Is Mindfulness “Religious”? From Sectarianism to Universalism

Jessie Sun
jesun@ucdavis.edu

This is an unpublished, non-peer-reviewed undergraduate paper, written in late 2014, for an Anthropology of Religion class at the University of Melbourne.

If you wish to cite this work, you can cite it as an unpublished manuscript:

Sun, J. (2014). *Is mindfulness “religious”? From sectarianism to universalism*. Unpublished manuscript. Available at [MindRxiv link here].

To what extent can mindfulness meditation, purposefully removed from its traditional Buddhist context, be considered “religious”? How does this deepen our understanding of the relationship between religion and modernity?

Is Mindfulness “Religious”? From Sectarianism to Universalism

For most Westerners, the image of the “tranquil meditator” has become ubiquitously associated with Buddhism (Mitchell 2014, 84). Yet, the practice of mindfulness, commonly understood as a non-judgemental, present-centred awareness (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 4), has now become increasingly fashionable among mainstream non-Buddhists, for non-Buddhist goals. To what extent, then, can this practice, traditionally central to the Buddhist path of awakening, still be considered “religious”? This essay describes the antecedents and analyses the characteristics of the emerging “mindfulness movement”. In observing challenges to the necessity and exclusivity of mindfulness’ association with Buddhism, I argue that the detraditionalising forces of modernity have rendered previously “religious” practices open to multiple interpretations; this, in turn, signifies a need to broaden the conceptual frameworks that guide the study of religious and spiritual experiences.

1. Religion and Buddhism in Modernity

Modernity has led to a staggering array of changes and breakdowns in traditional structures and taken-for-granted certainties (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002), which have sparked debates about the role of religion in modernity. The secularisation thesis predicted that modernity would necessarily lead to a decline of religion, at both a societal and individual level (Berger 1992, 2). However, Berger (1992), a key proponent of secularisation theory, later reversed his position, advancing the desecularisation thesis: secularisation theory was mistaken and the world (with some exceptions) remains “as furiously religious as ever” (p. 2). Still, the

question of whether religion is declining or more pervasive than ever critically depends on how it is defined and what indicators are being measured. This is a nontrivial issue, especially in a time of significant change, which means that religion may not necessarily appear in predictable places or forms; consequently, we cannot just assume that it is disappearing (Ammerman 2013, 6).

Hence, even newer “post-secular” approaches suggest that it may be more relevant to consider how modernity has resulted in new *forms* of religiosity, to broaden our conceptual scope (Possamai 2009, 53; Partridge 2004). The rise of the spiritual phenomenon represents one of these key changes, where spiritual ideas have continued to persist or even flourish while traditional forms of religion have declined (Partridge 2004; Heelas & Woodhead 2005). Supporting this, the Pew Research Center (2012, 10) found that the proportion of U.S. adults with no religious affiliation rose from just over 15% to just under 20% from 2007-2012, but that 37% of U.S adults identified as “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR) in 2012, and of the SBNRs, 44% pray daily and 92% believe in God. Thus, people may be turning away from traditional religious affiliations, but the alternative is not necessarily atheism (Possamai 2009, 62). The SBNR phenomenon has also been characterised by eclecticism, as many individuals draw on multiple traditions simultaneously (Houtman & Aupers 2007, 306).

In this new “spiritual supermarket” (Lyon 2000), Buddhist practices have been especially amenable to mass appropriation because of one specific way that Buddhism has been portrayed in the West. As McMahan (2008, 4; 243) explains, the standard view of Buddhism by Westerners has become one in which Buddhism is a “scientific religion”, “philosophy”, or “way of life” which requires no particular beliefs and has no strict rules, discourages blindly following authority in favour of personal experience, and holds few superstitions. All that is required is that you exercise compassion and meditate to maintain a peaceful mind. However, as McMahan (2008, 5) explains, these are only accurate representations of a *new* Buddhism,

Buddhist Modernism, which he defines as “forms of Buddhism which have emerged out of an engagement with the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of modernity” (p. 6). Featuring tendencies of detraditionalisation, demythologisation and psychologisation, Modernist Buddhism sees the Buddha’s original message as being particularly compatible with a modern cosmological framework governed by notions of reason, science, individualism and freedom (McMahan 2008, 8).

2. Preparing the Ground: The Vipassanā Movement

The vipassanā movement, which offers vipassanā meditation largely divorced from the elements of its traditional Theravāda Buddhist context, represents one of the most detraditionalised forms of Buddhist Modernism (Fronsdal 1998, 164). Beginning in the 1980s in the U.S., the most influential stimulants for its growth were the Insight Meditation Society (IMS), the Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and their pioneering teachers, Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg (Fronsdal 1998, 165). The trio had trained under Asian teachers who were part of the modernist movement in Asia, and therefore emphasised meditation over other aspects of the Theravāda tradition. In importing vipassanā meditation, however, the American teachers went even further than their Asian teachers in their near-exclusive emphasis on meditation, which they viewed as the “essence of Buddhism” (Kornfield 1993, x), while disregarding the “complications of rituals, robes, chanting and the whole religious tradition” (Kornfield, cited in Fronsdal 1998, 167). Without this concern for cultural preservation, the American teachers therefore adapted and presented the teachings in far more westernised forms by ignoring or even rejecting traditional cosmological elements such as karma, merit-making and rebirth, which had previously been seen as central to the tradition (Fronsdal 1998, 162). Instead, they replaced the traditional soteriological goal of escape from the round of rebirths (or at least avoiding lower rebirths) with a view of practice as a therapeutic tool that brings psychological benefits and freedom “in the midst of this very world” (Kornfield 1993, x). With

these pragmatic goals, the American teachers were spiritually eclectic, borrowing from whatever tradition that might aid in the pursuit of “freedom” (Fronsdal 1998, 176); as Fronsdal (1998, 176) observed, they were “almost as likely to quote a Sufi, Hindu, Tibetan, Taoist, or Zen teacher as they are to quote the Buddha or a Theravada teacher” in their Dharma talks and writings.

This eclecticism was facilitated by the nonsectarian and noncommittal attitudes of vipassanā meditators and teachers, who often downplayed their connections to Buddhism and religion. Practitioners would more often refer to themselves as “vipassanā students and teachers” rather than “students of Theravada Buddhism” (Fronsdal 1998, 169). Similarly, the early students, who had distanced themselves from traditional religious institutions and were more interested in personal transformation, were more likely to describe their practice as “spiritual” than “religious” (Fronsdal 1998, 169). This stance was more than acceptable to the teachers, who sometimes even discouraged students from identifying themselves as Buddhists as they cautioned that this “can be another way we get caught or lose one's true balance” (Goldstein & Kornfield 1987, 8). Thus, Kornfield (cited in Braun 2013, 166) explained:

“More and more, we're teaching meditation not as a religious activity but as a support for living a wise and healthy and compassionate inner life. A number of the people I teach don't consider themselves Buddhists, which is absolutely fine with me.”

Even with its extent of detraditionalisation and its emphasis on pragmatic goals, ethical teachings traditionally found in Buddhism continue to play a role in the IMS ethos. Loving-kindness, ethics, and generosity, along with mindfulness, make up the four core teachings in the IMS, even though mindfulness receives primary emphasis (Fronsdal 1998, 173). Furthermore, students formally, or even ritualistically, “take” or recite the five lay precepts at the commencement of intensive meditation retreats, and are expected to follow them during

the retreat (Fronsdal 1998, 175). Outside of these retreats, however, the teachers generally speak of these precepts as *guidelines* for cultivating a mindful and wise life (Fronsdal 1998, 174) and virtuous character (Fronsdal 2002, 299), rather than as strict rules or "absolute commandments" (Goldstein & Kornfield 1987, 7), in line with modernist interpretations of Buddhism. Therefore, vipassanā was not presented as a religion but as the cultivation of mindfulness as a means for attaining spiritual and psychological freedom relevant to one's present life (Wallace 2002, 38).

3. Beyond Buddhism? The Mindfulness Movement

The pragmatic and nonsectarian characteristics of the vipassanā movement prepared the ground for the arrival of the mindfulness movement; the recent widespread popularity of an overtly “de-Buddhicised” mindfulness in applications across multiple spheres of mainstream society, including medicine, psychology, education and the corporate world (Boyce 2011). The movement began with the pioneering work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, who created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme in 1979 as a complementary treatment for patients with chronic pain and diseases. MBSR consists of eight two-hour weekly sessions which include mindfulness instructions and discussions on various coping strategies; participants are also asked to practice for an additional 45 minutes each day, six days a week (Kabat-Zinn 1990). The *formal* practices include the “body scan” (moving the awareness from the feet to the head while lying down), “sitting meditation” (paying attention to the breath, body, sounds and thoughts while sitting), and “mindful movement” (slow, gentle, hatha yoga stretches) (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Participants are also encouraged to engage in *informal* practice by mindfully carrying out everyday activities (e.g., eating, walking and brushing your teeth), to cultivate a continuity of awareness during daily life (Kabat-Zinn 2003, 147).

Kabat-Zinn's (2011, 287) vision was to bring the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, to people who were suffering from stress, pain and illness, but who would have never

encountered or accepted these practices and teachings in their traditional Buddhist forms. Through painstaking efforts, he reframed the practice using an “American” vocabulary, to make the concepts commonsensical, accessible and acceptable - in other words, not “Buddhist” (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 282). When explaining the origins of these teachings to medical and lay audiences, Kabat-Zinn would show a photograph of a Buddha statue, and explain that the word “Buddha” means one who has awakened and that mindfulness “has little or nothing to do with Buddhism per se, and everything to do with wakefulness, compassion, and wisdom”, which are “universal qualities of being human” that the word “dharma” points to (Kabat-Zinn 2011, 283). Thus, Kabat-Zinn led a process of “de-Buddhicisation” in which he divorced mindfulness from its Buddhist connotations in favour of a “universal dharma perspective” (2011, 293).

As I have previously argued (Sun 2014, 10), this secularising manoeuvre was essential for the mainstreaming of mindfulness, which had received relatively little attention prior to its secularised presentation. The movement has thus largely been characterised by discourses of secularisation and instrumentalisation, in which its Buddhist origins and ethical implications have been somewhat obscured (Sun 2014, 10-12). In an American culture characterised by pragmatism and a scientific outlook (Tori 2006, 319), the key question in the public mind seems to be, “what can mindfulness do for me?” In response, mindfulness has been offered as a *scientifically validated* means to reduce stress, depression and anxiety (Khoury et al. 2013), increase enjoyment in everyday life (Boyce 2011), help kids learn better (Mindfulness in Schools Project 2014), help soldiers “think more clearly under fire” (Watson 2013), and cut healthcare costs (Hruby 2012) while improving the bottom line of corporations (Huffington 2013). What is constantly emphasised in popular media is that mindfulness is a “secular mental technique” (Hruby 2012) that “is not tied to any religious practice” (Watson 2013). As Braun (2013, 166) explains, this justification of practice in terms of purely instrumental goals makes sense in a cosmological context that lacks the compelling motivation of karmic threat.

In some ways, this heavily secularised discourse would suggest that the practice has been stripped not only of its Buddhist identity but of any connotations of spirituality. This has been a point of backlash for critics who have suggested that the practice has been decontextualised and denatured into a banal, self-centred therapeutic technique far from its original ethical and liberative purposes (Purser and Loy 2013). Yet, both empirical evidence and anecdotal accounts from mindfulness teachers suggest that there is more to these secularised courses than what first meets the eye. Despite the secular stance and lack of explicit discussions on spirituality in MBSR, several quantitative studies have nonetheless found increases in spirituality (Garland et al. 2007; Carmody et al. 2008; Birnie, Speca, & Carlson 2010) and everyday spiritual experiences (Astin 1997; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner 1998; Greeson et al. 2011; Geary & Rosenthal 2011), including elements such as personal faith, meaning and peace, a sense of connection with a higher power, and awe, joy and beauty, following the course. In one qualitative study, Mackenzie et al. (2007) also found that spirituality emerged as a key theme, even though participants often had not anticipated or sought spiritual growth through the program. Participants also described feeling increasingly interconnected with others, found that meditation helped them to develop a perspective that provided comfort, meaning and direction under high stress and uncertainty, and found that they began to develop qualities of gratitude, compassion and equanimity (Mackenzie et al. 2007, 65-67). Mackenzie et al. (2007) therefore concluded that “the development of spirituality might be an inevitable outcome of the practice, as one becomes aware of the intricate interconnections among themselves, other individuals and eventually all aspects of nature” (p. 67). This is consistent with Kabat-Zinn’s (2011, 298) suggestion that the Dharma can be “self-revealing”, even if not explicitly taught.

4. Multiple Interpretations in Modernity

If we now return to the original question of whether mindfulness, presented as secular practice, can be considered “religious”, the first key observation is that a single practice can be interpreted in multiple ways. Frisk (2014, 58) has suggested that mindfulness has become a “hybrid product”, potentially subject to both religious and secular interpretations. In this way, elements previously conceived of as “religious” may lose their “religiosity”, as the practices may be individually interpreted as religious or not (Frisk 2014, 59). Similarly, Mitchell (2014, 86) suggests that the distinction between mindfulness as “secular” or “religious” depends on the ends to which the practice is directed. While somewhat of a simplification and perhaps an invalid dichotomy, Mitchell’s key point, which recognises the importance of individual intentions, motivations and interpretations, still holds. What this shows, then, is that *context matters*. A practice in isolation is never by itself religious, spiritual, or otherwise meaningful; rather, practices and ideas necessarily take on their symbolic meaning from the social contexts and symbolic systems in which they are embedded. Thus, an individual’s cosmological framework will guide their motivations and interpretations of the practice.

Accompanying this, an alternative interpretation is the emerging argument that certain ideas and practices associated with Buddhism are really part of a universal, nonsectarian spiritual perspective. From this perspective, mindfulness, and its accompanying teachings, are neither necessarily nor exclusively Buddhist. For example, Kabat-Zinn (2000, 233) refers to meditation, yoga, Tai Chi and Chi Gong collectively as the “consciousness disciplines”, as he believes that they share the common root of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn 1994, 5). As we have seen, the American vipassanā teachers also expressed this universal attitude in their eclectic, nonsectarian approach, and Kabat-Zinn took this approach even further by making the Buddha “disappear” in proposing that wakefulness, compassion and wisdom are universal qualities that have little to do with Buddhism per se (2011, 293). Sam Harris, the second most famous atheist and outspoken critic of religion alive, has taken a similar approach in his recent manifesto for

a “rational approach to spirituality” (Harris 2014). In *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*, Harris (2014) endorses mindfulness meditation as a means to achieving the realisation that the “[o]ur conventional sense of self is an illusion” (p. 8), which he believes to be the core of spirituality. Previously, Harris (2006) also wrote about the process of transforming the mind from “a mere reservoir of greed, hatred, and delusion into an instrument of wisdom and compassion” (p. 7) and the concepts of emptiness, selflessness and impermanence, while claiming that “these truths are not in the least ‘Buddhist’” (p. 6) and warning that the “religion of Buddhism” threatens to stand in the way of this understanding. Thus, for Kabat-Zinn, Harris and others, the very label of “Buddhism” is sometimes seen as a misnomer or even as “getting in the way” of the key messages. They appeal instead to a discourse of universality that aims to discuss the full spectrum of human experience and wisdom in a nonsectarian way.

Taken together, this suggests that detraditionalising forces of modernity have opened up the space to challenge traditional interpretations of the practice. This sparks an even more intriguing question: if mindfulness can be individually interpreted in an “ad lib” way, and is not necessarily “Buddhist”, then *was mindfulness ever “Buddhist” in the first place?* To be sure, the “universal” interpretations of western proponents such as Kabat-Zinn and Harris are only interpretations and not truths, and so are inevitably culturally biased. Their interpretation nonetheless forces us to reconsider what it means for a practice or an idea to be “religious” in the first place, and therefore what a “religion” is comprised of. Here, the “Buddhist” teaching of non-self (*anattā*) appears to be instructive. An early nun, Vajirā, explained this through a metaphor: a chariot is made up of “non-chariot” things (e.g., the wheels, the framework, and the ropes), such that the word “chariot” is only used to denote a collection of components in a functional relationship with each other (Harvey 2013, 59). In a similar way, perhaps what we might call “Buddhism” or “religion” is also made up of “non-Buddhist” or “non-religious”

things. In line with Asad's (1993) influential critique of essentialist definitions of religion, then, perhaps we can only use these labels as conventional, convenient ways of referring to a functional collection of phenomena, while recognising that there is no essential defining core that we can point to as *being* Buddhism, and that "religion" does not "exist" independently of our conceptions (Herbrechtsmeier 1993, 16).

"Religious" or not, the main point of this brief study is to illustrate the utility of paying attention to precisely these phenomena that may not look prototypically or obviously "religious", as Ammerman (2013, 6) recommended. Through the example of the mindfulness movement, I have shown one way that religious forms and influence are changing in modernity, in that ideas and practices previously conceived of as "religious" may have an even greater and more widespread impact when ironically stripped of their religious identity. Nor is this influence necessarily fully "secular" (although it can be), as the practice begins to take on a more universal spiritual meaning for some. It is therefore a worthwhile endeavour to look beyond prototypical forms of religious activity and ask broader questions about the diverse ways that humans make sense of their world and recognise a "more than ordinary" dimension in life (Ammerman 2013, 292); insights that might be missed with an exclusive focus on "religion", narrowly defined. Hence, whatever label, category or conceptual framework we choose - "Buddhist-inspired", "pseudo-religious", "SBNR", "worldview analysis", "transcendent experiences", "beyond ordinary" or "religious appropriation" - it is apparent that these are phenomena that would be of interest to anthropologists of religion, if we are to understand the full spectrum of human experience.

Conclusion

This essay began by acknowledging that the detraditionalising forces of modernity have created new forms of religiosity and spirituality, which means that we now need to develop a broader conceptual framework of study. The Buddhist Modernism and vipassanā movements

prepared the ground for the mindfulness movement, which emerged as a full-blown secularising movement, yet one that seemed to retain the ability to implicitly transmit spiritual (or “Buddhist”) lessons, depending on how each individual interprets the practice. Thus, religion may be changing in modernity, but its influence remains, even if “repackaged” into secular “disguises”. The claim that mindfulness may be “universal” has also sparked new questions about what it means for something to be “religious” at all. These insights demonstrate the value of looking for new forms that religiosity and spirituality may now take, as this will guide and challenge the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that we bring to the study of “religious” phenomena in modernity.

References

- Ammerman, N 2013, *Sacred stories, spiritual tribes: finding religion in everyday life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Asad, T 1993, "The construction of religion as an anthropological category," in *Genealogies of religion: discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 27–54.
- Astin, JA 1997, "Stress reduction through mindfulness meditation: effects on psychological symptomatology, sense of control, and spiritual experiences," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, vol. 66, pp. 97–106.
- Beck, U & Beck-Gernsheim, E 2002, *Individualization: institutionalised individualism and its social and political consequences*, Sage Publications, London.
- Berger, PL 1999, "The desecularization of the world: a global overview," in PL Berger (ed), *The desecularization of the world: resurgent religion and world politics*, The Ethics and Public Policy Center and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Washington, DC, pp. 1–18.
- Birnie, K, Speca, M & Carlson, LE 2010, "Exploring self-compassion and empathy in the context of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)," *Stress and Health*, vol. 26, no. 5, pp. 359–371.
- Boyce, B 2011, *The mindfulness revolution*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.
- Braun, E 2013, *The birth of insight*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Carmody, J, Reed, G, Kristeller, J & Merriam, P 2008, "Mindfulness, spirituality, and health-related symptoms," *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 393–403.
- Frisk, L 2011, "The practice of mindfulness: from Buddhism to secular mainstream in a post-secular society," *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, vol. 24, pp. 48–61.
- Fronsdal, G 1998, "Insight meditation in the United States: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," in CS Prebish & KK Tanaka (eds), *The faces of Buddhism in America*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 163–180.

- Fronsdal, G 2002, "Virtues without rules: ethics in the Insight Meditation Movement," in CS Prebish & M Baumann (eds), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, pp. 285–308.
- Garland, SN, Carlson, LE, Cook, S, Lansdell, L & Speca, M 2007, "A non-randomized comparison of mindfulness-based stress reduction and healing arts programs for facilitating post-traumatic growth and spirituality in cancer outpatients," *Supportive Care in Cancer*, vol. 15, no. 8, pp. 949–61.
- Geary, C & Rosenthal, SL 2011, "Sustained impact of MBSR on stress, well-being, and daily spiritual experiences for 1 year in academic health care employees.," *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, vol. 17, no. 10, pp. 939–44.
- Gilpin, R 2008, "The use of Theravāda Buddhist practices and perspectives in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy," *Contemporary Buddhism*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 227–251.
- Goldstein, J & Kornfield, J 1987, *Seeking the heart of wisdom*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.
- Greeson, JM, Webber, DM, Smoski, MJ, Brantley, JG, Ekblad, AG, Suarez, EC & Wolever, RQ 2011, "Changes in spirituality partly explain health-related quality of life outcomes after mindfulness-based stress reduction," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 508–18.
- Harris, S 2006, "Killing the Buddha", *Shambhala Sun*, March 2006, accessed November 10, 2014 from <http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/killing-the-buddha/>.
- Harris, S 2014, *Waking up: a guide to spirituality without religion*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Harvey, P 2013, *An introduction to Buddhism: teachings, history and practices* 2nd edn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Heelas, P & Woodhead, L 2005, *The spiritual revolution: why religion Is giving way to spirituality.*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Herbrechtsmeier, W 1993, "Buddhism and the definition of religion: one more time," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 1–18.

- Houtman, D & Aupers, S 2007, "The spiritual turn and the decline of tradition : the spread of post-Christian spirituality in 14 western countries, 1981 – 2000," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 305–320.
- Hruby, P 2012, "Washington was making Rep. Tim Ryan sick ... until he found mindfulness," *The Washington Times*, July 11, accessed November 9, 2014, from <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jul/11/ohio-democrat-uses-mindfulness-stress-reduction-te/?page=all>>.
- Huffington, A 2013, "Mindfulness, meditation, wellness and their connection to corporate America's bottom line," *The Huffington Post Blog*, March 18, accessed November 10, 2014, from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/corporate-wellness_b_2903222.html>.
- Kabat-Zinn, J 1990, *Full catastrophe living*, Dell, New York.
- Kabat-Zinn, J 1994, *Wherever you go, there you are*, Hyperion, New York.
- Kabat-Zinn J 2000, "Indra's net at work: the mainstreaming of dharma practice in society," in G Watson, S Batchelor, & G Claxton (eds), *The psychology of awakening: Buddhism, science and our day-to-day lives*, Weiser, York Beach, pp. 225-249.
- Kabat-Zinn, J 2003, "Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 144–156.
- Kabat-Zinn, J 2011, "Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps," *Contemporary Buddhism*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 281–306.
- Khoury, B, Lecomte, T, Fortin, G, Masse, M, Therien, P, Bouchard, V, Chapleau, M, Paquin, K & Hofman, SG 2013, "Mindfulness-based therapy : a comprehensive meta-analysis," *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol. 33, pp. 763–771.
- Kornfield, J 1993, *Teachings of the Buddha*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Kornfield, J 2011, *Bringing home the Dharma: awakening right where you are*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.
- Lyon, D 2000, *Jesus in Disneyland: religion in postmodern times*, Polity Press, Oxford.

- Mackenzie, MJ, Carlson, LE, Munoz, M & Specia, M 2007, "A qualitative study of self-perceived effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in a psychosocial oncology setting," *Stress and Health*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 59–69.
- McMahan, DL 2008, *The making of Buddhist modernism*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Mindfulness in Schools Project 2014, "Mindfulness in schools - for the flourishing of young minds," accessed November 9, 2014, from <<http://mindfulnessinschools.org/>>.
- Mitchell, SA 2014, "The tranquil meditator: representing Buddhism and Buddhists in US popular media", *Religion Compass*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 81-89.
- Partridge, C 2004, *The re-enchantment of the west, volume 1: alternative spiritualities, sacralization, popular culture, and occulture*, T&T Clark, London.
- Pew Center for Research 2012, "*Nones*" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, accessed November 9, 2014, from <<http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/10/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf>>.
- Possamai, A 2009, "Religion, spirituality and the post-secularisation approach," in *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y*, Equinox Publishing Ltd., London, pp. 52–66.
- Purser, R & Loy, D 2013, "Beyond McMindfulness," *The Huffington Post Blog*, July 1, accessed November 9, 2014, from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html>.
- Seager, RH 2012, *Buddhism in America* 2nd edn, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Shapiro, SL, Schwartz, GE & Bonner, G 1998, "Effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction on medical and premedical students," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp. 581-599.
- Sun, J 2014, "Mindfulness in context: a historical discourse analysis," *Contemporary Buddhism*, In Press, available November 12, 2014, from <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2014.978088>>.

- Tori, CD 2006, "Buddhism in America: the primacy of meditative practice," in DK Nauriyal, MS Drummond, & YB Lal (eds), *Buddhist thought and applied psychological research: transcending the boundaries*, Routledge, New York, pp. 314–340.
- Wallace, BA 2002, "The spectrum of Buddhist practice in the West," in CS Prebish & M Baumann (eds), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, pp. 34–50.
- Watson, J 2013, "Marine Corps studying how mindfulness meditation can benefit troops," *The Huffington Post*, January 22, accessed November 9, 2014, from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/22/marine-corps-mindfulness-meditation_n_2526244.html>.