images for Mindfulness seminars at a local University

b) Interviews:

Andrea, personal communication, February 16, 2016 (N. Usme, Interviewer)

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Notes

ⁱ Hanegraaff is clear to state that Neopaganism is a term that does not encompass the meaning he attaches to New Age, thus he refers to this construct as the “New Age Neo Paganism variety” (See Hanegraaff, 1998, pg.78)

ⁱⁱ Hanegraaff makes a distinction between what he refers as New Age sensu stricto, which according to him is strictly related with the New Age beliefs on the arrival of the Age of Aquarium, and what he refers as New Age sensu lato. The last concept has to do with the development of the New Age movement in the United States. The author argues that this movement has a “strong American flavor and has been profoundly influenced by the Californian counterculture (Hanegraaff, 1998, p. 97). The author is clear in highlighting that one should not think that the last one is a development of New Age sensu stricto, as he argues that they have different characteristic. Hence, in saying that New Age developed in the 19th century I just focus on illustrating the historicity of the concept, but in this thesis I do not wish to develop around the difference between concepts as it is not my main focus. However,

note that when speaking about the development of New Age movement in the United States I understand “New Age” as related with the counterculture movement and thus in its *sensu lato* form.

ⁱⁱⁱ See a reflection made on this topic in the BBC online article “*Estrato 1, estrato 6: cómo los colombianos hablan de sí mismos divididos en clases sociales*”, Wallace, 2014.

^{iv} An email was sent to all thirty-three participants explaining and requesting their permission to discuss the mindful experience. They were all informed that names were going to be changed and none of their personal information was going to be disclosed. Note that only seven people answered directly to the email. However, as the information I include here does not cross any personal or ethical boundary I do not perceive this as damaging any particular interest.

^v Douglas does not use the term “cultural system”, but she refers to a system. However, I employ the term following my understanding on Clifford Geertz definition.

^{vi} Professor Jeff Wilson has previously highlighted the importance that Master Zen Thich Naht Hanh has acquired over the years. He claims that Hanh has become one of the most important Buddhist author dealing with mindfulness in the West (Wilson, 2014, p.36).

^{vii} In the interview with Andrea the concept of what “business” was became enmeshed with other topics and that is why this question was not made directly to her, hence her reaction to this question was not as evident as in the other cases.

^{viii} I illustrate my point on being and having via Fromm’s analogy because, as mentioned within the text, he seems to be reinforcing and accepting the heterosexual matrix. Further, his explanation is relevant as, in his view, the Western and Eastern societies are part of the dichotomy between the feminine and the masculine. However, I am aware that the field of cultural analysis and that of psychoanalysis make incursions within different realms and I do not wish to suggest they can be put together within the same line of thought nor that they have the same aim. Following that line of argument, my aim is not to scrutinize in the minds and psyche of the characters of this story, but to provide an analysis on what was highlighted within my fieldwork.

^{ix} In speaking of this naive nature, Fromm refers to the image that Jesus Christ acquired in front of a society that, by that time, were accustomed to the pagan martyrs that Fromm refers to. (Fromm, 1976, p. 115).

^x The name of the work-breaks has been changed to protect the identity of the company.

^{xi} Dr. Jessica Enevold has kindly highlighted that there could be a different way in which this could be understood. It could be the case that a New Age or alternatively spiritually oriented person argues that the physical and cognitive connection that I refer as pertaining to “the feminine side” is not gendered, but as a process that aims at providing and achieving human equilibrium. Taking this into account, I suggest to perceive my analysis as an illustration on how; perhaps without reflecting on it, a specific socio-cultural context is forced by its own involvement within the heterosexual matrix to think of this information as gendered.

^{xii} Several local articles discuss the topic e.g., “*otro caso de “usted no sabe quién soy yo” ahora protagonizado por un fiscal*”, Noticias Caracol 2016); “*La historia detrás del “usted no sabe quién soy yo”*”, Moreno, 2016