Mind, Body, Discipline

A multi-sited ethnography of a secondary school mindfulness programme, '.b'

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Abstract
The Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) is a charity and social enterprise that develops mindfulness curricula and trains teachers to deliver them. Their secondary school curriculum, '.b' (which stands for 'Stop, breathe and be') is the largest classroom-based mindfulness programme in the UK. The curriculum teaches techniques of mindfulness meditation, which involves directing attention towards one's present experience, but which can also include imagining, remembering and cultivating positive emotion. Alongside mindfulness meditations the curriculum draws on positive psychology, neuroscience and cognitive behavioural therapy to teach students about their thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

This thesis draws on a multi-sited ethnography of .b, conducted across four schools in the South West of England and Wales. Over a two year period, I participated in teacher training for the programme and analysed teaching materials; interviewed course developers and 15 .b teachers; observed 45 hours of .b lessons across participating schools; and conducted four focus groups and four interviews with students (total 22) who had completed the programme. Whilst much existing research has focused on determining the efficacy of mindfulness programmes for enhancing wellbeing, attainment and behaviour, this study examined the content of the programme and the every-day contexts of its delivery. Two bodies of theoretical scholarship - that of Michel Foucault and that of Charles Taylor - are drawn on to make sense of .b as a 'pedagogy of self-cultivation': that is as teaching students to nurture certain 'ways of being'. The thesis examines the forms of self-understanding and the practices of self-investigation that are taught in .b, and how these ideas and practices are interpreted by teachers and students in the classroom.

The central argument is that the compulsory, teacher-led format of the programme's delivery is in tension with its commitment to promoting self-reflexive, self-regulating individuals and this impedes its capacity to support some students' wellbeing. Exploring teaching materials and interviews with teachers and course developers, I show how mindfulness is positioned as enhancing young people's agency over their emotions and behaviours and facilitating their flourishing. The emphasis on voluntary self-shaping and self-care, however, is at odds with the conscripted mode of delivery and the relatively prescriptive format of lessons, which limits recognition of students' differential experiences and values. Through an analysis of classroom dynamics relating to social class, student subcultures and behavioural discourse I argue that, in practice, this results in the marginalisation of students whose experiences, behaviours or emotional capacities are outside of the assumed norm.

The thesis does, however, take seriously the 'therapeutic potential' of mindfulness, and explores how certain students described mindfulness as alleviating, containing or releasing difficult feelings. I contend that future research interested in the effects of mindfulness training for wellbeing should pay greater attention to the ways in which the embodied experience of mindfulness is mediated by social identity, relationality and social space. The final section of the thesis articulates some ethical implications of the current format of the programme's delivery and contends that adopting more consensual and collaborative approaches may be more conducive to young people's wellbeing.

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List of acronyms:

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DfE: Department for Education
LSA: Learning Support Assistant
MiSP: The Mindfulness in Schools Project
MYRIAD: My Resilience in Adolescence (research project)
OFSTED: The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (School inspection body, England)
PSE: Personal and Social Education (curriculum subject in Wales)
PSHE: Personal Social Health and Economic education (curriculum subject in England)
RE: Religious Education (curriculum subject)
SENCO: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
TA: Teaching Assistant

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1. Beginning to pay attention

1.1 Introduction

> On this course we'll pay attention to things in a completely different way...to the way you think, the way you move, the way you eat, the way you breathe, the way you live every mment of your life
> (.b Introductory Lesson, P.7)

This thesis is an ethnographic study of a secondary school mindfulness curriculum called Dot b (.b). At first glance, an ethnographic study of mindfulness in any given context may appear somewhat paradoxical, precisely because mindfulness is so often understood as something that happens 'within' the mind (Taylor 1989; McMahan 2008). Across psychological and popular self-help literature, the term mindfulness is used to describe a mental state (the quality of present moment awareness), trait (the degree of such awareness in daily life) and a meditative practice intended to cultivate trait mindfulness. Though there are ongoing debates around the definition of mindfulness meditation (see Dreyfus 2011; Grossman 2011; Chiesa 2013; Gethin 2015), it is generally understood as involving the direction of attention towards present experience (including sensations, sounds, visions and thoughts) without judgement or discursive elaboration (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Bishop et al 2004). Though a body of social scientific literature around mindfulness practices has begun to emerge (Arat 2016; 2017; Drage 2018a; 2018b; Wheater 2017; Kucinskas 2018), within popular literature the social and cultural dimensions of such practices are less frequently acknowledged. Indeed, some of the most influential writers on mindfulness in the 20th and 21st century have likened the practice to a 'mirror' or 'lens' that enables the practitioner to see *beyond* emotionally and culturally laden interpretations of their experience: providing clarity of insight to 'things as they are' (Kabat-Zinn 1990; Gunaratana 2010).

Yet, mindfulness techniques are nonetheless acquired and rendered intelligible through vocabularies and metaphors which derive from a particular social and historical context (Stanley 2012). Reflexivity through mindfulness meditation is necessarily guided by prevailing norms and understandings of personhood. Such practices are structured by the wider frameworks of meaning through which human beings are understood and through which they are attributed with value, and the ideas which cluster around what is usually referred to as 'the self' (Taylor 1989; Foucault 1990; 1997; Rose 1998; Skeggs 2011). By providing a framework for understanding personal experience and by encouraging certain emotional styles and dispositions, school mindfulness programmes aim to cultivate amongst young people particular ways of relating to themselves. As a programme which teaches students reflexive practices (practices for investigating and problematizing their experience) .b guides students' understanding of who and what they are (Foucault 1997). Moreover, as such programmes are situated within the authoritative context of the school, they may be a particularly important site for exploring struggles around ideals and values of the self (Foucault 1997).

This thesis, therefore, is about notions, ideals and practices of the self: how they are conveyed within a particular curriculum and how they are interpreted, mobilized and subverted by teachers and students through the mundane practices of the classroom. Most

particularly, it is about the ethical tensions, conflicts and negotiations that coalesce around a pedagogy of self-cultivation within the disciplinary and normative context of the school.

1.2 Training 'the precious instrument of the mind'

Throughout the history of universal education, schools have been enlisted in the project of shaping healthy citizens, of guiding behaviours and dispositions in line with prevailing norms, of addressing abnormalities and instilling desirable capacities (Foucault 1991; Rose 1990; 1998; Wright 2014). Yet, in recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on subjectivity as an explicit site of learning, and a range of programmes involving self-observation, emotional reflection and self-understanding have been enfolded into the provision of the school (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009). This focus on subjectivity has been partly catalysed by influential psychological literature positioning emotional styles and characteristics as skills that can be trained (Goleman 1995; Clarke et al 2015; Department for Education [DfE] 2017). Beyond this, concerns amongst the medical establishment and wider public around children's mental health have led many to argue that schools have a moral imperative to safeguard and optimise psychological health (Patel et al 2007; Wright 2015). Thus, via a plethora of educational interventions, the mind, self and emotions have come to take centre-stage in the classroom. Where historically the student's disposition was seen as malleable to subtle guidance (Foucault 1991; Rose 1990; Thomson 2001), current programmes - which foreground self-learning - position students as active participants in the development of their character (Brunila & Siivonen 2016).

Classroom based mindfulness programmes are the latest in a long line of recent educational initiatives geared towards 'social and emotional dimensions of learning' (Gillies 2011; Ecclestone 2012; Gagen 2015). At the most basic level, these programmes aim to teach students techniques of mindfulness meditation and to engender a present-focused awareness in day to day life (Kuyken et al 2013). Interest in the potential psychological benefits of mindfulness has burgeoned over the past 30 years (McMahan 2008; Lopez 2008; Wilson 2014). Elements of mindfulness training are central components of a number of so-called 'third wave' cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT) (Dryden and Still 2006), most notably Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). In recent years, a number of randomized control trials (RCTs) have appeared to verify various psychological benefits of mindfulness training in adults, from enhancing focus to reducing depressive symptoms (Teasdale et al 2000; Ma & Teasdale 2004; Grossman et al 2004; Chiesa & Serretti 2011; Khoury et al 2015). Though there are fewer controlled studies with young people, a growing body of research has suggested that mindfulness programmes with children may produce small, positive effects on wellbeing (Huppert & Johnson 2010; Kuyken et al 2013; Carsley et al 2018). Due to increasing concerns about the social and economic burden of mental illness in developed nations, interventions designed to promote mental wellbeing and reduce propensities to mental illness are becoming increasingly attractive to policy makers (WHO 2004; Cuijpers et al 2008). As such, school mindfulness programmes have gained attention as potential population-wide interventions for promoting mental health (Kuyken et al 2013; Weare 2013).

In 2015, the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPGG), a cross-party coalition established to consider policy applications of mindfulness, cited education as one of four

policy areas (including health, criminal justice, and work) in which mindfulness programmes could be utilised. The report recommended that a number of leading schools be identified as sites for establishing efficacy and 'scalability' of the programme (Mindful Nation UK 2015). In the same year the Wellcome Trust, a prominent charitable funder of health research, awarded £6.4 million to an interdisciplinary collaboration of researchers across the fields of cognitive psychology, neuroscience and education to determine whether the .b curriculum is 'effective and cost-effective' for promoting mental health amongst adolescents (Kuyken et al 2017).

Policy interest in school-based mindfulness programmes as strategies of mental health promotion can be situated in relation to wider shifts towards emphasising psychological interventions over medication in the treatment of mental health (Pickersgill 2019). Such shifts have been somewhat facilitated by the greater standardisation of mental health treatments, in particular CBT and its descendants, rendering these approaches more amenable to scientific testing which could be seen to verify their efficacy (Ibid; Marks 2012). Moreover, the relatively more prescriptive approach of CBT *vis a vis* earlier forms of psychotherapy means that CBT-based approaches are more easily adaptable to educational contexts (Ibid). As such, much of the policy interest in programmes such as .b is underpinned by a logic whereby psychological therapies which have a demonstrable evidence base are thought to be readily adaptable for use with healthy or 'at risk' populations (Kuyken et al 2013; Cuijpers et al 2008). Given their near-universal reach to young people at key developmental moments, schools have been seen as an ideal site for such interventions (Weare 2013: Schonert- Reichl and Roeser 2016).

A 'way of being'

Contemporary understandings and applications of mindfulness draw upon a form of Buddhist meditation and Buddhist philosophies of mind, self and emotion, which have been adapted for Western, secular contexts (Kirmayer 2015; Feldman & Kuyken 2019). The Buddhist schools of thought that have shaped the development of 'secular mindfulness' are concerned with understanding the nature of human experience, and with providing practical and ethical guidance for relating to ourselves and others (Gethin 2015). It is partly because Buddhist thought has largely been interpreted in the West as providing a model of mind and practical psychology, as opposed to dealing with metaphysics and cosmology, that it has been perceived as amenable to secular and non-Buddhist faith contexts such as schools, prisons, workplaces and healthcare settings (McMahan 2008). Nonetheless, contemporary mindfulness programmes also teach ideas about the nature of mind and emotions and encourage a particular orientation towards life that is hoped to minimise human suffering. As such, mindfulness programmes do not only teach techniques of meditation, but arguably convey a far more comprehensive philosophy of being or 'philosophy of life' (Hadot 1995).

In recent years, there have been extensive debates around the definition of mindfulness, with competing claims about the extent to which differing understandings reflect 'original' ideas within early Buddhist texts and regarding the core psychological components of the practice (see Gethin 2011; Grossman 2011; Chiesa 2013; Bishop et al 2004;). Nonetheless, most basically, mindfulness meditation involves directing awareness towards our present experience (including emotions, thoughts and urges), and continually returning awareness

to this open state each time our attention is consumed by a particular thought (Feldman & Kuyken 2019). Unlike concentrative styles of meditation, the purpose of mindfulness is not to narrow the focus to one point (though the practice generally begins with a period of focusing) or to prevent the arising of thoughts. Rather, mindfulness, as it is most widely understood, involves the intention to maintain an open awareness, in which the practitioner 'observes' her experience (*including* thoughts) as it unfolds (Ibid). The practice of mindfulness involves both formal periods of sitting meditation and what is often referred to as 'mindfulness in daily life', whereby the practitioner attempts to remain aware of their present behaviours and experience throughout their daily activities. The popularity of secular mindfulness owes in part to the view amongst its proponents that the practice may alleviate psychological suffering and contribute to overall wellbeing (Kabat Zinn 1994; Pennman & Burch 2013; Feldman & Kuyen 2019). Specifically, scholars have suggested that mindfulness may reduce the intensity of difficult emotions and mind states by countering the tendency to resist or avoid them (Chambers et al 2009), and some research has indicated that the practice may help to cultivate greater self-compassion and thereby reduce depressive tendencies (Kuyken et al 2010). The view that mindfulness may be supportive of mental health appears to have been borne out by psychological studies with a number of populations, including adults with conditions such as chronic pain, anxiety or recurrent depression (Grossman et al 2004; Hofmann et al 2010; Khoury et al 2013; Gu et al 2015).

Whilst the term mindfulness has a long history in the English language, generally understood in terms of maintaining an awareness of or 'holding in mind' (Dryden & Still 2006) and whilst other psychological research has acknowledged the significance of present moment awareness for wellbeing (Langer and Newman 1979), modern mindfulness has evolved from the work of an American meditation teacher named Jon Kabat Zinn (1990). Kabat Zinn began practicing yoga and meditation in the early 1970s whilst he was studying for a PhD in Molecular Biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) (Harrington 2008). In 1979, Kabat Zinn convinced the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Medical Centre in Worcester, USA, to allow him to develop a programme to teach Buddhist meditation to patients with chronic pain (Ibid). The programme, which he called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), was an attempt to translate the philosophy and practice of mindfulness into a format and language that would be accessible for a secular, Western audience. Over a period of eight weeks, participants of the programme were taught meditation techniques and aspects of Buddhist philosophy in weekly group meetings and asked to practice mindfulness meditation for 30-40 minutes a day (Kabat Zinn 1994). UMass deemed MBSR a success and throughout the 1980's the programme was adopted by other clinics across the US and gradually adapted for a range of therapeutic applications (Chiesa and Seretti 2009; Grossman et al 2004; Khoury et al 2015). The later success of MBSR in a number of clinical trials (which indicated the programme alleviated pain and enhanced wellbeing) has been the key catalyst for the proliferation of mindfulness-based approaches across the Western world over the past four decades (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat-Zinn et al 1985; Wilson 2014).

Mindfulness for schools

The .b curriculum can be situated within the lineage of eight-week mindfulness programmes that have evolved from MBSR. The curriculum is based on Mindfulness

Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), a later adaptation of MBSR designed for adults with a history of recurrent depression (Segal et al 2002). MBCT has been widely deemed successful and has been a National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) approved treatment for depression on the National Health Service (NHS) since 2004 (Segal et al 2001; Teasdale et al 2000; Ma & Teasdale 2004; NICE 2004). The .b curriculum covers the same principles and learning objectives as MBCT in lighter, more adolescent-appropriate language. Lessons cover ideas about the nature of mind, thoughts and emotions and encourage students to adopt ways of relating to experience that are deemed psychologically healthy. Indeed, .b has now gone through numerous iterations and, from its early stages, has had input and research interest from a number of prominent psychologists (see Huppert & Johnson 2010; Kuyken et al 2013). Elements of the curriculum also touch on ideas from positive psychology, simplified neuroscience, and evolutionary psychology and as such the curriculum has a broadly eclectic feel. The programme is designed to be delivered to a conscripted audience, that is, as part of timetabled lessons, usually PSHE or PSE, primarily for mainstream students. Nonetheless, as the programme is outside of the National Curriculum (in each of the Four nations), in practice schools adopt differing approaches, including selecting students on the basis of perceived need or, in some cases, running the programme as an extracurricular activity.

The original curriculum was designed by three classroom teachers at prestigious independent boys' schools in the South of England. In 2007, Richard Burnett was teaching Religious Education (RE) at Tonbridge School, a boarding school in Kent, when he met Chris Cullen, who was also teaching RE at Hampton School, a day school in South West London. The two were both committed meditators, Cullen having trained as a Dharma teacher[1] at Spirit Rock meditation centre in California and Burnett having practiced insight (*Vipassana*) meditation for many years. The two met Chris O'Neill, a psychotherapist and theology teacher at Charterhouse School, a boarding school in Surrey, who was then training at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre to teach MBCT to adults. In 2007 the three founded The Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), of which Burnett is now Director, which hosts training for .b along with a number of other school-based programmes. Since 2016, MiSP has become a registered charity and now offers a number of free places on their training courses to teachers at schools with a greater than average number of pupils on free school meals (a proxy of socioeconomic disadvantage) (Gorard 2013).

The 10, 40 minute to 1-hour lessons of .b are delivered by a trained teacher using a PowerPoint and other resources provided by MiSP. The introductory lesson explains mindfulness as *"intentionally paying attention to the present moment…training the mind to be present in the moment, whatever is happening, be that good or bad."* (L0 p.14). However, students are encouraged to learn through experience and each lesson draws out different elements of mindfulness theory and practice. In each of the lessons, students are taught one to two mindfulness exercises, beginning in earlier lessons with exercises of centring attention on the breath or bodily sensations, and later involving exercises such as drawing attention towards the sensations associated with emotions and cultivating gratitude. The lessons also incorporate short, humorous animations intended to illustrate aspects of mindfulness or

[1] The notion of 'dharma' can be understood in Buddhism and a number of Indian philosophical traditions as 'truth', cosmological order or more broadly, 'the way of things' (Gethin 1998).

ideas about stress, anxiety and worry. Each lesson is designed in .b's characteristically playful and colourful style.

An overview of the .b curriculum and index of lesson materials can be found in Appendix A. Figure 1.1 shows an overview of the curriculum:

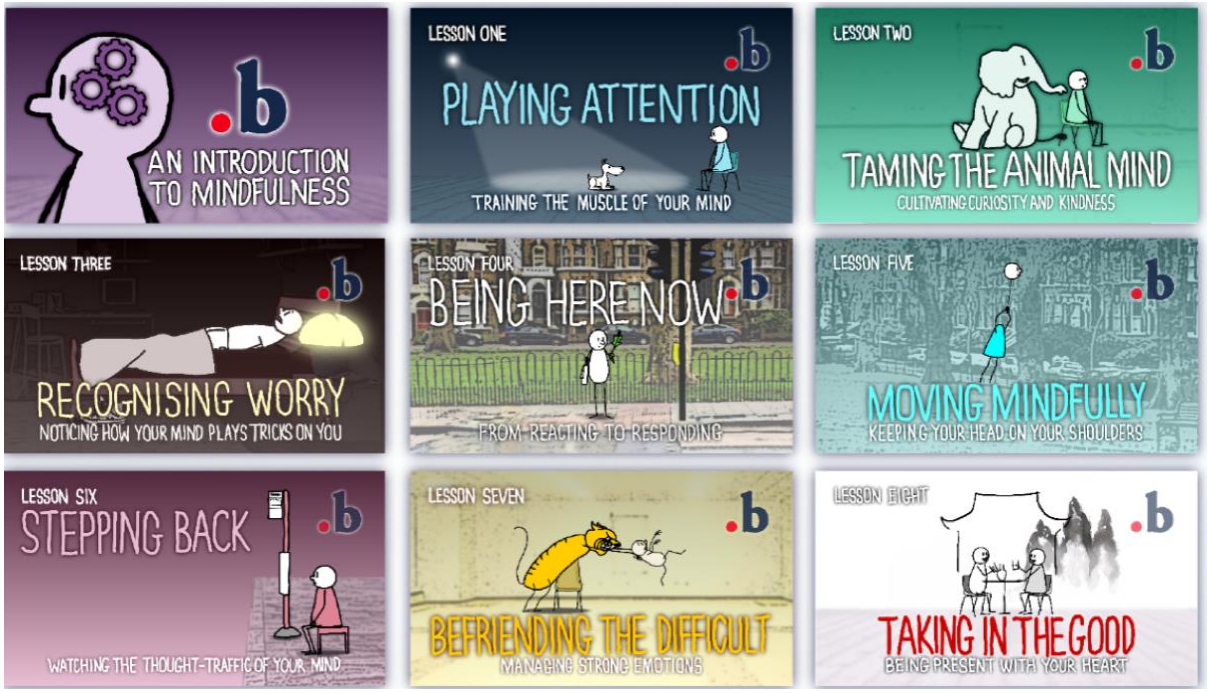

Figure 1.1 Overview of the .b curriculum (excluding lesson nine)

1.3 Biography of a question

My initial interest in mindfulness in schools, like many of those I came to know through the research, was through my own experience of practicing meditation and finding it supportive during a time of difficulty. I first engaged with meditation through yoga, which I have practiced for many years and later taught. I became interested in meditation specifically when a teacher recommended that I read a book by the American Tibetan Buddhist nun and popular writer Pema Chodron (2001), *Start where you are*. I read a number of other books by Chodron and others such as Kabat Zinn and Thich Naht Hanh and started to develop a daily practice. Over the years I attended a number of silent meditation retreats and participated in two MBSR courses for my personal development and practice. I kept up a committed daily practice for a little over a year, after which point my mindfulness practice became less regular, though I continue to practice yogic meditative practices and breathing exercises most days.

When I began this research, I was particularly interested in whether mindfulness may help young people who are marginalised, particularly working-class students and/or those whose home lives are difficult. This is most likely in part because of my own background and in part because of the work I was involved with after graduating from university. For a couple of years prior to undertaking a Masters in Psychology of Education, I worked for a research agency that specialises in sensitive public and third sector research. While there, I worked largely with so-called 'at risk' adolescents. Perhaps as I had myself experienced

difficulties at home during adolescence and had been almost permanently excluded from school, the experiences of marginalised girls, in particular, resonated with me strongly. My initial decision to undertake a Masters in psychology was not because I wanted to do a doctorate but because I wanted to train to work with young people in a therapeutic capacity. Similarly, when I decided to do a PhD my interest was initially not in the values of selfhood that mindfulness programmes prescribe, or the negotiations around them in the classroom, but rather to understand whether they might offer young people some relief where it was needed. These concerns still lie beneath this thesis, though they do not always manifest themselves in the same ways as the concerns of my adult participants.

The questions I eventually came to ask were largely shaped through the literature that I read during the early stages of the project. I was most moved by Charles Taylor's (1989) *Sources of the self,* which widened the lens through which I came to make sense of mindfulness. That is, I came to understand mindfulness as structured by and itself shaping a particular vocabulary through which practitioners come to understand themselves (Stanley 2012). My initial interest in Foucault was through reading various works of Nikolas Rose (1990; 1998; 1999), and later Judith Butler's (1997) *Psychic life of power*. I came to Foucault's own work later, primarily through *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1991), which I found both compelling and frustratingly totalising, and a number of his later lectures (1983; 1997).

1.4 Theoretical grounding: key terms

In both the questions I am asking and the epistemological assumptions that guide the research, I am influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (1990; 1991; 1997). That is, I am influenced by Foucault's (1997) call to examine the different means by which human beings at various points in history have come to understand themselves, and the different schemes of knowledge through which this self-understanding has been made possible. As such, I am understanding .b and mindfulness more generally as reflecting a particular constellation of ideas, institutions and techniques through which certain people in our present period come to problematize and make sense of their existence, and through which they act upon themselves in the service of realising particular ideals. In turn, both mindfulness and .b must be situated within broader frameworks of knowledge, ways of making sense of human beings and constituting truth about them, what Foucault would call "games of truth" (Foucault 1997). Part of the aim of the thesis, then, is about establishing what sorts of truths are established about human beings within the curriculum, according to what 'rules', and the negotiations that coalesce around these truths in the programme's delivery. Though Foucault's own work was centred around primarily archaeological and later genealogical approaches, I am following those who have applied his ideas to the study of social practice (May 1992; Silverman 1997; Holland et al 1998; Brownlie 2004). Adopting this approach nonetheless entails recognising that the frameworks of meaning and practices through which human beings are constituted are socially and historically bound (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine 2008).

Following Foucault (1991), when I speak of the 'subject' I mean both she who acts and she who is known or produced by knowledge. The subject can be understood as 'the person' or 'the individual' (Henriques et al 1998). Nonetheless, to understand the person

as a 'subject' is to acknowledge that the ways in which she is recognised, labelled, and experienced as herself emerge through frameworks of meaning that preceded her being. As such, human beings are always certain *kinds* of subjects, (women, men, children, good girls, naughty boys, blue collar workers, immigrants). We are never only one 'kind' but rather are situated in relation to particular constellations of identities, and subject-categories are themselves potentially inexhaustible (Butler 1997). This thesis is centrally concerned with issues relating to 'subjectivity' – which may be understood as how experience emerges through our positionalities as particular kinds of beings (Henriques et al 1998; Blackman et al 2008). I use the word 'subjectivity' to refer to those aspects of experience which are often thought of as 'inner' (emotions, consciousness, thoughts etc.) or 'of' the person (characteristics, dispositions). Significantly, however, I understand these features as deriving not from each person's unique character but through acquired patterns of behaviour and societal norms. In turn, when I mention 'the self', I am not referring to an 'inner essence' of the person but rather the human being in first person, or how the human being conceives of and acts upon herself (Foucault 1997). These ideas are explored more comprehensively in Chapter 3.

By using the term 'discourse' I am referring to 'webs of meaning' or networks of signs that communicate meaning (Foucault 1966; 1991). Discourse is in part constituted through language: words, phrases, idioms, and narratives, but it refers also to the ways that images, gestures, bodily movement and so on connect into these wider fields of signification (Parker 1990). Whilst I am influenced by Foucault's work and whilst I draw on a range of his theoretical ideas, I am not wedded to a 'Foucauldian approach'. Rather, my approach is somewhat pragmatic, I have drawn on the work of other theorists where I felt them to be relevant. For example, I refer to .b as an 'assemblage' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). I do so to recognise the multiplicity and contingency of .b, to avoid essentializing it as a singular or coherent 'thing'. That is to say, though the curriculum is developed by an organisation with a formal 'mission' and agenda, and though the ideas of the programme are crystalized within lesson plans and teaching materials, it is nonetheless enacted by various agents across numerous spaces. How .b is conceived of by those actors, what it comes to *signify* and what it *does*, takes shape through these dispersed social practices, the discourses through which they make sense of the programme, and through formal teaching materials, training courses, conferences and website pages (see Stanley & Kortelainen 2019).

Though I borrow this term from Deleuze and Guattari, I do so as a means of conceptualising the programme as multifaceted and material, rather than as a means of drawing substantially on their theoretical approach. Similarly, when I use the term 'affect', I recognise an indebtedness to Deleuze & Guattari's work. However, I am more specifically drawing on the work of Valerie Walkerdine (2007; 2010) and Margaret Wetherell (2012; 2013) on affective-discursive practices. As such, by 'affect' I am interested in embodied feeling, sense and the ways in which emotional experiences are constituted in social space. This conception of affect is closer to what is usually understood as 'emotion' but is not bound to the categories through which emotions are constructed in a given culture. By using the term affective-discursive practice within the analysis, I am acknowledging that affects, however bodily and material, are nonetheless bound up with social meaning making (Walkerdine 2007; Wetherell 2012).

1.5 Purpose of the investigation

Whilst a body of social scientific research has taken now shape around social and emotional learning in the UK and elsewhere (Gillies 2011, Gagen 2015, Brunilla 2013), and whilst a number of ethnographic studies of adult mindfulness programmes, teachers and practitioners have recently emerged (Wheater 2018; Kucinskas 2018; Drage 2018), there is currently a dearth of empirical sociological research into mindfulness in schools. As such, I adopted an approach that would allow me to explore 'what is taught' within .b and to investigate specific, situated social practices through which the programme is enacted in schools. In doing so, I am taking an approach that bridges between analysis of 'programmes of conduct' or models of practice (in this instance lesson plans and teaching guidance) (Foucault 1981; Rose 1998; Kendall & Crossley 1996) and empirical social research of therapeutic practice in action (Silverman 1997; Brownlie 2004; Stanley & Kortelainen 2019). As such, I conducted an extensive multi-sited ethnography of .b across a number of settings, which comprised: interviews with 15 .b teachers and 2 of .b's developers; participation in .b teacher training and analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials; observations of 45 hours of .b lessons across four schools; and four focus groups and four interviews with children (total 22) who had completed the programme.

The overarching question which guided the research was: *what are the understandings, ideals and techniques of selfhood that are conveyed within the .b curriculum and how are these taken up, contested and resisted by teachers and students?*

In attempting to answer this question, I addressed four specific research questions, each of which are taken up in turn in the four analytic chapters of the thesis (chapters 5-8). These are:

1. How is .b positioned, in terms of its purpose and need, by course developers and schoolteachers who are delivering the programme? What problems is the programme hoped to address?
2. How are knowledges of 'selves' constituted within the .b curriculum and teaching materials? Within these materials, what are the ontological features and normative ideals of 'the self'? Through what practices are students taught to know themselves and to act upon themselves?
3. Within the classroom, how are the ideas and practices of the programme drawn upon by teachers, and in what ways are they taken up, contested or resisted by students? How are the practices of .b shaped by wider norms and discourses of the classroom?
4. After completing the curriculum, how do students take up, modify or resist the ideas and practices of .b?

As the research went on, I came to feel that the programme was characterised by certain tensions, particularly in relation to the ideals the curriculum conveys and the methods it employs. As such, a secondary axis of the analysis related to exploring and attempting to articulate these tensions and the ethical issues they give rise to. I explore what I mean by 'ethical tensions' more comprehensively in Chapter 3, however most basically I mean negotiations surrounding values of the person and notions of 'the good life' (ideas about what makes life meaningful and worthy) (Taylor 1989). Also bound up within these ethical

tensions are issues relating to social justice and the potential for harm. My concern is not whether mindfulness meditation encourages ethical attitudes and behaviour (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Stanley et al 2016), nor whether this practice 'should' be situated in relation to Buddhist ethical commitments, both of which have been the subject of much discussion within existing literature. Rather, I am concerned with ethical issues surrounding compulsory mindfulness programmes within schools and the rolling out of standardised approaches to 'teaching' wellbeing across disparate socioeconomic contexts.

Throughout the thesis I refer to .b as a therapeutic programme. Nonetheless, within the teacher training for .b and within wider promotional literature, MiSP explain that their mindfulness curriculums are not therapeutic interventions (MiSP 2019a). In my .b teacher training, trainers explained that the programme was not therapeutic as it was designed to support mental health rather than to address psychological problems. Within MiSP's training and from the perspectives of my interviewees, then, therapy is arguably understood in terms of relational practices that are geared towards (psychological) healing (Swan 2010). Whilst I accept this as an understanding of 'therapy', in this thesis I refer to .b as 'therapeutic' in a broader sense. By using the term therapeutic, I am referring to the fact that the programme draws on psychological ideas and therapeutic practices, primarily via MBCT but also, indirectly through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), humanistic psychology and psychoanalysis (Dryden & Still 2006). As I discuss in Chapter 6, these ideas influence and shape those that are depicted within the programme even though they are not always explicitly recognised by MiSP. Moreover, by terming the programme therapeutic I am situating .b in relation to what a number of scholars have termed 'therapeutic culture' (Wright 2008; Furedi 2013; Wright 2008; Salmenniemi et al 2019), that is, the wider culture through which psychological ideas have come to shape prevalent forms of self-understanding and to guide the ways in which modern people work upon themselves in the service of realising certain ideals (happiness, fulfilment, success and so on) (Foucault 1997; Rose 1996b; Illouz 2003; 2007; 2008). Importantly, whilst I recognise the extensive critiques that have been levelled at therapeutic practices, the most pertinent of which are discussed in the following chapter, my own position is somewhat more ambivalent.

Indeed, much of the existing social science literature on 'secular' adult mindfulness programmes and social and emotional learning have drawn on earlier critiques surrounding therapeutic culture (see for example Ecclestone & Hayes; Brunila 2014; Forbes 2019; Purser 2019). As I explore in section 2.3, a significant proportion of these critiques have built upon the work of Michel Foucault and have centred around the notion of 'neoliberalism', positioning such programmes as forms of governance designed to engender styles of subjectivity that are conducive to late capitalist economies (Ibid). As such, in Chapter 3 I set out my position *vis a vis* these critiques: clarifying why I feel such perspectives are too singular and totalising in their conception of power and, as such, fail to account for the complexity of social practice.

Importantly, though throughout the thesis I draw out the discourses I see as underpinning interviewees responses, curriculum materials and interactions between teachers and students, exploring links to the cultural and intellectual strands which may inform these (including branches of psychology, liberal ideals, Buddhist philosophies and so on) it is not my intention in doing so to assess their truthfulness, to expose them as misguided or false.

Rather, my aim is to articulate these discourses more fully such that their implications can be considered, something that I explore throughout and that I return to return to more comprehensively in the concluding chapter.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Overview of the argument

Over the course of the thesis, I trace a central tension at the heart of the .b curriculum and current approaches to its delivery. At the most basic level, this tension reflects a conflict between the ideals of personhood to which students are taught to aspire on the one hand, and the practical ways in which students are situated within lessons and the construction of the child-subject on the other. The curriculum portrays an ideal of an agentive and self-creating individual and teaching scripts are constructed so as to present the student as voluntarily engaging with mindfulness in the service of self-care. Yet, the programme is simultaneously built upon an understanding of the child/student as a 'site of intervention': a subject who is chosen for and acted upon by adults who are thought to act in her interests (Steedman 1990; Kehily 2004). By claiming that student participants of the programme are conceived as a 'site of intervention', I mean that the use of the programme in compulsory, mainstream educational settings, it's relatively didactic approach and the positioning of students as somewhat passive recipients is largely justified through an understanding of young people in terms of risk (of psychological suffering) and potential (for resilience and prosperity).

This conception of youth and the tension between disciplinary practices and ideals of individual agency are arguably reflective of all compulsory education and of governmental tactics within advanced modern states in general (Rose 1996; 1998). Nevertheless, I contend that, at a very practical level, this framing and impedes the programme's capacity to realise its aims of supporting young people's wellbeing. One implication of this approach, for example, is that it relies on a prescriptive and ultimately narrow set of perspectives about who students are and who they should be and, as I explore in Chapter 7, can therefore inadvertently exclude students who sit outside of the established norm. A second implication, discussed in Chapter 7 and 8, is that by limiting possibilities for students' creative engagement and recognition of their differing values and perspectives, this approach may heighten resistance amongst some students towards the curriculum itself and, accordingly, to their teachers. A third implication of this top-down approach, again explored in Chapters 7 and 8, is that it provides limited avenues for students to communicate their experiences of the programme and to influence its delivery, meaning that unpleasant or unhelpful experiences can remain unaddressed. The ultimate argument, which I expand in the concluding chapter, is that explicitly or subtly obliging students to participate in reflexive practices (including mindfulness exercises or other forms of introspection, therapeutic self-reflection and so on) is incongruent with the values the programme conveys and carries the potential for various forms of harm. This is, I claim, in part because these practices are shaped at an experiential level by the relational context of their delivery and by 'who' subjects are within those spaces.

In the following three chapters, I explore the existing research landscape of mindfulness in schools (Chapter 2), the theoretical basis of the thesis (Chapter 3) and the methodological approach and specific methods of the research (Chapter 4). Subsequently, the first two discussion chapters examine the discourses within adult interviewees' accounts (Chapter 5) and curriculum materials (Chapter 6) through which understandings and ideals of selfhood are constructed. In the following two chapters I examine how the programme was enacted and interpreted in practice, drawing on my observations of lessons (Chapter 7) and the accounts of students within focus groups and interviews (Chapter 8). In these latter discussion chapters, I explore the tension outlined above and further expound its implications, paying attention to particular issues that arose in observations and students' accounts. The concluding chapter synthesises the discussion and explores implications of the thesis for research, policy and practice.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2, *Lineages and landscapes of mindfulness in schools* examines the existing literature on mindfulness in schools and the wider debates surrounding therapeutic mindfulness. Here, I note the tendency of both advocates and critics to view mindfulness programmes as having the potential to shape children's subjectivity. Nonetheless, I also note the absence of literature examining the values and practices such programmes convey and the ways in which they are interpreted in situ. As such, I build a case for a more granular and situated exploration of what such programmes 'do' and how they are enacted within the classroom.

In Chapter 3, *Shaping the subject, situating the self,* I examine the theoretical literature that has informed my analysis and approach. I turn, firstly, to the work of Charles Taylor who articulates the ways in which the modern experience of self is formulated through an inescapable language of 'inwardness'. The notion of inwardness, I argue, is one of the foundational metaphors through which modern mindfulness is understood (that is, a concept in which it is fundamentally grounded). Secondly, I examine the ideas of Michel Foucault in relation to discipline of the body and his contentions that contemporary forms of governance are centred around instilling capacities of self-surveillance. I consider how these ideas have been drawn upon by critics of therapeutic mindfulness and therapeutic education, however, I claim that these critiques do not sufficiently recognise multiplicity and change, and hence provide an account that is overly pessimistic and stagnant.

In Chapter 4, *A way of making sense of things,* I provide a comprehensive overview of my methodology, including my epistemological framework and the practical details of 'what I did'. I provide a detailed overview of the timeline and structure of the research project, including a description of the four schools across which the main ethnographic research was conducted. I suggest that, given the lack of existing sociological understanding about school mindfulness programmes, a multi-sited ethnography offers scope and breadth, whilst recognising certain compromises in depth. I discuss some of the extensive ethical and methodological issues involved in conducting research with human participants and particularly with children and consider some of the ways I attempted to navigate dynamics of power.

In Chapter 5, *Risk and potential of young minds,* I discuss the ways in which .b teachers and developers that I interviewed spoke of the need for and value of the curriculum. I argue

that interviewees primarily situated .b in relation to concerns about mental health, but that psychological wellbeing was situated on a spectrum from suffering and vulnerability through to apical states of 'flourishing'. I explore how interviewees conveyed vulnerability to psychological distress as an inherent feature of humanity and positioned mindfulness as providing 'skills and strategies' to forfend against difficulty. Yet, beyond this, mindfulness in schools was seen as potentially facilitating the flourishing of humanity as a whole by enhancing children's self-awareness, empathy and compassion. I suggest, finally, that these ideas rest on an understanding of children in terms of risk and potential, both for their own future wellbeing and that of wider society.

Chapter 6, *A pedagogy of the self,* turns to examine the .b curriculum, specifically lesson plans and teaching materials. Here, I draw out the particular ways in which notions of the self are constituted in .b: how students are taught to understand 'what they are' and the ideals to which they are taught to aspire. I argue that .b depicts a self that is underpinned by, but not reducible to, biochemical processes that are a product of human evolution and who, through mindful engagement with the present, acquires the capacity to train the brain in the service of wellbeing. The techniques that the programme conveys attempt to position the subject as a meticulous and attentive observer of her experience. Through this reflexive stance, emotional drives and impulses lose their force upon the subject. As such, mindfulness is conceived as realising the ideal of the rational agentive, self-creating subject.

Chapter 7, *Silence and stillness,* provides a discussion of my observations of .b lessons across the four schools. Here, I note that despite the overriding understanding of human beings as united through biology, the programme tacitly pivots around a conception of the 'ideal student', that is the white, middle-class, intellectually able and emotionally flexible subject (Gillborn 1990). Moreover, the ideals of the subject within .b and the techniques that the programme utilises are so reminiscent of ideals of 'good behaviour', that particularly where students are resistant, the practices of the curriculum become entangled with disciplinary practices. Finally, I illustrate how the use of reflexive practices within compulsory classroom contexts is justified within the programme by depicting the child as a 'skilled navigator' of an internal emotional landscape, and consider what exclusions are implicit within this understanding of the subject.

The final discussion chapter, Chapter 8, *Breaking the silence,* involves an exploration of my four focus groups with Year 8 (aged 13-14) students across Schools One and Two, and the four interviews at School Three. I explore female students' accounts of discomfort and dis-ease, arguing that metaphors of internality and depth which structure the programme may be insufficient for understanding students' emotional experiences, proposing instead a recognition of the tenderness of the 'skin'. Yet, I examine, also, some students' accounts of using mindfulness, in which the practice is described as releasing, relieving or containing affective states and, accordingly, as enabling them in aspects of their lives. Ultimately, I argue that students' accounts illustrate how embodied experiences of mindfulness were fundamentally entangled with the mundane classroom practices through which they were subjectivated as classed, gendered subjects. And, accordingly, that this appeared to shape the extent to which the programme was accessible and valuable to different students.

In Chapter 9, I conclude the thesis by further examining tensions between the understandings of the person that underpin the curriculum and the methods it adopts, focusing on ethical implications. These ethical tensions relate to the understanding of mindfulness as a practice that is voluntarily engaged with in the service of self-care, the understanding of subjectivity as an interior space, and the conception of the somatic body as distinct from its social contours. After reiterating some important limitations of the research, I draw out implications for future research, policy and practice, advocating for a more active role of young people in the development and delivery of wellbeing programmes.

2. Lineages and landscapes of mindfulness in schools

2.1 Introduction

I have a number of aims for this chapter. The first is to provide some historical and social context that will orient the reader to the discussions in the following chapters. The second is to illustrate why an ethnography of a school mindfulness programme is warranted, or even why it should be interesting, at this time. My final aim is to justify the logic of a focus on 'discourses and practices of selfhood' within .b, to clarify what I mean by this and why this is a pertinent avenue of investigation. I have already briefly outlined some key terms for the thesis in the introductory chapter. However, I will leave a more detailed theoretical exploration of how I am conceptualising selfhood and its relationship to ethics in the following chapter.

Perhaps what is most striking about the literature surrounding mindfulness in schools, is the extent to which it traverses a huge range of intellectual disciplines. Understanding the driving forces behind educational mindfulness programmes, their historical routes and their critiques requires sorting through psychological and neuroscientific research reports and educational policy papers, as well as religious studies literature and social science critiques. This range is not simply a reflection of the degree of interest in mindfulness, but is characteristic of the particular assemblage of ideas, practices, technologies, research networks and institutions that form what we understand to be mindfulness today (Wilson 2014; Stanley & Kortelainen 2019). For some, mindfulness itself has come to represent a potential unification of scientific and spiritual agendas, offering the potential for ethical transformations of society, whilst still embracing the modernist project of human progress (McMahan 2008). The excitement surrounding these ideas appears to gather pace in discussions surrounding the possibilities for mindfulness as an educational intervention, drawing on the figure of the child as a powerful image of human potential (Steedman 1995). The intensity of these hopes is met in equal measure by the ferocity of opposition, with some claiming that such interventions ultimately serve to adapt young people to unethical conditions characteristic of late capitalist societies (Forbes 2017; Hsu 2016).

In the following sections, I attempt to examine the rationale behind mindfulness in schools, including the research that appears to support it, the historical and social contexts that have given rise to such a project, and the critiques that have coalesced around it. In doing so, I hope to chart a way through that does not fall prey to hyperbolic perspectives or totalizing narratives of either salvation or condemnation. Rather, what I see, reflecting on the literature as a whole, is a great deal of unknown about mindfulness in schools. Very little, for example, is known about how mindfulness programmes like .b are used in actual classrooms by teachers and students outside of the controlled conditions of research trials; about the ways in which these programmes are incorporated into the broader practices of the school; about what teachers and students consider these programmes to achieve and how they interpret the ideas within them. Very little, in fact, is even known about what programmes like .b actually *teach*: that is, the specific relational and reflexive practices they comprise and the particular ideas they convey.

The remainder of the chapter is split into three overarching sections. The first *'A mindfulness in schools project',* attempts to provide an overview of the literature surrounding .b and the supporting rationale for school-based mindfulness programmes. The second *'Schooling the Soul'* explores the broader emergence of therapeutic programmes within education in relation to a longer standing alliance between psychology and education. The final section '*Healing the mind*' turns to the historical development of therapeutic approaches to mindfulness and the critiques that have been levelled against this project.

2.2 A 'Mindfulness in Schools Project'

In an early paper exploring the possibilities for a school mindfulness programme, Richard Burnett (2011), co-founder and director of the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), notes the remarkable success of 'secular mindfulness' courses in addressing mental health problems such as depression and anxiety among adults. The paper, published on the basis of his MA Buddhist Studies dissertation*,* is based on a review of existing literature on mindfulness with adults from Buddhist and psychological contexts and a number of interviews with prominent adult mindfulness teachers. In it, Burnett (2011) argues that a secondary school mindfulness curriculum could help to support social and emotional learning, reduce the risk of mental health problems, and promote general wellbeing. The paper teases out the threads of connection between understandings of mindfulness in Buddhist and 'secular' contexts, noting that each are centrally concerned with the alleviation of human suffering. In Buddhist schools of thought, Burnett notes, mindfulness is geared towards understanding and eventually dismantling the causes of *'dukkha'* - understood as suffering or un-satisfactoriness (Ibid; Gethin 1998). He argues, moreover, that by alleviating distress associated with psychopathology or ill health, therapeutic mindfulness programmes are largely consistent with Buddhist concerns, despite their neglect of religious elements of the practice. Yet, Burnett sees the potential of mindfulness as reaching far beyond the facilitation of psychological health. It's 'true potential' is something more (p. 98). In considering this, Burnett includes a quote from an interview with the esteemed cognitive psychologist and mindfulness teacher John Teasdale:

> [W]e're not just fixing pathology here, we're actually learning to recognise patterns of mind that both contribute to the way in which we convert sadness into depression, mild fear into chronic anxiety but also stand between us and our inherent potential for another way of being, greater wisdom and compassion. (quoted p.98)

Burnett surmises that the objective of a school mindfulness programme must be neither therapeutic nor spiritual, but something in between. This space - somewhere 'in between' the spiritual and the therapeutic is an interesting one: it raises questions: what is taken from each of these previous strands of mindfulness practice, and what is left behind? Perhaps unsurprisingly, throughout the promotional literature for MiSP there is a tendency to foreground practical explanations of mindfulness as a mental technique and emphasise connections to psychological research (MiSP 2019a). Nonetheless, within the wider literature surrounding educational mindfulness, the traces of spiritual ambitions are subtly evident in visions of the potential for individual flourishing and of the personal and social

transformations that may be realised through mindfulness (Ergas 2014; 2015; 2017; Hyland 2009; 2011; Schonert-Reichl & Roesser 2016).

From its early development, the Mindfulness in Schools Project has drawn influence from positive psychology, the branch of psychology concerned with understanding and enhancing positive mental states (Seligman 2002). The early development of MiSP was influenced by Professor Felicity Huppert, a key figure in positive psychology and Director of the Wellbeing Institute at Cambridge University. In an interview with one of .b's developers, I was told that the idea for .b was originally developed after a talk delivered by Huppert in 2007 on wellbeing in schools in which she claimed that mindfulness may provide the most promising basis for a school wellbeing initiative. Wellbeing is difficult to define, with some scholars viewing it in terms of positive states such as contentedness and others arguing that it may be experienced even in the absence of such positive states (Wright and McLeod 2014). Nonetheless, Huppert and Johnson (2010) define wellbeing as a combination of 'feeling good' and 'functioning well':

> Feeling good includes positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, interest and affection. Functioning well includes a sense of autonomy or self-determination ... competence and self-efficacy…. resilience in the face of challenge or adversity which involves the awareness and management of thoughts and feelings, and positive relationships, which encompasses empathy and kindness (p.264)

This latter aspect, 'resilience', has been of particular interest within literature surrounding mindfulness. It is this component of wellbeing that is thought to bolster against the onset of mental illness in the face of difficulties (Tugade & Fredrickson 2004). Perhaps unsurprisingly, within the broader literature surrounding social and emotional learning there is a tendency to focus on the amelioration of mental *ill* health, emphasising the associated personal, social and economic costs (Wright & McLeod 2014). In part, interest in school-based mindfulness programmes has been driven by the framing of young people's mental health as a 'global public health challenge' (Patel et al 2007; WHO 2005), and the identification of schools as a key locus for interventions due to their near-universal reach (Ibid; Greenberg 2006).

The ongoing My Resilience in Adolescence project (MYRIAD), launched in 2015, is primarily geared towards identifying specifically whether the .b curriculum is 'effective' and 'cost-effective' in promoting resilience amongst young people. The large-scale UK-wide randomised controlled trial will compare groups of students who are taught .b to those who are taught existing programmes of social and emotional learning across 84 schools (MYRIAD 2019). Students in both groups will be tested on a range of measures prior to taking part in the curriculum, immediately afterwards, and again one and two years after the intervention. Though MYRIAD do not state what measures they will be using, pilot trials used a combination of self-report measures for testing wellbeing, low-level depressive symptoms and trait mindfulness (how mindful students perceived themselves in their daily lives) (see Huppert and Johnson 2010; Kuyken et al 2013). The project, which has received £7 million of funding from the Wellcome Trust and will run for 7 years in total (from 2015-2021), provides some sense of the degree of interest in the programme as a potential universal mental health intervention in school

The 'what' and the 'how' of .b

The .b curriculum was largely modelled on 'secular-therapeutic' mindfulness[2] programmes for adults, specifically Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and, to a lesser extent, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), translating the basic ideas and practices of these programmes into more 'age appropriate' formats and incorporating video clips, animations and activities, in addition to shortening the length of practices and reducing group contact time and the length of time spent on group discussions (referred to as 'inquiry'). MBSR is an eight-week course involving a two-hour weekly group meeting and daily home practice of ninety minutes. The programme was originally developed by Jon Kabat Zinn in 1979 for alleviating chronic pain amongst patients with long term conditions but has since become widely popular as an intervention for general stress management (Harrington 2008). Early research into MBSR suggested that the programme was effective in reducing patients' symptoms of depression, anxiety and physical pain (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat-Zinn et al 1985). The initial success of the MBSR programme prompted vast swaths of research exploring its potential benefits in everything from self-esteem to immune functioning (for reviews of literature see Chiesa and Seretti 2009; Grossman et al 2004; Khoury et al 2015). MBCT was later developed by clinical psychologists Zindel Segal, Mark Williams and John Teasdale, who were each established researchers in the field of research into cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for depression. Segal, Williams and Teasdale adapted the basic MBSR model by incorporating elements of CBT theory and practical worksheets (Segal et al 2002). The programme was specifically designed for the prevention of depressive relapse and, in 2004, after two clinical trials was approved for the treatment of recurrent depression on the UK NHS (Segal et al 2001; Teasdale et al 2000; Ma & Teasdale 2004; NICE 2004).

In adapting MBCT for a child audience, .b builds upon a model of mental health promotion that has been utilised with other psychological interventions, whereby therapies originally developed for the treatment of clinical problems are reformulated for 'universal' application with children (Huppert and Johnson 2010). This 'risk-management' approach to mental health is informed by clinical research suggesting that psychological interventions delivered with healthy young people can markedly reduce the incidence of depressive disorders (Cuijpers et al 2008). It is further argued that even small increases in measures of wellbeing and resilience amongst the entire population of young people may confer significant differences in the incidence of mental health problems (Kuyken et al 2013). Furthermore, adolescence is seen as a key moment in neurological development, and hence many proponents of mental health interventions view this as a 'window of opportunity' for steering developments (Ibid; Roeser and Pinela 2014; see also Blakemore and Choudhury 2006; Choudhury et al 2006).

The logic behind this approach is that the mechanisms that make mindfulness effective for the prevention of depressive relapse may also make it effective for preventing the onset of depression in the first place (Huppert and Johnson 2010). Within the cognitive behavioural

[2] The terms 'secular' and 'therapeutic' are both somewhat contentious in relation to mindfulness programmes. However, by secular, in this instance, I mean only that such programmes are removed from an explicitly Buddhist context, though I certainly recognise the persistence of the religious undertones of mindfulness discourse and practice within nominally secular spaces (Brown 2016; Arat 2017; Hale 2017). I am using the term therapeutic in the same manner here as outlined in chapter 1.

model that underpins MBCT, vulnerability to depression is thought to be partly related to negative self-beliefs (Beck et al 1979). Furthermore, research conducted by Teasdale and colleagues suggested that sad moods can trigger negative self-thoughts amongst people prone to depression, propelling them back into depressive states (Teasdale 1983; Segal & Ingram 1994). Teasdale therefore proposed that the non-judgement and 'friendliness' practiced through mindfulness may cultivate a sense of self-compassion and protect against the cascading of negative self-thoughts when sad moods arise (Segal et al 2002). A number of psychologists have also drawn parallels between the practice of mindfulness meditation and psychological ideas about 'metacognition', understood as the reflexive capacity to know that we are thinking or simply 'thinking about thinking' (Teasdale 1999; Wells 2005; Jankowski & Holas 2014). Teasdale further suggested that by practicing to 'see thoughts as thoughts' through mindfulness, practitioners could gain what he termed 'metacognitive insight': the *experiential* understanding that thoughts are not accurate reflections of reality (Teasdale 1999).

A study by Willem Kuyken and colleagues (2010) later appeared to support the perspective that the primary mechanism by which MBCT prevents the recurrence of depression is by increasing trait mindfulness and self-compassion. These findings in relation to MBCT were in line with some influential research published in the journal *Science* of the same year which suggested, as the researchers interpreted it, that *'a wandering mind is an unhappy mind'* (Killingsworth and Gillbert 2010). Participants of the study were sent messages at various points throughout the day, asking them what they were thinking about and how they were feeling on a scale of 1 to 100 (Ibid). The researchers claimed that people were significantly less 'happy' when they were not thinking about what they were doing.

The promotion of mindfulness as an educational intervention is also underpinned by the perspective that children can be taught to 'regulate' their emotions, thereby reducing the propensity for both mental health problems and 'bad behaviour' (Thompson 2001; Broderick et al 2012). 'Emotion regulation' is a complex concept and there is no consensus as to whether it involves regulating the *response* to an emotion or whether 'emotions' themselves are adjusted (Gross and Thompson 2007). These contentions reflect differing perspectives about what comprises an 'emotion' i.e. debates regarding the relationship between cognitive, physiological, behavioural and social aspects of emotions (Ibid; see also Wetherell 2012). Nonetheless, psychological literature has suggested that turning mindful attention towards emotional experiences may help to reduce the valence of the emotion as feelings gradually dissipate, thereby it is argued that mindfulness meditation may constitute a form of emotion regulation (Chambers et al 2009).

In addition to the mental health benefits, it has also been claimed that learning mindfulness may facilitate academic success in a number of ways. Most basically, research has suggested that attentional training may improve attention spans, thereby enabling students to focus for longer periods (Jha et al 2007). Some have suggested that learning mindfulness may help to switch attention between tasks and ideas (Moore and Malowinski 2009). Moreover, it is hoped that by reducing anxiety and stress (in part via mindful emotion regulation and in part through aggregate benefits of practice) mindfulness may improve performance in exams (Bennett & Dorjee 2016; Kuyken et al 2013).

Making up brains

There has been a longstanding interest in understanding both the neurological mechanisms of mindfulness and how mindfulness and meditative practices may impact upon neurological development. Though, as yet, little is known about the neuroscience of mindfulness and the adolescent brain (Sanger & Dorjee 2015; Kaunhoven & Dorjee 2017), a number of studies have provided insight into the effects of mindfulness training on brain functioning and architecture in adults. Whilst it would be unnecessary to chart all of these developments here, the studies below have arguably been the most influential amongst researchers and practitioners interested in mindfulness interventions for education. These studies are therefore significant to understanding the wider influences upon the existing research landscape of mindfulness in schools.

Using fMRI, Farb et al (2007) compared brain activity of non-meditators to those who had undergone an 8 week mindfulness course whilst engaged in tasks involved in experiential-self (ES) referencing (thinking about the self in the present moment, such as current feelings) and narrative-self (NS) referencing (thinking about descriptions of the self). The researchers found more pronounced deactivation in the medial prefrontal cortex, which is largely associated with complex cognition and semantic processing, amongst meditators whilst engaged in ES referencing. In addition, they found that there was a strong coupling between the right insula cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex in non-meditators that was decoupled in meditators. It was concluded that there are distinct neural mechanisms involved in ES and NS referencing and that mindfulness training may enhance the capacity to disengage narrative process to focus on present experience.

Perhaps the most widely cited finding within popular literature is that mindfulness can contribute to 'neuroplasticity', changing the physical architecture of the brain. Hölzel et al (2011) compared MRI images of novice meditators before and after completing an eight-week MBSR course. The research identified increases in grey matter in the left hippocampus (thought to be involved in the formation of memories). In addition, increases in grey matter were found in the posterior cingulate cortex, the temporo-parietal junction, and the cerebellum - areas thought to be involved with emotion regulation, self-referential processing and perspective taking. Such findings have been seen to indicate that psychological benefits associated with meditation are underlain by changes in the physical structures of the brain.

In exploring the relationship between mindfulness and emotional regulation, Creswell et al (2007) found that people who scored higher for trait mindfulness (the tendency to be more aware in daily life) had greater prefrontal cortex activation and lesser amygdala activity whilst completing an affect labelling task[3]. They conclude that mindfulness supports emotional regulation via greater prefrontal cortical regulation of affect. Other neuroscientific research has been interpreted as supporting the view that mindfulness has a positive impact on mental health. An influential study by Mason et al (2007) appeared to demonstrate that networks of the brain which were active at rest were involved with

[3] Affect here is used in the sense generally employed by cognitive psychologists: as referring to somatic changes associated with emotive environmental or internal stimuli (Lewis et al 2010). Affect labelling tasks generally involve the presentation of various stimuli intended to generate an emotional response and asking participants to label the emotion that each stimulus represent (Constantinou et al 2014).

narrative generation, and that these activations correlated with participants claims that their minds had 'wandered'. The researchers deemed this 'stimulus independent thought' and argue that the default activity of the brain is narrative generation. Later research by Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) demonstrated a negative relationship between mind-wandering and self-reported happiness. Following from this, brain imaging research by Brewer et al (2011) found that default network activation was depressed in experienced meditators during meditation. Such studies appear to support the view that mindfulness contributes to wellbeing by reducing the propensity for engaging in narrative generation. In popular mindfulness literature this default mode activation is commonly related to what is termed 'automatic pilot': where the individual is operating without full consciousness and engagement with the 'here and now'. Thus, by enabling the individual to fully engage with their lived experience mindfulness is presented as the antidote to the 'automatic pilot' mode of mind.

A number of scholars have noted the value of neuroscientific ideas for generating popular interest in mindfulness, and of the import of neuroscientific research in facilitating its acceptance in mainstream education (Moses and Choudhury 2016; Purser, Forbes & Burke 2016). Neuroscience has become a significant discourse in .b and is interwoven throughout promotional documents and the curriculum itself. Yet, there is little research so far that has looked explicitly at how neuroscientific ideas are presented within mindfulness programmes (cf. Moses & Choudhury 2016) and no sociological literature which examines how these ideas are interpreted by teachers and students within the classroom. Whilst the focus of this thesis is more around formulations and ideals of selfhood, notions of the material, neurological and evolutionary underpinnings of subjectivity are nonetheless central to how this selfhood is constituted within the curriculum. As such, this thesis can be seen as partly speaking to a gap in social scientific understanding regarding educational programmes that both convey forms of neuroscientific knowledge and are positioned as modulating the developing brain (Broer & Pickersgill 2015; Gagen 2015; Pykett & Disney 2015).

What is currently known about mindfulness in schools?

For the vast majority of psychological studies on mindfulness programmes with young people the primary objective is to gauge the extent to which a given mindfulness programme is effective at producing certain outcomes (primarily relating to mental health, however also sometimes broader cognitive faculties, attainment or behaviour). A number of meta-analyses are available which summarise research that has been conducted on mindfulness programmes both in schools (Carsley et al 2018; Zenner et al 2014) and more broadly amongst young people (Greenberg and Harris 2012; Kallapiran et al 2015; Klingbeil et al 2017; Zoogman et al 2015). These analyses have tended to find small positive effects of the programmes on measures of mental health and wellbeing, whilst noting that, as yet, high-quality studies are lacking (Greenberg and Harris 2012; Kallapiran et al 2015; Klingpeil et al 2017; Zenner et al 2014; Zoogman et al 2015).

Interestingly, a recent systematic review of research on school-based mindfulness interventions found a number of factors to markedly influence the effectiveness of interventions for promoting mental health (Carsley et al 2018). Firstly, the researchers found that interventions delivered during late adolescence (between aged 15-18) were most

successful. Secondly, the review indicated that whether or not the teacher of the programme was a teacher based at the school was essential for the effectiveness of the programme: when programmes were delivered by an external facilitator there was not a significantly positive effect on wellbeing. Finally, the researchers found that the programmes which produced the most sustained benefits for mental health were those that comprised both elements of mindfulness practice and mindful yoga.

There are currently very few existing studies that have looked specifically at .b, and these can be summarized briefly. Huppert and Johnson (2010) compared students who received the programme during their religious education (RE) classes with those who received standard RE with no mindfulness teaching, using pre and post-intervention measures of resilience, wellbeing and mindfulness. The researchers also conducted a questionnaire to ascertain how frequently students utilized mindfulness outside of the classroom. The mindfulness programme did not have a statistically significant effect on the outcome measures, however the researchers found that the amount of home practice students did was significantly correlated with post-intervention measures of wellbeing. The study was conducted during the early stages of .b's development and was used to inform and refine later iterations of the curriculum (Huppert & Johnson 2010).

A later trial, published by Kuyken et al (2013), attempted to ascertain the feasibility of .b as an intervention for promoting mental health. The study used a non-randomised control design, comparing students who received the curriculum at six schools with a control group (matched in terms of school type i.e. fee paying, state, grammar) on measures of wellbeing and depressive symptoms. Measures were taken before and after the programme, and at a three month follow up. The researchers also conducted a survey that asked students about the extent to which they engaged with home practice, and the extent to which they found the programme useful and valuable. After adjusting the results for age, gender and ethnicity, the study found significantly lower depression scores amongst the mindfulness group after the intervention and at the follow up, and decreased self-reported stress and improved wellbeing scores at the follow up. Interest and enjoyment of the programme overall was mixed, though most students claimed to have used at least some of the practices at least once. Kuyken and colleagues interpreted the results as suggesting that mindfulness programmes may be an effective intervention for reducing mental health problems if delivered to pupils on a large-scale.

A study published as part of the initial stages of the MYRIAD project has also looked into factors supporting the implementation of mindfulness programmes in secondary (age 11-18) schools (Wilde et al 2019). The researchers identified schools across the UK that were already delivering mindfulness in some form and conducted interviews with key members of staff involved in delivering mindfulness and senior leaders and focus groups with other teaching staff, exploring issues surrounding the perceived value and purpose of mindfulness, as well as barriers and facilitators to delivery. They note three key themes for effective implementation including: the need for support from senior leaders and other members of staff; the recognition that implementation takes time and may have periods of greater and lesser progress; and finally, ensuring that the wider community within the school shares an understanding of what mindfulness is and why it is thought to be valuable for pupils.

As yet, there is very little qualitative research on school-based mindfulness programmes and almost no such research on .b that has been published in academic journals (cf. Ager et al 2015; Dariotis et al 2016, 2017; Wang et al 2016). Qualitative studies that have been conducted have tended to be implemented by teachers of the programmes themselves and therefore are likely to assume particular perspectives. For example, in a study conducted by teachers of a primary school mindfulness programme in Australia, the researchers largely interpret students' repetitions of ideas of the course as representing a form of experiential truth that the students have realized through mindfulness practice (Ager et al 2015). On the whole, within the literature on school-based programmes, very little consideration has been given to the specific content of curriculums, or to the ways in which children and teachers themselves interpret ideas and practices within them. Beyond this, existing research on .b has been disproportionately weighted towards independent and selective schools, with the initial pilot study being conducted in two independent boarding schools (Huppert & Johnson 2010) and the later trial including six private schools and two grammar schools (out of a total of twelve within the trial) (Kuyken et al 2013). My own study explored .b's delivery at four, rural state secondary schools across Wales and the South West. These schools had varying socioeconomic demographics, and each had a primarily white-British ethnic in-take. As such, this study cannot claim to be representative of mindfulness within the state educational context across the UK. However, the study does provide an opportunity to explore how the programme translates to less socially and economically privileged schools, and to meaningfully engage with students' interpretations of the programme (through focus groups and observations).

2.3 Schooling the soul: Education and the 'inner life' of the child

A number of scholars have produced compelling accounts of the ways in which universal education has been bound up with more subtle project of governing the sensibilities of citizens (Rose 1990; 1998; 1999; Green 1990). Thus, it is suggested, the regulation of bodily conduct, timetabling and punctuality, obedience to authority and neatness are insisted upon not simply because they are conducive to learning, but because they imbue the pupil with certain mannerisms and ways of thinking, such that she learns to govern herself (Rose 1990; 1998; 1999). It has further been argued that the discipline of psychology has come, in various ways, to provide a source of expertise and practical technologies through which these outcomes are achieved. Valerie Walkerdine (1984) and Erica Burman (2007), for example, have written about the role of developmental psychology in measuring, ranking and categorising children and thereby in producing the 'normal child'. A number of scholars have noted how psychometric testing facilitated the construction of developmental stages against which children could be measured (Walkerdine 1984; Burman 2007; Wright 2015). Such processes simultaneously facilitated the development of strategies for intervening on the development of children deemed 'abnormal' (Wright 2015).

Moreover, extensive commentaries have been written about the extent to which during the 20th century, delinquency came to be understood in terms of psychological deficiencies (McCallum 1990; Wright 2012; 2015; Rose 1990). Beginning with the establishment of Child Guidance Clinics in the 1920s as specialised centres for treating 'abnormal' children, a whole range of educational interventions emerged for targeting children who were

deemed both 'at risk' and as *posing* a future risk to society (Ibid). Yet, Mathew Thomson (2006) has explored how, alongside these strategies of normalization, psychological ideas were also drawn upon by grassroots movements which sought to re-envisage education as a means for nurturing the creative potential of the child. These progressive education movements drew eclectically from psychological theories from behaviourism to psychoanalysis and were influenced by Theosophy, particularly notions of authenticity and ideas about the distinctness of the individual. Advocates of progressive education argued that the role of the school was not to discipline but to support children to realise their full capacity for agency, creativity and individuality, whilst also recognising 'common humanity'. As Thomson (2006) and Eggermont (2001) note, these ideas were largely incorporated into mainstream perspectives on education throughout the latter half of the 20th century.

Yet, for many scholars, the explicit foregrounding of subjective dimensions of learning in education policy during recent decades marks a significant development in this broader history (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Gillies 2011; Gagen 2015). Beginning in the early 2000's there has been a proliferation of educational programmes that specifically aim to teach 'social and emotional skills' and a general shift towards universal interventions for promoting mental health (Ecclestone and Hayes 2009; Wright 2014). In part, this more overt emphasis on 'self-skills' (self-regulation, self-knowledge, self-awareness and so on) within education may be seen to reflect wider cultural developments in relation to understandings of the nature of 'selfhood'. These relate, firstly to the popular perception of psychology as an authority which can help us to become happier, more fulfilled and more ethical beings (Thomson 2006), and secondly, to the intensification of expectations and possibilities for reflexive self-creation (Rose 1990; 1996; 1999).

The first of these cultural shifts relates to the ways in which, over the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century, psychological ideas have come to permeate society through a vast spectrum of modalities (from psychological therapies and public health policy, to self-help books, talk shows and magazines) translating into a complex apparatus of expertise which claims to speak with authority about our 'inner lives' (Ibid; Illouz 2008). As such, Nikolas Rose and Eva Illouz have argued that people in Western nations have come to understand themselves through the language of psychology and have come increasingly to seek out that expertise to guide their behaviours, decisions and personal relationships (Rose 1998; Ilouz 2008). The second, related development has been the increasing degree to which people are understood as autonomous individuals who create themselves through acts of choice: via consumption and techniques of working upon the self to realise certain capacities and ideals (Rose 1990; 1998; 1999). Yet, Rose argues, this expansion of liberty is necessarily bound to a more delicate penetration into the mentalities of citizens, such that they may be invested with certain values, virtues and characteristics which are conducive to the functioning of late capitalist society (Ibid; 1996).

Here, Rose is building on the writings of Michel Foucault regarding the contemporary modalities of government (Burchell, Gordan & Miller 1991; Foucault, Davidson & Burchell 2010; Lemke 2001). Rose, following Foucault, argues that the 'retreat of the state' in advanced liberal democracies is accompanied by the proliferation of technologies of monitoring and evaluation through which institutions such as schools, hospitals and

prisons are coerced to act in line with free-market rationality (i.e. in terms of efficiency, cost-saving and productivity). This market logic permeates through all domains of society, including education, health and fields of expertise such as psychology. This mode of 'governance at a distance' produces a particular logic through which people come to govern themselves as 'enterprising subjects': an unending project of self-improvement in the interests of maximising personal capital and productivity (Rose 1996). What is frequently called 'neoliberalism' refers specifically to this particular rationality of government that has been hugely influential in Western states over the past forty years and which has arguably come to structure education policy (Ball 2012).

Thus, a number of scholars who have built upon these ideas note that within the discourse surrounding social and emotional learning, the subject is simultaneously a subject that is *shaped* (through their psychological and neurological development) and a subject that learns to create herself in a civilised image through enhancing her skills of self-management (Ecclestone 2007; Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Ecclestone & Brunila 2015; Brunila 2014; Brunila & Siivonen 2016). Hence, Brunila (2012) notes that through therapeutic interventions pupils are taught to perceive themselves as working to overcome their negative emotional patterns such that they can be freed for entrepreneurship and greater productivity. Such scholars perceive new therapeutic approaches to education therefore not as liberating the individual, but as opening up intimate spaces of personal life to be evaluated and worked upon. Daniel Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence is seen as one example of a form of influential psychological expertise, and a powerful idea that carved out a new domain of personal competencies that could be intervened upon, exercised and enhanced. Similarly, Elizabeth Gagen (2015) has argued that advances in understandings of neuroplasticity during adolescence have provided the bases for more sophisticated interventions on the molecular level of children's development.

In 2003 the New Labour government launched the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, which is widely seen as having been the catalyst for the proliferation of educational interventions targeting social and emotional skills (Ecclestone 2007; 2013). This agenda broadly sought to facilitate a more integrated and holistic approach to young peoples' care across a range of public services and placed a new emphasis on schools as providers of psychological support. It was within this policy context that Social and Emotional aspects of Learning (SEAL), the first nation-wide school-based intervention of its kind, was launched (DCSF 2007). Though central government backing for SEAL was withdrawn under the subsequent Coalition government, Ecclestone (2012) notes that its central ideas have been largely carried forward under the current emphasis on 'Character Education'. This new approach, she argues, accepts the understanding of emotional habits and dispositions as 'skills' but translates these into the more traditional Victorian language of virtues and moral reasoning.

Moreover, the broader logic that spans this agenda, Ecclestone argues, reflects a significant shift in perspectives about the purpose of education. Ecclestone (2016) views what she terms as a 'therapeutic ethos' in education as reflecting a loss of confidence in traditional educational aims of developing skills and disseminating knowledge, and a corresponding drive for education to take on roles previously the preserve of the family, such as nurturing values and providing emotional support. The new Scottish and Welsh curriculums can

arguably be seen as reflecting this general movement. In Scotland, the 'Curriculum for Excellence' was launched in 2010 and explains that its guiding premise is that education should nurture in students those qualities that are desirable amongst citizens (Scottish Government 2008). The new Welsh Curriculum, to be launched in 2022, largely builds on the same framework, stating that its primary objectives are to enable children to become: *"ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society."* (Education Wales 2019 p.5). Indeed, many teachers I spoke with over the course of this research noted that mindfulness in schools can be situated in relation to shifts within education policy towards emphasising psychological traits and capacities.

The young and the blighted

Pressures on schools to support young people are fuelled in part by the widespread public perception of a crisis of youth mental health (Scraton 2004; Kehily 2010). Wright and McLeod (2014) further note that there is a consensus within the medical community of an upward trend in mental health diagnoses amongst young people over the past thirty years. In light of concerns surrounding mental health problems amongst young people and in the context of continuing financial constraints on schools, mindfulness programmes have been posited as a potentially cost-effective means for expanding psychological support within schools (Weare 2013).

Frequently within popular discourse, the crisis of youth mental health is seen as resulting from changes in the experience of adolescence as a result of digital media and common fears relate to the constant demands on attention, the ubiquity of information and explicit content, the deluge of advertising, the consequences of 'picture-perfect' culture of social media for self-esteem and body-image and cyber-bullying (Palmer 2008; 2015; Plowman et al 2010). In contrast, historian of media and culture, David Buckingham (2000), argues that digital platforms simply come to replace previous domains of influence over young people's lives, emphasising that there are both positive and negative impacts of such technologies, though perhaps not for all young people equally. Furthermore, it has been claimed that as young people are raised with technologies, they are more likely to incorporate them into their sense of self, meaning that they are unlikely to experience technological demands on attention in the same way as adults (Ibid; Singh 2013). Finally, noting the long line of crises that have been perceived to blight childhood, a number of scholars claim that the cultural construction of childhood fundamentally rests on notions of vulnerability, ensuring the constant need for adult surveillance and protection (Scraton 1997; Jackson & Scott 1999).

As Wright and McLeod (2013) note, measuring statistical trends in mental health over time is extremely difficult as definitions and categories of mental illness are continually evolving. The literature that does exist on mental health trends over the past two or three decades generally indicates relatively small increases specifically in 'emotional disorders' (such as anxiety and depression) amongst adolescent girls, and no significant increases in disorders amongst boys (see for example Bor et al 2014; Fink et al 2015; NHS Digital 2018). The largest longitudinal study in the UK noted an overall 1.5% increase in mental health problems amongst 5-15-year olds over the 18-year period between 1999 and 2018,

primarily due to a 1.7% increase in emotional disorders amongst older adolescent girls (NHS Digital 2018). Interestingly, though poverty is widely seen as a specific risk factor for psychological problems, the increase in the proportion of children living in poverty over the last decade has been far greater than increases in diagnoses of mental illness amongst young people. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation notes that there was a 3% increase in the proportion of children living in poverty over the six years between 2011-2017 (a 15% increase in the overall number of children living in poverty) (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2018). These figures, and the far greater public attention surrounding children's mental health in recent years, give some context to what Ecclestone (2015) terms the 'therapisation of social justice'. - that is, 'what matters' in the public and policy discourse of the day is the psychological (we might add, medically diagnosable) consequences of inequality, rather than inequality itself.

Notably, the increasing pressure over recent years for schools to provide for pupils' emotional and psychological (as well as developmental) needs has not been accompanied by an increase in funding. In England, spending per pupil across primary and secondary schools decreased by 8% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2017/18, primarily due to significant local authority cuts (Belfield, Farquharson, Sibieta 2018). As such, the prominence facing schools, whereby staff shortages and scarce resources may translate to greater uncertainty and volatility in the school environment, which may be reflected in students' behaviour and wellbeing (Hanley et al 2017). Notably, statistics in mental health do little to tell us about emotional experiences that fall outside of the range of medical diagnoses.

Some commentators have claimed that the increasing degree of psychological literacy amongst the general public means that people are far more likely to understand their emotions in medicalised and psychologised terms (see also Illouz 2008; Rose 1990; 1998). This argument reflects what philosopher of science Ian Hacking (1995) calls 'the looping effects of human kinds'. That is, that our subjective experiences and 'internal' processes are responsive to the ideas we encounter in the world: that 'what we are' is steered by the terms through which we understand ourselves. Notably, the most prominent psychobiological theories of emotions view them not as pre-given neurochemical entities awaiting recognition (as previous 'basic emotion' theories imply), but as emergent processes that are shaped in part by our reflexive appraisals of them. This understanding of psychological and emotional experiences as socially and historically contingent undermines both attempts to chart changing levels of mental health problems, and endeavours to draw sharps line between 'real' and 'imagined' issues of mental health (Hacking 1995; 1998)

Psychological immunization and psychoeducation

As Wright & McLeod (2014) note, educational interventions such as SEAL are predicated on the assumption that at least some mental health problems are preventable. This builds upon the idea of 'early intervention', whereby young people who are identified as 'at risk' are provided with additional support or subjected to various interventions geared towards addressing behavioural tendencies that are deemed problematic. The logic behind such approaches is that certain emotional traits (such as empathy and 'resilience' under

conditions of stress) can be understood as 'skills' and that deficiencies in these skills lead to emotional problems (Mrazek & Haggerty 1994). 'Universal' school-based interventions that are geared towards preventing mental illness further posit that these skills can be taught in a relatively systematic manner. In contrast, some critics claim that such approaches fail to recognise the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the school environment (Gillies 2011) and note that interventions have produced variable results (e.g. Stallard et al 2012).

Some critics have called the 'universal' preventative approach to mental health problems 'psychological immunization', arguing that there is no reason to believe that emotional skills can be transmitted in the same way as skills in maths or science (Craig 2007), and suggesting instead that they are 'caught not taught' (Woolf 2013). Ecclestone (2014) suggests that programmes which explicitly ask students to focus on feelings of difficulty may in fact exacerbate negative emotional tendencies, encouraging students to perceive themselves as vulnerable. She argues, moreover, that the therapeutic ethos that underpins these programmes reinforces the view amongst adults that young people require excessive external support, ideas which are then tacitly communicated and absorbed by young people themselves.

Notably, one trial which examined the effects of an intervention of CBT with secondary school pupils found that the intervention had a marginally worse effect on pupils' mood than the control (Stallard et al 2012). Kuyken et al (2013) note that these negative effects could reflect the greater attention that participating in the programme brought to difficult feelings. The authors of the study argue that there is a need to exercise caution in relation to the implementation of preventative measures in secondary schools, highlighting the practical difficulties with ensuring programmes run smoothly in complex, busy, and time-pressured school environments. Nonetheless, Ecclestone's argument largely revolves around the extent to which therapeutic programmes draw attention to negative feelings and hence potentially exacerbate the perception of vulnerability. In contrast, MBSR and MBCT, on which .b is based, discourage narrativizing and analysing feelings of difficulty, encouraging participants instead to just 'be aware' of these feelings and thoughts as they arise and pass away. Some have therefore suggested that mindfulness may avoid some of the ruminating tendencies of previous initiatives (Kuyken et al 2013).

2.4 Healing the mind: The emergence of therapeutic mindfulness

Despite the vast quantities of research published within the 'psy' and 'neuro' disciplines around mindfulness of every sort and for every ill, literature in the social sciences is still fairly limited by comparison. It is notable that the greatest proportion of literature outside psychology has been published in the field of Buddhist studies, indicating the extent to which mindfulness, even in its contemporary iterations, is closely bound to Buddhism. Much of this research can be read as attempts to 'defend the field' from appropriation and misinterpretation by psychologists, by clarifying interpretations of mindfulness within Buddhist traditions (Dreyfus 1995; 2011; Sharf 2015). There have been heated debates about the extent to which mindfulness is 'ultimately' a Buddhist practice, about the extent to which present understandings are grounded in Buddhist texts, and whether or not mindfulness represents some 'universal', human experience (see Sharf 1995; 2000; Gunther Brown 2016). It seems unnecessary to recount these well-worn debates, although I will

discuss the most relevant areas of contention below. Other scholars have drawn attention to the particular conditions that have given rise to therapeutic mindfulness, viewing this not as a desecration of some 'true' original but as an interesting development in the history of mindfulness, one which straddles religious and secular domains (McMahan 2008; Wilson 2014; Drage 2018). This literature is of particular interest in explaining the context that gave rise to therapeutic approaches to mindfulness. Notably, many of the discourses that characterise modern understandings of mindfulness are evident, if not accelerated, within the discourses surrounding .b.

A second set of literature relates specifically to the use of mindfulness therapies in various settings. In particular, reflecting some of the critiques of therapeutic education outlined above, scholars drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault have viewed modern mindfulness as a tool by which individuals are taught to self-manage stress and distress, diverting attention from their root causes in capitalist, patriarchal and racist structures (Purser & Loy 2013; Forbes 2017; Hsu 2016). Nonetheless, this literature has tended to focus on particular instances of mindfulness (such as workplace initiatives) in which such quieting and responsibilising narratives are most prominent, sometimes at the expense of understanding how such narratives interweave with more socially oriented and critical discourses.

The truth within: Universality and Authority in Therapeutic Mindfulness

In popular literature mindfulness is widely presented as an ancient technique for training the mind, derived from the teachings of the Buddha (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Goldstein 2013; Feldman 2001). In Jon Kabat-Zinn's foreword to Williams and Penman's UK bestseller *Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world*, he explains that mindfulness:

> is actually a *practice*. Indeed, it is thousands of years old and is often spoken about as 'the heart of Buddhist meditation' although it's essence, being about attention and awareness, is universal. (2014 p.12 emphasis in original)

It seems, then, that mindfulness is both central to the Buddhist tradition and yet somehow *more than* a Buddhist practice, belonging instead to some common feature of humanity. In such literature, the argument follows that as a method for engaging with one's internal world mindfulness is both timeless, as the nature of consciousness is constant, and value free, as it is simply a mirror to consciousness without prescribing a particular framework for its interpretation. Attention and awareness, the core mental processes of mindfulness, are seen as psychological states: capacities innate to the structure of the mind and therefore present to some degree in all people (Feldman & Kuyken 2019). These states are internal and, of themselves, neutral, existing prior to their content and the social and cultural processes that shape individual idiosyncrasies. By extension, to the degree that mindfulness is seen as a practice for cultivating a particular state of awareness, it is arguably 'universal'.

Thus, whilst the Buddhist roots of mindfulness are generally acknowledged, it is argued that mindfulness cannot be the property of any religion, as religions are structures which are social in their origin (Kabat Zinn 1994; 2014; cf. Sharf 1995). This perspective rests on the assumption that mindfulness reflects a singular, universally accessible experience

(Drage 2018) and is indebted to the ideas of perennialism and alternative spiritualities of the 19th and early 20th century (Sharf 1995; 2000). Yet, in his work exploring the emergence of the two most widely recognised adult mindfulness programmes (MBSR and MBCT), Drage argues that this apparently 'universal essence' is paradoxically tied to a particular form of patriarchal authority (2018 p.120). That is, certain key figures within these developments have been seen to have the authority to disseminate mindfulness in part due to their apparent access to and comprehension of this 'essence', and in part through pre-existing gendered and institutional structures of power. Indeed, a number of scholars have noted how the success of these programmes is largely tied to the role of certain charismatic figures with perceived scientific legitimacy and stature (Dryden and Still 2006; Wilson 2014; Kucinskas 2018).

For many scholars, the emergence of MBSR and its acceptance within medical institutions marks a key moment in the history of mindfulness in the West (McMahan 2008; Wilson 2014; Purser 2019). Whilst previous figures had claimed that Buddhist meditative practices could have practical value (McMahan 2008), and whilst some psychologists had somewhat covertly incorporated Buddhist ideas into their therapies (Fields 1992; Dryden & Still 2006), Kabat-Zinn was the first to simultaneously acknowledge the Buddhist roots of the practice whilst marketing it for a medical purpose (Wilson 2014). It is from this point that we see the emergence of something marked out as 'secular mindfulness', though a number of scholars particularly within the fields of religious studies have contested that such programmes are in-fact underpinned by Buddhist religious ideals and motivations (Brown 2016; Hale 2017). Kabat-Zinn is an important figure in relation to MiSP, in terms of his explicit endorsement (he is listed as a supporter on the MiSP website) and as a charismatic figure who is able to generate interest in mindfulness amongst teachers. His hugely popular books '*Full Catastrophe Living'* (1990) and *'Wherever You Go, There You Are'* (1994) amongst others, have generated him a significant following amongst a mostly female, white, middle-class audience (Wilson 2014). Kabat-Zinn has spoken at a number of conferences on the subject of mindfulness in schools, including one that I attended, in which his presence generated notable excitement.

The notion of 'secular mindfulness' has become the centre of heated debates surrounding ethics. In such debates, secular interpretations are frequently contrasted against Buddhist perspectives, with some authors arguing that the ethical dimensions of mindfulness have been stripped away (Purser 2019; Purser and Loy 2013; Forbes 2017; Forbes 2019). These accounts have tended to assume the profanation of mindfulness in therapeutic settings, viewing such approaches as being geared purely towards self-improvement, workplace productivity and pleasant experience. Nonetheless, empirical accounts exploring social contexts surrounding the emergence of mindfulness therapies have highlighted precisely the intertwining of the scientific and the spiritual: illustrating how ideas of 'universal truth' and empiricism; social change and self-responsibility; salvation and discipline are tightly entangled in contemporary mindfulness discourse. Such scholars argue that the popular acceptance of mindfulness outside of Buddhist circles has been enabled by the pragmatic negotiations of key actors, motivated simultaneously by spiritual belief, commitment to social agendas, and personal ambition (Drage 2018a; 2018b; Dryden and Still 2006; Kucinskas 2018).

Based on his ethnographic research at Bangor University's Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP) and biographical interviews with the programmes founders, Mathew Drage (2018b) has described how a quasi-religious form of authority was central to the establishment of MBCT. Prior to their research into the clinical applications of mindfulness, the three founders had each built up highly esteemed careers through their research into the use of CBT in the treatment of depression. Mark Williams, who helped to establish the CMRP and later founded the Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC), was then Professor of Psychology at the University of Bangor, John Teasdale was a leading researcher at Cambridge University's Applied Psychology Unit (APU), and finally Zindel Segal held a professorship in Psychology at the University of Toronto (Ibid). Yet, during his interviews with Williams and Segal, it was explained that Teasdale held the authority amongst the three. Interestingly, Drage argues that Teasdale's authority amongst his colleagues derived not only from his academic standing but also from his committed meditative practice and the perception that he had realised certain perennial 'truths' through meditation. Drage notes that the culture surrounding therapeutic mindfulness, both in Kabat-Zinn's Worcester, Massachusetts clinic and within the UK, largely orbited around such figures of power, whose positions were secured by their apparent access to a transcendental knowledge that unified the scientific and the subjective.

Thought traffic and Passing Clouds: Making sense of modern mindfulness

Religious studies professor David McMahan argues that contemporary Western engagements with Buddhist meditative practices are a 'microcosm' of the West's interpretations of Buddhism (p.203). McMahan argues that modern Buddhism has been a 'co-creation' of Asian Buddhist 'modernisers' and Westerners, in which key figures have adapted Buddhist ideas to make sense of pertinent issues of their day. Hence, the discourse surrounding what he terms 'Buddhist modernism' has been shaped by concerns relating to religious and moral pluralism, epistemic tensions between religion and science and, more recently, climate change and the 'pace of modern life'.

Moreover, McMahan argues that contemporary discourse surrounding meditation is characterised by a dialectic between two 'inescapable metanarratives of modernity' which he describes, following Taylor (1989), as 'scientific rationalism' and 'romantic expressivism'. The former is rooted in Enlightenment reformulations of and responses to Christian ideas and comprises the notion that truth is discoverable through rational calculation and empirical investigation. The latter can be seen largely as a response to the perceived mechanisation and disenchantment of the world following the Enlightenment, and comprises literary, philosophical and spiritual movements inspired by Romanticism. McMahan notes that some of the earliest popularisers of Buddhism within the West (such as Henry Olcott and Helena Blavatsky) were adherents to Theosophy, a 19th century esoteric movement that sought to align spiritual practice with scientific 'advancement' (see also Blavatsky 1975).

This dialectic between science and romanticism is evident in popular depictions of meditation as a means for 'spiritual connection' that is nonetheless 'empirically verified'. McMahan further notes, as does Lopez (2008), that Western representations of meditation ignore a significant breadth of Buddhist practices, 'trimming off' many of the mythological

elements. Moreover, he explains, ideas of 'self-discovery', 'self-acceptance' and 'authenticity' that are frequently associated with meditation are directly indebted to the influence of Theosophy, Transcendentalism as well as Humanistic psychology and artistic movements such as the Beat Generation. Furthermore, he views modern interpretations of meditative practice in terms of a pragmatic response to the threat of nihilism wrought by modernity: as a means by which modern Buddhists and lay practitioners attempt to obtain mystical experience without abandoning science. In contrast, key Buddhist figures have sometimes portrayed Buddhism as providing an ethical corrective to science, as holding the capacity to facilitate human progress on more humane and sustainable terms.

In her historical exploration of mind-body therapeutic practices in the United States, Harrington (2008) examines the core cultural narratives that structure understandings of the relationship between the psyche, the body and healing. Perhaps the most prominent for making sense of contemporary mindfulness are the narratives that Harrington calls *'broken by modern life'* and '*eastward journeys'*. The former refers to the idea the hyper-connectivity and increasing pace of modern life drive excessive levels of stress that causes both physical and psychological damage. She notes how secular adaptations of meditation were initially primarily marketed as a palliative for stress (see for example Benson & Klipper 1975)[4]. The latter narrative that Harrington describes reflects earlier forms of Orientalist discourse. First described by the Palestinian scholar Edward Saiid, orientalism describes the tendency amongst Western cultures to exoticise Asian cultures, viewing them as a diametrically opposed image of the West. The particular bent of Orientalism that Harrington describes within mind-body discourse emphasises the superiority of 'Eastern' cultures in matters of spirituality and ethics. Harrington notes that it is this narrative that expresses the idea that salvation from contemporary ills can be found in the ancient traditions of the East. Thus, mindfulness retains a sort of exotic cache, yet is adapted to speak to the concerns of its Western adopters who are overwhelmingly white, female and middle-class (Wilson 2014; Kucinskas 2018).

Becoming the observer: mindfulness and the internal gaze

The ascent of therapeutic mindfulness programmes into secular institutions of the workplace, the school, and even parliament, has provoked stringent critique from a number of angles. As noted above, a proportion of this critical literature has drawn on the work of Michel Foucault (1990; 1991; 1997) and Nikolas Rose (1990; 1996; 1999). Professor of Management and Buddhist practitioner, Ronald Purser, for example, claims that modern therapeutic mindfulness programmes are neoliberal technologies that teach practitioners to manage their personal anguish in the service of productivity (Purser and Loy 2013; Purser 2019). Purser argues that, by diagnosing the causes of distress as failures of the mind, modern adaptations of mindfulness distract from critical reflection on structural inequality. According to Buddhist philosophies, Purser argues, the 'psychological' benefits of mindfulness relate to the gradual dissolution of ego, which is seen as the root of suffering (Gethin 2015; Sharf 2015; Purser 2019). Critics claim that, in presenting mindfulness as an

[4] Ayesha Nathoo (2016a,b) has also explored how, within the UK, 'therapeutic relaxation', a technique developed by Edmund Jacobson in the 1930's to alleviate stress and associated ailments, provided a precursor to contemporary interpretations of mindfulness. Nathoo describes how therapeutic relaxation became popular amongst the English middle classes throughout much of the mid-20th century.

ethically neutral self-help tool, such initiatives actually reinforce conceptions of an isolated, bounded self (Purser 2019). Beyond this, it has been claimed that traditional Asian Buddhists do not aspire to Western models of mental health and, as such, the framing of mindfulness in terms of an 'ancient' tool for enhancing wellbeing is misguided (Sharf 2015).

In response to criticisms about the de-ethicized nature of contemporary mindfulness programs, certain proponents have claimed that mindfulness is inherently ethical (Kabat-Zinn 1994; Siegal et al 2009). This perspective follows that through practice, mindfulness enables individuals to become less reactive to emotions, more objective and, through lessening the burden of their own suffering, more compassionate to others (Kabat-Zinn 1994). A number of scholars have contended that mindfulness may therefore retain its socially transformative potential, even when stripped of its explicit relationship to Buddhist ethical guidance (Reveley 2015; Ergas 2015). This perspective has been deemed 'Trojan Horse Buddhism': implying that mindfulness practices have the potential to transform neoliberalism from within (Purser & Ng 2015). James Reveley (2015), for example, argues that the facets of subjectivity which are most suitable to neoliberal capitalism, such as cognitive flexibility, creative thinking and openness to experience, are also necessary for active resistance.

As a number of scholars have noted, these debates have become markedly polarised (Harrington 2015; Walsh 2016). The intensity of these debates may be seen to reflect the extent to which various competing concerns are motivated by a mix of religious conviction and social vision. Nonetheless, Richard Payne (2014) has claimed that mindfulness, however it is defined or practiced, is a 'tool' and is therefore always underwritten by particular values. As such, the teaching of mindfulness programmes will be infused with the values of their creators *"whether that includes an ethic of caregiving, a sense of economic injustice, a drive for profit, or a desire for satisfaction"* (Walsh 2016 p.153). Thus, we might argue, that for the purpose of understanding what 'mindfulness is doing' in any given context, we must move beyond assuming that mindfulness is a constant, unchanging, subjective experience and instead examine the *particular values* embedded within the programme under question, and *the particular ways in which it is implemented.*

2.5 Conclusion

For some, educational mindfulness programmes hold the potential to engender the creativity and innovation necessary to advance modern economies into a new phase of prosperity (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser 2016). For others, they are the key to inner transformations necessary to unravel neoliberal capitalism from within (Hyland 2013; Ergas 2013; 2015). And yet, still others lament what they see as the co-opting of a spiritual practice for inculcating within the young an inwardly focused, ethically complaisant, entrepreneurial sensibility (Purser 2019; Forbes 2017; 2019). Running throughout these perspectives, however, is the belief that mindfulness programmes have the potential to embed something deeply into the psyche of the child, to shape subjectivity in particular ways that may translate into significant consequences for society.

Though I suspect that the effects of school mindfulness programmes may be somewhat less dramatic, I share a concern with the role such programmes play in influencing the

nature of subjectivity. Like earlier social and emotional learning programmes, .b prescribes certain ideas, both tacitly and explicitly, about how pupils should interpret and respond to their emotions, about what sorts of feelings are desirable, and about what sorts of characteristics, dispositions and behaviours they should nurture. And, as such, the programme implicitly conveys values of the self and the 'good life'. Unlike previous social and emotional learning programmes, however, .b instructs in a technique of reflexivity which is seen to bring light to present experiences 'as they are', and yet which simultaneously, immediately mediates that experience in particular ways. Moreover, the claim that this experience reflects a universal, timeless essence has arguably resulted in a failure to examine how particular teachers and pupils in particular schools make sense of mindfulness and of the broader ideas within which it is framed. The present study, then, provides an opportunity to explore these questions, and to consider how .b is situated within the mundane practices and power dynamics of the school.

3. Shaping the subject, situating the self

3.1 Introduction

My overarching intention for this chapter is to provide the theoretical grounding for the arguments I build in later chapters and to explore some of the central concepts that I draw on throughout the thesis. This involves examining more closely my understandings of the self, the subject and their relationship to ethics, power and governance. In the first half of the chapter, I explore the ideas of Michel Foucault regarding the constitution of subjectivity, and, to a lesser extent, theorists who have built on his work, including Nikolas Rose, Gilles Delueze and Julie Henriques and colleagues. Subsequently, I move on to discuss the work of the contemporary philosopher Charles Taylor regarding the nature of modern identity. In particular, I draw on Taylor's (1989; 1992) work to explore the notion of 'internality' which has become axiomatic to contemporary understandings of the self and which has arguably shaped contemporary understandings of mindfulness (McMahan 2008). In the final section of the chapter, I clarify my interpretation of 'ethics' and specifically what I mean by 'ethical tensions', which I return to in the concluding chapter.

Taylor and Foucault are generally positioned in relation to quite different schools of thought, and indeed, Taylor was fairly critical of Foucault in a number of his works. Where the two converge relates to their understanding of the character of human beings, and of ethics, as emergent from particular historical conditions. Moreover, both pay greater attention to broad historical continuities and disjunctures than to axes of social difference within any given period or culture. This is a limitation of both perspectives and is an issue I return to in the concluding section of the chapter. Where the two diverge relates to their position on the ontological nature of ethics and their conceptions of power and discipline. It would be far beyond the scope of this thesis to do justice to these complex issues. As such, I narrow my focus to three specific aims, as outlined below.

My first aim is to clarify the notions of the subject and the nature of subjectivity which have guided this thesis. Here, I draw on Foucault's understanding of the subject as shaped through disciplines of the body (Foucault 1988a; 1998; 1990; 1991), though I argue that such disciplines are always multiple, layered and conflicting (Rose 1998) and hence, the subject is never wholly defined by one form (Butler 1997; 2005; Henriques et al 1998). Subsequently, I outline Foucault's ideas around neoliberalism, governmentality and subjectivity (Foucault 1997; Lemke 2001). Examining these theoretical perspectives allows me to specifically set out my position *vis a vis* existing Foucauldian critiques in social science literature on secular mindfulness (Purser & Loy 2013; Purser 2019, Forbes 2017) and therapeutic education (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Brunilla 2012; Ecclestone & Brunilla 2015). I term these existing critiques collectively 'Therapeutic governance' (TG) as, whilst their target differs, their critique advances on broadly similar lines, which I explore below. Whilst this literature makes an important contribution, I feel that such critiques are often too singular and totalising in their conception of power. This one-dimensionality arguably reflects an excessive emphasis within these accounts on textual analysis at the expense of explaining social practice.

My second aim relates to my understanding of 'the self' by which I mean not the essential essence of human beings but a person's reflexive relation to herself, how she comes to know and to understand herself. The distinction between the self and the subject is somewhat slippery, as this reflexive relationship is structured by discourse and the ways in which we are subjectivated. However, by the self I mean more narrowly the subjects' relations with herself (the 'I' and the 'me') (James 1890; Mead 2004 [1934]; Barresi 2002). This is consistent with Foucault's notion of the self (1990; 1997), however, I draw on Taylor (1989) to explore how our modern sense of self has come to be formulated in terms of a kind of interiority. Moreover, I argue that this notion of interiority structures contemporary understandings of mindfulness in a number of ways (McMahan 2008). This inwardness, moreover, is pervaded by dualisms between self/other, nature/culture, mind/body. Though modern Buddhism and 'secular' mindfulness are frequently positioned as inimical to the dualisms of Western philosophy, I argue later in the thesis that these understandings tacitly suffuse the .b curriculum and many teachers' interpretations of it, as well as much of the wider literature (both psychological and popular) on secular mindfulness.

My final aim, is to clarify my understanding of 'ethics' and, in particular, what I mean by 'ethical tensions' which are the focus of the concluding chapter of the thesis. I begin by briefly outlining existing debates surrounding the ethics of mindfulness (Bodhi 2011; Baer 2015; Stanley et al 2016; Brazier 2016) to clarify how my position differs from these debates. Drawing on a number of his later lectures and interviews (1983; 1997), I review Foucault's conception of ethics as a practice of freedom via the radical deconstruction and scrutiny of subjectivity and contend that this position does not provide sufficient basis for a collective ethics. Following Taylor, I argue that ethics is an inescapable condition of being a human agent. That is to say, that acting in the world requires making strong evaluations about what we perceive to be of value and what we feel makes for a worthy life (though these evaluations are not necessarily, or even primarily, consciously recognised or articulated). Moreover, I claim that though notions of the 'good' are also the products of power, this does not mean that we can or should escape them, nor does it mean that all notions of the good are inherently oppressive, precisely because the sources of discursive power are multiple.

As such, I argue for a pragmatist approach to ethical analysis that is attenuated with a Foucauldian sensitivity to power. For researchers, this entails scrutinising the values and practices within a given culture or institution, such that we may work towards certain, 'ethical gains'. This 'work' is never complete and is destined to error, but it is an approach that recognises the contingency of value practices without collapsing into nihilism. Indeed, this understanding of ethical work as involving perpetual scrutiny is not so different to Foucault's (1997) own conception of ethics as a 'practice of freedom'. However, I argue that this ethical scrutiny must take place at a collective level rather than primarily at the level of subjectivity and claim that freedom alone is not sufficient for a conception of the good life.

3.2 Foucault and the disciplined subject

In order to understand the relevance of Foucault's theoretical perspectives for this research, it is important to clarify how he conceptualises the subject and her relationship to power, knowledge and discipline, as well as his understanding of the school as a disciplinary institution. Below, I first outline the most pertinent points of Foucault's thinking for my analysis, before briefly describing how these ideas have been taken up by existing critiques of therapeutic education and secular mindfulness. Subsequently, I demonstrate the ways in which I see myself as building on this work and how I depart from it.

Foucault's central concern across his works is to examine the various means by which modern persons have been made 'subjects'. For Foucault, the term subject is particularly appropriate as it means both that which acts (the grammatical subject) and a subject of knowledge, that is, a subject that is produced *by* knowledge (Foucault & Rabinow 1984). Moreover, Foucault was concerned with the ways in which various bodies of knowledge - legal, medical, psychological, administrative - emerged both to objectify, monitor and evaluate human beings and to guide, instruct and create them. Significantly, Foucault refuted the Marxist interpretation of power as something that is possessed and enacted by a sovereign or ruling party, arguing instead that power exists in relationships or *'games of strategy'* (Foucault 1997 p.298). He claims, furthermore, that power is dynamic, rather than held within a more or less stable system of domination. Beyond this, Foucault views knowledge and power as productive of each other: claiming that all forms of power entail and rely upon particular knowledges, and all accepted 'truths' within a given culture or domain constitute power (Foucault 1991; 1997). Following Nietzsche, Foucault viewed morality as one site of social relations that is produced by power-knowledge, that is historically contingent and which itself constitutes a form of disciplinary power (Foucault & Rainbow 1984).

Importantly, Foucault inverts the usual understanding of the soul as the deep 'interior' of the individual, perceiving it instead as that which is formulated by power (Foucault 1991; Butler 1997). As Deleuze has described, the subjectivity of the individual from this perspective, her 'feelings', characteristics, traits and so on, all that which is perceived as her interior world, can be likened to a 'folding' inwards of cultural ideals, norms, social categories and positionalities (Deleuze 1992; Rose 1996). Thus, what Foucault and other post-structuralist theorists call 'subjectivation' is the means by which the subject becomes a particular kind of subject, and through which particular kinds of subjects come into being (Butler 1990; 1997; 2013). The student, teacher, mother, mad person, good citizen and so on are all formed via such processes. The number of subject positions that any one person may occupy is limited only by the scope of *meaningful social categories of personhood* (Butler 2013). Foucault himself did not explore the psychic processes through which subjectivities are formed. However, a number of feminist scholars, drawing on Foucault's work and psychoanalysis, have attempted to make sense of precisely how these various subject positions are held together in a (somewhat) enduring 'character' (Henriques et al 1984; Butler 1997). Most notably, Henriques and colleagues (1984), drawing on the work of Jaques Lacan, contend that the discursive frameworks within which subjects are situated are productive of desire, hence the subject comes to desire the conditions through which

she is constituted as a particular kind of subject. Desire does not emerge in a straightforward or voluntaristic manner and hence there is always the potential for change even when certain identities are particularly tenacious.

Foucault claims, furthermore, that within the modern world the means by which the soul of the subject is formed have come to be calculated, rationalised and formally regulated through disciplinary mechanisms. Such disciplinary mechanisms are enacted within institutions such as schools, prisons, hospitals and via the dissemination and uptake of expertise (e.g. psychological, medical, pedagogical). In *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1991) in which he attempts to articulate a genealogy of the modern penal system, Foucault claims that there was a shift from punishment of the body within the pre-modern period to the 'discipline of the soul' in the 20th Century. Additionally, however, Foucault questions the common assumption that this shift reflected a drive for greater humanity in the means of punishment, claiming instead that the primary purpose was to punish with greater precision and to embed further the mechanisms of power throughout society:

> The true objective of the reform movement...was not so much to establish a new right to punish based on more equitable principles, as to set up a new 'economy' of the power to punish, to assure its better distribution...so that it should be distributed in homogenous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body (1991 p.80)

Thus, Foucault claims that in the modern period punishment has come to entail a 'political economy of power'. Hence, the development of the prison, which Foucault claimed provided a model for the school, involved a meticulous rationalisation of time, space and the positioning of bodies. Dress codes, timetables, the architecture of the prison, each were designed to maximise the efficiency of regulatory activities and the docility of the body. Moreover, this political economy of power, he claims, extended outwards through a vast network of disciplinary institutions whose role was to establish and instil norms of behaviour and temperance and to correct perceived irregularities. Schools, therefore, represent a key site of normalisation, enabling interventions for 'delinquency' and abnormalities' in behaviour, administered according to the same principles of conduct as explicitly punitive facilities (Ibid).

Neoliberalism and the self-monitoring subject

Perhaps the elements of Foucault's work which have been most influential on critiques of secular mindfulness and therapeutic education relate to his ideas surrounding surveillance and discipline in *Discipline and Punish* (1991) and his work on governmentality and neoliberalism developed in his 1978-79 lectures at the *College de France* (Foucault 1997). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault draws upon the image of the Panopticon, an 18th century proposed architectural design for a prison, created by Jeremy Bentham, as a metaphor for disciplinary society. The Panopticon was designed much like an inverted coliseum or arena, in which prisoners' cells faced inwards to a central room from which they could always potentially be observed by a guard. For Foucault, the constant threat of supervision reflects the ways in which discipline is distributed throughout society. Through disciplinary mechanisms, norms become ingrained within the sensibility of citizens, such that

expectations for conformity emanate not only from positions of authority but also from peers and families. This threat of constant supervision, moreover, entreats subjects to monitor themselves, such that norms and ideals become naturalised. Thus, the subject comes to perceive herself and her behaviour through the 'eye' of another.

Foucault later illustrates how such forms of self-governance have become central political strategies within contemporary, Western states. Neoliberalism is an economic and political strategy that developed throughout the 20th century and which arguably superseded welfare capitalism as the dominant mode of governance from the late 1970s onwards (Harvey 2007). The central premises of neoliberal economic theory revolve around the retraction of the state from the provision of welfare and the reduction of market interventions such as industry regulations, taxes and tariffs (Ibid). Yet beyond this, Foucault argued that neoliberalism involves an extension of economic rationalities - the drive for increased capital, productivity, and efficiency - into ever-expanding domains of human life. Thus, fields such as healthcare, education, and the judiciary system, previously governed in accordance with quite different principles come to be evaluated in terms of this economic model (Foucault 1997). Foucault was concerned not with economic policies as such but with the ways in which the 'art of governing less' was achieved via the more subtle and comprehensive intervention into the lives of citizens, such that they could be entrusted to govern themselves (Foucault 1997; Lemke 2001). Hence, Nikolas Rose (1996; 1999) claims that citizens of modern societies are governed *through* freedom: through their simultaneous and co-constitutive liberty and self-surveillance.

Foucault terms the logic or rationality of governance in any one space and time 'governmentality' (Foucault 1997; Lemke 2001). Governmentality within neoliberalism, he claims, entails engineering the conduct of citizens at a distance, via diffuse and indirect mechanisms (Foucault 1997). Theorists building on Foucault's work claim that this is achieved by embedding a pervasive logic of entrepreneurship across policy domains, through which citizens, workers and students are compelled to act in line with market logic and encultured to perceive themselves as self-creating and self-responsible individuals (Rose & Miller 1992; Rose 1996; Miller & Rose 1997). Whilst other social theorists have examined the social and cultural implications of neoliberalism (see for example Bourdieu 1998; Gill 1995), Foucault's theoretical insights regarding the *constitution of the subject via discipline* provide one way of conceptualising the relationship between macro-rationalities of governance and micro-social processes relating to self and subjectivity. As such, Foucault's work on modes of government has inspired a whole range of critiques which attempt to link up neoliberal governance with the day to day ways in which people experience their lives, work and personal relationships (Ball 2003; Ball & Olmedo 2013; Braedley & Luzton 2010; Wakerdine & Bansel 2010).

Within education, numerous analysts have explored how education policy over the past 20 years has instilled a market logic within the sector, attempting to maximise attainment and efficiency whilst minimising costs, positioning parents as 'consumers' and driving competition between institutions (Ball 1994; 2005; 2012; Davies & Bansel 2007; Ross & Gibson 2007; Au & Ferarre 2015). Accordingly, it is argued that this logic functions by structuring the mundane actions of teachers and students, by disciplining thought and

behaviour via the continual reinforcement of the values of productivity and efficiency (Ball 2013; Davies & Bansel 2007).

As explored in the previous chapter, critics of therapeutic education and social and emotional learning often claim that such programmes are tacitly underpinned by a neoliberal agenda. From this perspective, the drive to instil capacities for self-regulation of emotions and behaviours amongst students is another means of surreptitious social control. The student of such programmes, it is claimed, is compelled to turn inwards to focus on their thought patterns and behaviours, to continually work upon them in the interests of self-improvement (Brunila 2011; Brunila & Siivonen 2016). Such programmes, it is argued, construe wellbeing as a matter of individual 'management' as opposed to a collective responsibility rooted in social conditions (Ecclestone 2015; Ecclestone & Brunilla 2015; Sointu 2005). As noted, these critiques of therapeutic education largely mirror some of those levelled against secular mindfulness in the workplace (Purser 2019; Purser & Loy 2013; Forbes 2019).

The infolded subject

As I go on to argue, school mindfulness programmes subtly portray certain values and are designed to encourage behaviour in particular ways. In this sense, then, such programmes may be understood as a form of governance from a Foucauldian theoretical perspective. Yet, I see a number of problems with this frame of analysis, and I outline these below. I do, however, find Deleuze's (1993) understanding, following Foucault, of the self as a 'folding inwards' compelling. Throughout this thesis, then, I am understanding the discourses and practices of the programme as *one* among many influences that shape and form the subjectivities of students. That is, students' self-understanding and subjective characters may be to some extent shaped – though not wholly determined - by the ideas, values, norms and techniques of the programme.

TG analyses frequently understand this process as too complete and singular in nature. Too complete, because there is a tendency to assume a direct and totalising relationship between the discourses and practices prescribed by therapeutic programmes and the nature of subjectivity that they produce. This tendency may reflect the focus within much of this literature on documentary evidence, such as popular literature (Purser 2019) and policy or curriculum documents (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Ecclestone & Brunila 2015). Hence, within such accounts, the subject appears as a relatively stable 'effect' of discourse. In practice, therapeutic programmes may be a less potent influence upon subjectivity than critics assume. Moreover, importantly, the values that they prescribe are always shifting, volatile, subject to interpretation and change (Butler 2013). Various thinkers have attempted to make sense of this volatility, noting that language can never fix or wholly capture meaning (Derrida 2001; Butler 2013) and hence that the subject is never fully articulated - never fully knowable to herself or others (Butler 1997). Rose (1996) argues, furthermore, that because subjects are positioned in relation to multiple discourses and regimes of discipline, social life is always subject to change.

Yet, I also say that TG accounts are at times too singular because there is a tendency to understand all dimensions of therapeutic programmes in light of neoliberal discourses of the self, neglecting the ways in which such discourses are layered and entangled with other,

sometimes conflicting ideals. Within certain accounts of secular mindfulness programmes, there appears to be a one-directional relationship whereby neoliberal logic reformulates mindfulness into a neutral self-help technique geared towards productivity, but there is little sense of to what extent, and in what ways, earlier narratives of Buddhist modernism inflects or attenuates this logic (see Purser 2019; Purser & Loy 2013, cf. Drage 2018).

The apparent one-dimensionality of Foucauldian inspired critiques may be seen to reflect the excessive emphasis within Foucault's earlier work on modes of domination and his particular understanding of 'strategy'. For Foucault, strategies, like power, do not have a singular source or direction and are not necessarily consciously enacted by a knowing subject (Foucault 1991; 1997; Downing 2008). In *Discipline and Punish* (1991), for example, Foucault reads something of an identifiable, unified strategy through the complex and conflicting motivations of various groups and individuals enacting reformations in the means of punishment during the early modern period. Hence, he is able to speak of the *"true objective"* (p.80 quoted p.45) of this reformation in terms of the extension of power. This is despite his recognition that members of the citizenry and political class at that time increasingly expressed horror and shame at witnessing brutal forms of punishment (see Foucault 1991 p.73-74). This language of strategies without actors is central to much of Foucault's work (McKinlay & Pezet 2018). Moreover, it is this understanding of strategies, strategies that seem to act *through* individuals, to work beneath their conscious intentions, that enables TG critics to discount conflicting discourses within therapeutic programmes, seeing only neoliberal governance, over and over. It seems from this interpretation of the Foucauldian perspective, that power is so diffuse that it has once again become monolithic.

Indeed, as many scholars have argued, though Foucault's conceptions of power move beyond the rigidity of a Marxist model, he does not offer sufficient tools for understanding how power *differentially affects different sorts of beings* (Grimshaw 2003). It is clear within *Discipline and Punish* (1991) that disciplinary power and modes of domination are nonetheless strategies that maintain forms of class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequality. Yet, Foucault does not specifically problematise the ways in which certain forms of power entrench particular identities or propose ways of addressing inequalities that, by their very nature, affect at a collective level (Bartky 1997; McNay 2013).

Beyond the apparent contradictions in this notion of strategy, is, I think, a more troubling issue with Foucault's work, one which presents a tension for more recent scholars who employ his ideas. Though Foucault positions himself in his earlier work as adopting a Nietzschean stance of moral neutrality, this masks the value judgements that arguably underpin this work. Though he refuses to view humanitarianism as a moral gain, it is apparent that Foucault perceives such developments as *less desirable* than previous systems, precisely because he understands them as representing an *extension* of means of control. This is not an ethical position that I think many TG critics hold. Rather, critics who understand therapeutic programmes as entailing forms of neoliberal governance frequently advocate for forms of welfare capitalism, Marxism or democratic socialism (see Ecclestone and Hayes 2009; Purser 2019; Forbes 2019), which would entail different forms of, but not necessarily *less* disciplinary power.

3.3 Inner worlds

I return to my take on Foucault's ethical position in the final section. However, now I turn to the work of Charles Taylor. Like Foucault, Taylor is concerned with central historical developments in the nature of human beings' relations to themselves, though he does not understand these relations in terms of domination or disciplinary power. Rather, Taylor argues that modern identity has come to be shaped through the emergence of certain overarching discourses which carry differing conceptions of human dignity and worth. To some extent, Taylor's account offers more specific tools for understanding the multiple narratives through which modern people make sense of their existence, though he too does not explore how these narratives intersect with the ways in which subjects are positioned as particular kinds of beings, nor does he problematise their relationship to power. With these caveats recognised, I nonetheless find Taylor's work insightful for understanding some of the discourses of the self that have shaped contemporary interpretations of mindfulness.

In *Sources of the Self* (1989), Charles Taylor describes the historical ontogenesis of what he terms the 'meta-narratives' of modern identity: discourses that have become so deeply embedded in our culture that it is impossible to think or act without reference to them. Though definitions of modernity and its parameters differ, Taylor understands the modern period as having roots within the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and the Enlightenment beginning in the 17th and spanning until the present time. Taylor does not understand modernity in terms of teleological progress, but as a historical period characterised by the dominance of ideals such as liberty, democracy and equality (Taylor 1989, Smith 2013). These ideals, he contends, are rooted in particular developments in religion, philosophy and culture and have evolved and mutated over the history of Western civilization. In order to understand how the 'meta-narratives' of our culture come to shape identity, however, we must first understand Taylor's conception of 'the self'.

Taylor does not conceptualise the self as a unique essence or substance, though his work does not preclude the possibility of basic, universal dimensions of human nature. Taylor is concerned with the self as a 'sense of' identity, as opposed to the individual organism or the awareness that we are alive. Moreover, what is of paramount importance in human life, according to Taylor, relates to 'meaning': the ways in which human beings make sense of things, and the largely unarticulated moral resources through which they do so. Crucially, Taylor understands 'the self' as inherently bound to our sense of 'the good': those things we value, not only in terms of what we think is right or wrong, but also with regards to what we think makes for a good life.

Taylor claims that, within Western culture, there are three 'meta-narratives' which each provide competing 'moral sources'. By this, he means that these meta-narratives provide differing notions of ultimate worth, even though many of the particular 'goods' they promote converge. Though the moral sources emerge in succession over a long period, and though later developments can be understood largely in terms of reactions to earlier prevailing ideals, each of these meta-narratives continues to the present day, and Taylor claims that our moral conflicts may be understood as emanating from disjunctures between them. As such, Taylor asserts, the three sources constitute core *axes* of modern identity,

and our sense of self derives in part from our (unacknowledged) position in relation to each: the self, that is, comes to be constituted as a position in moral space.

The first of these sources is the 'theistic', from which the latter two emerged. This source relates to the influence of Christianity, whereby the 'good life' was defined by what was believed to be God's will. From this we develop the values of benevolence, self-sacrifice, respect for authority and penitence, amongst other things. The second, 'scientific rationalism' is rooted in the Enlightenment and entails the view that truth is discoverable through reason and empirical investigation and that human worth lies in capacities of intellect. Hence, from this thread, we derive values of equality (limited to those considered to be 'human'), self-mastery, and reason. The final source, 'romantic expressivism' arose as a response to the perceived 'disenchantment of the world' wrought by the Enlightenment, and comprises literary, philosophical and spiritual movements traceable to the Romantic period of the late 18th and 19th centuries. From this view, morality is expressed in our *sentiments*, and human value is reflected in our expressive potential. It is this source from which we derive a belief in the aesthetic value of art and nature and the importance of creativity. Finally, each of these meta-narratives have come to shape what Taylor terms the 'broad inward gesture' of contemporary culture: our particular understanding of human beings as creatures of inner depths, with memories and desires contained within our unique, private interior (Ibid).

Talyor traces the genesis of this turn inwards to St. Augustine who, in the dialogue *On Free Choice of the Will* (AD 354-430), claimed that the proof of God was 'within' (Taylor 1989). Prior to Augustine, truth had been understood as lying within the established order of the cosmos, which human beings could only hope to understand through the interpretation of 'signs'. Moreover, Augustine's proclamation, Taylor claims, is the intellectual legacy that enabled Descartes to argue that moral truth could be realised through rational calculation rather than acceptance of creed. That is, truth came to be understood in terms of *procedure* (rationality, observation) rather than in terms of a cosmological order. Though Descartes himself was not atheistic, it is this move which sets in motion the turn from theism and the emergence of the rationalist bent in modern thought. Though he does not dispute the significance of Descartes' dualistic formulations of mind and body, Taylor perceives Cartesian thought as having a more profound, though less widely recognised, influence on modern thought. That is, Descartes claimed that it was possible to separate ourselves from the emotional dimensions of our experience, to turn back towards it and subject it to rational evaluation. Through this, we subject our thoughts, feelings and behaviours to scrutiny. As Taylor explains:

> To bring this whole domain of sensations and sensible properties to clarity means to grasp it as an external observer would, tracing the causal connection between states of the world or my body, described in primary properties, and the 'ideas' they occasion in my mind. Clarity and distinctness require that we step outside ourselves and take a disengaged perspective (1989 p.146).

This, Taylor calls 'radical reflexivity' and it paved the way for later conceptualisations of 'self-control' and of responsibility for the development of our own character, which Taylor sees as being first articulated in the philosophy of John Locke (Taylor 1989). Moreover,

Taylor and others have argued that this particular formulation of inwardness provided the intellectual grounds from which the psychological sciences, in particular cognitive psychology, behaviourism and neuroscience, emerged (Ibid; Dazinger 1997; Billig 2008). This radical reflexivity gives rise to the possibility of understanding subjectivity as something that we can 'turn towards' and hence that we can 'see'. This optic metaphor ('observing the mind') has become almost inescapable within contemporary mindfulness discourse (Stanley & Kortelainen 2019). And it is here that we see the emergence of the dualistic strand in Cartesian thought: as the self is severed from the bodily and affective, such that she comes to 'see' her experience from an external perspective (Taylor 1989; Billig 2008).

This understanding of 'radical reflexivity' arguably reflects one of the most central, though unrecognised, tensions with regards to social and emotional learning programmes and therapeutic mindfulness. On the one hand, such programmes frequently situate themselves as a counterweight to the historical neglect of the bodily and the affective within education (Hyland 2009; 2011; Ergas 2015). And yet, at the same time, positioning emotions and mental experiences as a site for pedagogical intervention fundamentally rests upon such a form of reflexivity, whereby the self is *not reducible to* her emotions, actions and behaviours, but is able to 'observe' them and influence their manifestation. Significantly, David McMahan (2008) argues that this understanding of disengaged reflexivity provided an important precursor to Western interpretations of meditation, though again this influence is generally unacknowledged. As I argue in my analysis of the .b curriculum in Chapter 6, this understanding of the self as capable of dispassionate self-reflection and self-mastery is central to the narratives of .b.

Implicit within this understanding of the self, moreover, is a sense of separateness from not only the body but also the world. This is reflected in the Lockean formulation of the self as a 'subject of representations': the view that the subject *"is in contact with an "outside" world...but this contact is through the representations she has "within"* (Taylor 1995 p.60). This sense of the self as separate, as an interior centre of cognition that processes and communicates with an 'outside' world, is generally reflected in contemporary understandings of education (Biesta 1998). This self/world (and thus, self/other) construction of the subject is notably in contrast to Theravada Buddhist schools of thought, from which modern mindfulness has largely developed, which view the self as emergent from social and material conditions external to herself, such that she is inseparable from them (Gethin 1997; McMahan 2008). Nonetheless this perspective is so deeply ingrained within Western culture and within the psychological sciences (Billig 2008), that it subtly informs the discourses of self within .b.

Taylor claims that the final moral source, or metanarrative, that comes to structure the modern identity emerges around the 18th century with the writings of Rousseau, and burgeons with the philosophical, literary and artistic movement of the Romantics throughout the 19th century. From the romantic perspective, the value and dignity of human beings lies in our essential nature, and this nature 'within' the person is the wellspring of creativity and authentic expression. The true nature of human beings, moreover, is benevolent, our moral capacity derives from our inner sense of what is right, and our failings and misdeeds are attributed to the distortions of our culture. Importantly,

as noted in the previous chapter, this romantic ethic underpinned 19th century alternative spiritualities which were a significant influence over Western interpretations of Buddhism.

Indeed, the ideals of what Taylor terms 'romantic expressivism', furthermore, are arguably characteristic of much popular literature on mindfulness, including the writings of Jon Kabat Zinn, the developer of MBSR, who MiSP refer to as *"the founding father of secular mindfulness"* (MiSP 2019a). The quote below is taken from one of Kabat-Zinn's most popular works, *Full Catastrophe Living* (1990):

> *"As you embark on your own journey of self-development and discovery of your inner resources for healing ...all you need to remember is to suspend judgment....What you will be learning will be coming primarily from inside you, from your own experience as your life unfolds from moment to moment, rather than from some external authority, teacher, or belief system." (Kabat-Zinn 1990 p.14)*

Implicit in Kabat-Zinn's statement is a form of radical freedom: a self who is, through her engagement with what is *inside,* able to cast off and unfurl herself from the conditionings of her culture, to learn from what is true and authentic about herself, beyond what she has been taught. This is what Buddhist Studies scholar Robert Sharf (1995) terms the notion of 'direct experience': the idea that meditation can reach a truth beyond culture. Sharf's claim is that, though Kabat-Zinn and others describe mindfulness as ancient and timeless, such perspectives were inconceivable to early Asian Buddhists, for whom truth lay within established doctrine. These notions of the internal space as a wellspring of truth are, therefore, fundamentally bound to the intellectual developments in the modern period since the time of Augustine. Ironically, then, it is this language of internality, authenticity, and self-discovery that is in fact so particular to our time.

Moreover, this nature/culture binary, which infuses much modern mindfulness discourse (see Fromm 2013) is arguably part of what enables the dismissal of social axes of difference by Kabat-Zinn and others (see Chapter 2), as mindfulness is conceived as an engagement with our 'inner', and hence pre-social, world. Indeed, these binaries (nature/culture, mind/body, self/other) that are tacit axioms of modern thought, emerge in different ways from both later meta-narratives of modern thought, that is, the rational and the romantic. As explored in the previous chapter, modern interpretations of mindfulness are arguably characterised by a dialectic between these strands (McMahan 2008). Thus, though mindfulness is often presented as antithetical to Cartesian dualism or as potentially 'healing' the divided self of modernity (Varela et al 1992), these dualisms nonetheless subtly reverberate throughout contemporary interpretations of the practice (Ibid).

3.4 Ethics

The differing moral sources outlined above, come to play out, also, in the various ongoing debates regarding the ethics of mindfulness. These debates have been highly polarised and somewhat repetitive (Stanley et al 2016). The contention relates in part to whether or not mindfulness is understood as purely attention, or whether it is seen as comprising some other psychological or ethereal properties (see Bodhi 2011). For Kabat-Zinn and many others, mindfulness is inherently ethical (Williams & Kabat-Zinn 2011; Kabat-Zinn 2011;

Kabat-Zinn 2017). This position follows a number of lines. It is sometimes argued that mindfulness is not equivalent to attention but is infused with a compassionate attitude (Kabat-Zinn 2011). Or rather, it is claimed that the practice of mindfulness enables us to recognise our emotions with greater clarity, such that we become less reactive and more able to act in our own and others' best interests (Crane et al 2017). Finally, it may be argued that mindfulness entails coming into contact with our inherent truth (sometimes called 'Buddha nature') which is itself essentially noble and wise (McMahan 2008). This perspective derives from the romantic notion that the true nature of human beings is beneficent and that, as such, disharmony, selfishness and greed result from the corruptions of our culture. Proponents of this perspective often contend that social change is derived through the redemption of each individual from 'within', and hence, even outside Buddhist contexts, mindfulness retains its socially transformative potential (Kabat-Zinn 2017).

Nevertheless, the perspective that mindfulness is inherently ethical has been fervently rejected by a number of critics, primarily amongst scholars who are themselves practicing Buddhists. Such scholars contend that mindfulness within Buddhist thought is not simply a meditative practice but explicitly an ethical practice, one which is directed towards cultivating ethical action in all aspects of life (Bodhi 2011; Purser & Milillo 2015; Kirmayer 2015; Stanley 2013b; 2015). Ethics here is understood primarily as virtue, and guided by Buddhist ethical precepts, but is also frequently understood as encompassing issues of social justice (Stanley 2015; Stanley et al 2018; Purser 2019). As discussed in Chapter 2, such scholars are often highly critical of mainstream secular mindfulness programmes, which they perceive as neglecting ethical dimensions (Purser & Loy 2013; Walsh 2016; Purser 2019; Forbes 2019). In direct contrast, those promoting mindfulness in clinical contexts generally argue that the ethics surrounding such interventions must be grounded in secular, scientific ideals, such as values of professional practice, and that mindfulness itself is only ethical in the utilitarian sense that it may alleviate psychological suffering (Baer 2015).

These debates largely pivot around claims regarding the 'true' nature of mindfulness (Stanley et al 2016), or derive from attempts to protect the practice from misappropriation (Dreyfus 2011; Bodhi 2011). However, following my interest in mindfulness as comprising *specific social practices,* my concerns largely side-step these debates altogether. In formulating my understanding of ethics, I draw both from Taylor and from Foucault, in different ways. Though their positions regarding the ontological nature of ethics are quite distinct, I feel that the particular approaches they describe for a *practice* of ethics, are quite compatible, each potentially correcting some of the limitations of the other. Below, I outline a pragmatic approach to exploring ethical issues within research, which entails subjecting the ideals and practices within a given domain to scrutiny such that we may identify possibilities for what I call, following Taylor, 'ethical gains'. However, I claim that this process must entail a Foucauldian sensitivity to power and a recognition of the differential forms of oppression (Grimshaw 2002; McNay 2013).

Ethical tensions and ethical gains

In his later work, Foucault (1988a; 1988b; 1990) explicitly examines the relationship between freedom and ethics. It is in this work that he explores the possibilities for working upon the self as a 'practice of freedom'. For Foucault, freedom is never a state but always a practice, since each liberation opens possibilities for new power relations. Thus, in his later lectures and the latter volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (1988a; 1990), Foucault explores the practices of self-care and self-discipline within the philosophical schools of antiquity. He claims that in the modern world such practices have come to be institutionalised and hence mechanised within systems of power, stifling possibilities for alternative forms of subjectivity. The practice of freedom for Foucault entails, then, a perpetual self-examination:

> *If we are acted upon most effectively by power relations internal to our own sense of ourselves, then the resistance to power must perhaps take form, ultimately of an unprecedented, non-ascetic, perhaps anarchic form of self-repudiation* (Foucault 1983)

For Foucault, then, ethics is about the continual undoing of power at the level of our subjectivity. Various critics have noted the tensions between this conception of the subject as agentive and self-creating and that presented within Foucault's earlier work (Grimshaw 2003; McNay 2013). Such critics question how the subject whose perspectives, values and sensibilities are formed by power is able to turn back upon herself to create herself in a different image. Foucault (1988a) himself claimed that such practices of freedom were nonetheless constrained by the ideals we derive from our culture, and it is likely that he would have developed his conception of this relationship further were it not for his early death. As noted above, theorists who have built upon Foucault's work have grappled with these issues and, I think, gone some way to accounting for social change (see Henriques et al 1998; Butler 1997; Rose 1998, see also McNay 2013).

As many scholars have noted (Henriques et al 1998; McNay 2013; Butler 1990; 1997), Foucault's perspective opens up possibilities for working towards radically different ways of being, for attempting to 'unpick' the threads of oppression woven into, in Foucault's terms, our soul. I find Foucault's understanding of power as mobile and productive, as well as his claim that resistance must entail self-scrutiny and self-work compelling. Yet, I find Foucault's conception of freedom insufficient as an ethical framework for informing a collective ethics. Insufficient, because it provides little means for discerning more or less desirable forms of social life. If, as Henriques and colleagues (1984) suggest, power is productive of our very desires, how then, in Foucault's terms do we determine which desires we should uproot and which we should nurture? As such, Foucault's ethical framework appears to have only one axis. To use Taylor's spatial analogy, from such a perspective we can only ever move along a flat plane: we understand moral and social life only in terms of *degrees of* freedom. In reality, the goods which we hold dear (however dependent on our culture they may be) are multiple, and so to perceive ourselves only in terms of such a plane would cripple our understanding of the ways in which we actively construct meaning in our social lives. From an analytical perspective, if power is diffuse and productive, if all manifested social life is attributable on some level to power, we must

have some means of determining *what forms of power* are more desirable, more terrible, more oppressive, more evenly distributed. We must start to ask not 'is this power' but 'what and who does power serve here'? That is, we must have some means of discerning what is a worthy object of repudiation, unless we want to indiscriminately deconstruct every structure of social life (for more on this argument, see Latour 2004). To see only power in social relations, would be like viewing the material world in only one colour.

Taylor's (1989; 1993; 2003) conception of ethics, though flawed, offers, I think, important insights for social-cultural analysis and for informing wider collective action. For Taylor, we are fundamentally ethical beings: strong evaluations are the substance of human agency. As such, Taylor rejects the relativist ethical stance, that begins with Nietzsche and which is implicit in much postmodern thought, including that of Foucault. In contrast, he argues that because we *cannot but* make ethical judgements, ethics is for human beings non-negotiable, real and true, even though particular formulations of the good are fundamentally contingent. For Taylor, it *is* possible to make ethical gains, and we achieve this through the scrutiny of the values and actions within any given culture and space, such that we may recognise certain tensions, incongruencies and conflicts, and such that we may work towards their unravelling. Just as with Foucault's self-work, this process is never complete, and we may feel that we are taking a step forward only to find ourselves ever-more plagued by inconsistencies, and that our most heartfelt and unquestionable convictions have blinded us to the fundamental contradictions of our culture. Nonetheless, though we are bound to certain failures, in Taylor's terms, this does not exonerate us from the ethical 'work'.

This is a very brief and inevitably simplified account of Taylor's position, however for my purpose here I feel it should suffice. Taylor claims that certain ethical principles have become axiomatic to contemporary culture (equality, freedom from excessive constraint, basic 'human rights', the respect of human life and the imperative to reduce human suffering), and that these emanate from each of the moral sources outlined above. Indeed, when he speaks of ethical scrutiny, he is primarily speaking about a genealogical investigation into the genesis and evolution of our 'moral sources', and it may be argued that this philosophical anthropological perspective is too abstracted to be of value to investigations of social practice. Nonetheless, I feel that aspects of Taylor's ideas have practical applications for sociological analyses.

Arguably, Foucault may object that this ethical formulation tacitly rests on the fiction of humanism. Who, he might say, are 'we'? Or more accurately, who is it that we are not and who has this notion of 'we' served to exclude? Yet, Foucault's own formulation of ethics, as I have argued above, *also* concedes that there can be 'ethical gains' - it simply conceives of these gains only in terms of the curtailing of discursive power (see also Taylor 1984; 1989; McNay 2013). It seems to me, moreover, that there is a subtle form of elitism in the conception of the unworking of power taking place through our own 'self-repudiation'. Foucault's understanding of ethics, therefore, arguably also tacitly rests on a particular conception of 'we': how could a person who has not come into contact with post-structuralist theory know to subject themselves to a radical unworking of their own dispositions, sentiments and desires? What good would it be anyway to a person who is dealing with the violence of structural inequality, hatred and bigotry? Does this perspective

on ethics not leave us in a position whereby intellectuals and the educated class work to dismantle every oppressive structure of identity, only for identity lines to be redrawn between 'we the enlightened ones' and those for whom such identities were a source of dignity and solace? (see Latour 2004).

The approach to research I am arguing for attempts to articulate 'ethical tensions' and hence indicate avenues through which positive changes may be made. This rationalistic perspective is necessarily blinded to its own prejudices and therefore destined to error. Yet, as Foucault himself claimed:

> "The relationship between rationalization and excesses of political power is evident. And we should not need to wait for bureaucracy or concentration camps to recognize the existence of such relations. But the problem is: What to do with such an evident fact? Shall we try reason? To my mind, nothing would be more sterile. First, because the field has nothing to do with guilt or innocence. Second, because it is senseless to refer to reason as the contrary entry to nonreason. Lastly, because such a trial would trap us into playing the arbitrary" (Foucault 1982)

Unless we are only to 'play the arbitrary', we cannot do without reason. The ethical scrutiny I am arguing for must entail also a sensitivity to the ways in which power is *differentially* distributed and the differential terms of our subjectivation. In this approach, researchers must examine how the prevailing discourses within a given context marginalise or exclude certain subjects (those subjects who are considered deviations from the norm, who are constructed as less-than human or less-than capable of 'rational' action), to expose incoherencies within these delimitations of humanness, whilst simultaneously examining how power manifests itself through our own sense of ourselves and perception of our social landscape.

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I am asking questions about how the self is conceptualised in .b, the sorts of selves that are seen as desirable and the sorts of selves that are problematized. I am attempting, moreover, to make sense of the values of selfhood that underpin the programme: the particular notions of 'the good' the programme depicts. These notions of 'the good' themselves can be seen to constitute a form of disciplinary power: they establish norms through which subjectivities are formed. Yet, this disciplinary power is but one force that acts upon the subject. It is therefore misguided to speak of therapeutic programmes *producing* neoliberal subjects, as some critics do (Brunila 2014; Reveley 2015; Forbes 2017; Purser 2019), even when neoliberal discourses are prominent within such programmes. That is not to say that such discourses may not be compelling in their force on the subject, that they or not worthy of critique, that we must accept their claims to 'truth' and the values they assume, but simply that they are not totalising.

As such, although I am interested in the forms of subjectivity .b encourages, it is not my intention to ascertain the extent to which the curriculum conveys neoliberal ideals of personhood. To the extent that these ideals are arguably axiomatic to contemporary education policy (Ball 2013; 2016) and are widely diffused throughout prevailing cultures

of the self (Rose 1998), such ideals are likely to be to present to some degree within an educational programme which imparts ways of relating to the self. To find evidence of such ideals, then, might not be so surprising or interesting. I do not discount notions of autonomy within the programme, in contrast, tensions surrounding ideals of freedom and the practical experiences of young people are central to my argument. However, I feel that more can be gained from *not* benchmarking my exploration of the constitution of the subject in the programme against a particular understanding of neoliberal subjectivity (Lemke 2001).

Furthermore, I have argued that mindfulness and other therapeutic programmes do not represent a singular, coherent agenda or a singular form of discipline. Rather, as I show throughout the thesis, the ideas and values within .b reflect pragmatic negotiations and interweavings of the perspectives of programme developers, educators, the wider field of mindfulness teachers and practitioners, and education policy agendas. Such programmes are also enacted by different agents (teachers, students, educators), each with their own potential interpretations, in different school contexts. Exploring the social practices of .b in a number of schools will enable me to recognise this multiplicity, to examine how different elements of the programme come to the fore, and to understand the degree to which the ideals of selfhood in the curriculum reflect the lived experiences of students in the classroom. Finally, the analytic approach I have outlined above entails attempting to articulate what I perceive to be the core discourses, ideals and values within a given cultural context or institution, subjecting each to scrutiny and examining them against an exploration of social practice. My hope is that in articulating tensions, incongruencies and conflicts, social science researchers may be better equipped to identify what might constitute positive change within a specific cultural context at a specific time.

4. A way of making sense of things

4.1 Introduction

The title of this chapter 'a way of making sense of things' was an attempt to capture the pragmatism and fluidity that is characteristic of qualitative research. I have outlined the things I did, the decisions I made, and the tools I used as well as the dilemmas I attempted to work through whilst conducting the research.

In the first section, *Being, Presence and Knowing,* I explore the ontological and epistemological foundations for the study, and I do this by considering some of the assumptions that underlie common understandings of mindfulness and positivist (primarily psychological) mindfulness research. I then move on in *Multi-sited Ethnography* to outline my rationale for the research approach, before describing my specific methods and how each relate to the research questions. In the section titled *Creating Sense,* I outline my analytical approach in which I draw on Attride-Stirling's (2001) conceptual thematic analysis, and in the final section *Ethical Dilemmas,* I explore some of the most pressing ethical issues that I negotiated throughout the research. I conclude by clarifying how this approach speaks to the need I have outlined for a study of mindfulness in schools that examines both 'programmes of conduct' (Foucault 1981) and social practice (Bourdieu 1990; Wetherell 2012).

4.2 Being, presence and knowing

> A good way to stop all the doing is to shift into the "being mode" for a moment. Just think of yourself as an eternal witness, as timeless. Just watch this moment, without trying to change it at all. What is happening?...What do you see? What do you hear?
> (Jon Kabat Zinn, 1994 p.28)

The concept of 'the present' is of central importance within modern literature on mindfulness, such as the work of Jon Kabat Zinn, cited above. The importance of the present, it seems, has something to do with what is 'real', a way of contacting and 'knowing' the real. Discourse around mindfulness is frequently characterised by binaries of what is more/less true, authentic, *real:* being/doing, sensing/thinking, present/absent. In this discourse, mindfulness frequently appears as a pellucid gaze that the practitioner obtains, whereby her usual lenses, shaded by cultural notions and egocentric thought, fall away (Sharf 2015). The implicit assumption is there is *something true* about our experience that we can come to know in an unadulterated form: as we become the 'eternal witness'. Thus, modern adopters of mindfulness have often interpreted the practice in line with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the Enlightenment, positioning mindfulness itself as a form of 'inner empiricism' (Sharf 1995). These points of accord between modern interpretations of mindfulness and the axioms of science have made mindfulness an attractive area of study within the field of clinical neuroscience and cognitive psychology (McMahan 2008, Lopez 2008). Thus, mindfulness has come to be interpreted as both a form of 'inner empiricism' in itself and as an object amenable to scientific investigation.

Traditional approaches to ethnography have shared a preoccupation with the discovery of something 'real', although of a different sort. Rather than seeking to peer beneath culture, the ethnographer's gaze is turned towards it (Britzman 2002). Within the naturalistic view of ethnography, immersion into the culture under study provides the researcher with deep and thorough local knowledge, enabling vivid description (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). From this perspective, the contribution of ethnography to knowledge is its granularity: the capacity to depict subtle details that would evade less time-intensive research. The ethnographic text thus promises to bring us closer to 'things as they are' (Britzman 2002). Beyond this, ethnography has been viewed as a means of portraying the experiences of certain *people* (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). In this sense, an ethnography is one telling of a story about 'what it is like' for these people, in this place, at this time. Thus, traditional approaches to ethnography have generally maintained a view of cultural worlds as entities that are more or less 'discoverable'.

Post-structuralist thinkers have been among those who have presented a challenge to this conception of ethnography (Britzman 2002, Vaughan 2004, Youdell 2010). Drawing on the work of Gilles Derrida, Deborah Britzman (2002) argues that the experiences of both the researcher and the 'researched' are mediated by discourses that are multiple, fragmented and at times conflicting. This view rejects the notion of a humanist subject that sits apart from the natural world, claiming that each are intelligible only through discourses derived from a certain sociality and history. In this sense, discourse is partly a product of shared language, but it is also embodied as habits, traits, feelings (Foucault 1977, Butler 2011). On this reading, the distinction between the 'real' (that which is represented) and the representation in the ethnographic text is destabilised. *Both* are 'textualised': accessible only through meanings that are numerous and shifting (Derrida 2001).

Taking seriously post-structuralist ideas entails a new reading of 'the present' and its relationship to 'the real'. To take the example of mindfulness, even the most embodied "feeling tones" are themselves intelligible *through* and in-part produced *by* discursive processes that are less 'imminent', less accessible (Stanley 2012). 'The present' may therefore not be as contiguous as it appears. This distinction has important implications for the kinds of questions we may ask of a school mindfulness programme. Firstly, because if discourse can shape what people feel, what is 'real' for them, then the influence of such programmes is not just the exercises they teach but the values and ideals through which practices are framed. Accordingly, however, the investigation of this thesis is not intended to uncover a singular 'truth' about mindfulness in schools, but rather to explore how certain truths about subjects within the programme are constituted, and to examine the practices through which particular subject positions emerge and are contested within the programme's delivery.

4.3 Multi-sited ethnography: Following things, creating 'things':

Central to my research approach was a recognition of the dynamism and multiplicity of .b. Whilst the ideas of the programme are crystalized in formal teaching materials and lesson plans, they are nonetheless enacted by various agents in different spaces. As a syllabus that instructs in 'a way of being', .b could be seen as portraying a particular cultural 'script' for selfhood. .b lessons *are,* in fact scripted (a script for teachers is provided within MiSP's lesson plans). Yet, a script is also a helpful metaphor for the means by which narratives shift, sometimes subtly but sometimes radically, as they are interpreted and voiced by new actors. The script of .b is reliant on teachers and students, each with their own perspectives, agendas and contextual influences, to enact it. Likewise, the programme may be interpreted in new ways by teachers and students, with tangential or entirely unintended themes resonating, and others rejected. As such, I felt that a multi-sited ethnographic approach would provide the necessary scope to explore such processes of enaction, contestation and change. Whilst remaining true to the fundamental ethnographic tools of extensive fieldwork and participant observation, I adopted an overriding approach of methodological 'eclecticism and pragmatism' (Delamont and Atkinson 1995 p.iv).

Though arguably mobility has always been written into the project of ethnography (Cook, Laidlaw & Mair 2009), it has been claimed that multi-sited ethnographies may unwittingly essentialise their research phenomena: by implying to have captured them in their entirety (Candea 2007). Yet, any such study entails a combination of pragmatic decisions, negotiations and chance through which researchers gain access to certain *instances* of a 'thing'. This thesis is not intended to provide a holistic representation of '.b'. As I hope to have clarified earlier, my conception of the programme as continually 'in progress' precludes the possibility of such an investigation. The use of multiple sites was helpful for exploring how various agents create meaning from the programme. On my reading, 'multi-sited ethnography' implies an approach that is unabashedly fragmented. Thus, my fieldwork involved a number of deliberately *selected*, *relatively distinct places and spaces,* that were each connected to .b.

4.4 The what and the how

This section provides an overview of what I did and why. Each of the specific methods I used was geared towards answering my overarching research question:

> *What are the understandings, ideals and techniques of selfhood that are conveyed within the .b curriculum and how are these taken up, contested and resisted by teachers and students?*

I separated this overarching question into four specific areas of interest. Table 4.1 provides an overview of these areas of interest, the corresponding analytic chapter, and how they relate to the methods I used.

Table 4.1. Overview of methods

Discussion chapter	Research question	Methods
Chapter 5: *The risk and potential of young minds.*	How is .b positioned, in terms of its purpose and need, by course developers and school teachers who are delivering the programme? What problem is the programme hoped to address?	Interviews with course developers and .b teachers. Conferences and events.
Chapter 6: *A Pedagogy of the self.*	How are knowledges of 'selves' constituted within the .b curriculum and teaching materials? Within these materials, what are the ontological features and normative ideals of 'the self'? Through what practices are students taught to 'know themselves' and to act upon themselves?	Analysis of .b teaching materials. Participation in .b teacher training.
Chapter 7: *Silence and Stillness.*	Within the classroom, how are the discourses and practices of the programme drawn upon by teachers, and in what ways are they taken up, contested or resisted by students? How are the lived 'realities' of .b shaped by the social dynamics of the classroom?	Observations of .b lessons.
Chapter 8: *Breaking the silence.*	After completing the curriculum, how do students take up, modify or resist the discourses and practices of .b? What discourses are evident within students' discussions *of* the programme?	Focus groups with students.

I gained ethical approval on 26th April 2017, prior to beginning my fieldwork (see Appendix C). Table 4.2 provides an overview of the timeline of data collection.

Table 4.2 Timeline of data collection

Method/setting	Timeline
.b teacher training (dates concealed to protect confidentiality)	2017
Interviews with .b teachers and course developers	May 2017- November 2017
Attendance at relevant professional conference	Summer 2017
Initial observations of .b lessons at School Three* (pilot study)	July 2017
Observations of .b lessons at School One	January - May 2018
Observations of .b lessons at School Two	May 2018- July 2018
Observations of .b lessons at School Four	April and May 2018
Focus Groups at School One	June 2018
Focus Groups at School Two	June 2018
Attendance at relevant professional conference	Summer 2018

*Schools have been numbered in terms of the quantity of data collection rather than chronologically

In the following sections, I discuss the methods I used in detail, taking each discussion chapter in turn. The approaches I took for recruitment and gaining consent are also discussed alongside each specific method. The analysis for each chapter was nonetheless informed by my wider ethnographic research in addition to the specific datasets. Nonetheless, I felt this was the most logical and straightforward structure. Throughout the discussion chapters, I indicate which datasets I am drawing on and where other relevant data has informed my understanding.

4.4.1 The risk & potential of young minds

The analysis in Chapter 5 centres around my interviews with .b course developers and .b teachers and is broadly informed by my ethnographic research at mindfulness conferences and events, which are each outlined below.

Interviews

Within this study, interviews were viewed as an interaction through which interviewees and I forged understanding, rather than as a conduit through which information was gleaned (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). This interaction was an instance in which I could explore the circulation and citation of discourses surrounding the programme (ideas about

purpose/need of the programme, what the course is seen to *do,* what it is felt to be *teaching,* the taken for granted assumptions, points of contention and so on). It was an opportunity to consider how participants deliberate and resolve issues, and what issues they raise themselves. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format and ranged from 40-90 minutes.

In total, I conducted 17 interviews, including two with .b's developers, and 15 interviews with people teaching .b in schools (see Table 4.3 below). A third person was involved in the original development of .b, but is no longer involved with MiSP, was not interviewed as I was unable to make contact. An eighteenth interview was conducted but was not included in the analysis.[5] Six interviews were conducted in person, eight via Skype/Facetime and three over the telephone. While face to face interviews may be more desirable in some circumstances, my participants were, by and large, incredibly busy and hence I felt it was important to be to accommodate their preferences. Notwithstanding the occasional technical blip, I found that participants were comfortable with video calls, that conversations flowed with ease. Telephone conversations were perhaps less personal, but I found that they facilitated productive and interesting conversations, nonetheless. Such conversations, of course, lack the subtleties of non-verbal communication, but I felt they were sufficient to address my questions.

Structure of the conversation

Prior to conducting interviews, I produced an interview schedule with key areas to discuss. This structure was flexible in that I followed participants' guidance, sometimes covering topics in a different order depending on the issues they raised, and the time spent on each area varied. Nonetheless, participants generally looked to me for guidance and appeared to expect that the conversation would follow a relatively formal structure. The schedule was therefore useful for managing expectations as well as ensuring that all relevant issues were covered. Over the course of the research, I adjusted the schedule, reducing the time spent on the content of the course. This was because I found that these conversations became quite descriptive and that I had a good understanding of the curriculum from my training. An overview of the key areas covered is provided on the following page.

5 This is for two reasons. Firstly, the interview was very short and was conducted over the phone on a bad line. Secondly, the interviewee was recruited because the participant was listed on the MiSP website as a 'supporter', but when I asked the respondent about the programme they explained that they did not perceive themselves to be a supporter.

Within each of the areas I included a number of more specific probes. Two versions of the interview schedule can be found in full in Appendix D.

Role/position

- What is their role and how does it relate to .b?

Interest in Mindfulness

- How would they describe mindfulness to someone else? How did they become interested in it? How did they become involved with .b?

Value and purpose of .b

- Why did they want to teach .b in schools? What do they think it offers (to students/teachers/schools)?

Content and structure of .b

- What do you see as the key learning objectives of .b? What are the most helpful aspects of the course in your opinion?

Format of delivery in your school

- How is the programme run in your school: what year groups/ages, targeted/untargeted, timetabled/extra-curricular.

Reception by teachers and students

- How, in your opinion, has the programme been received by students/other members of staff?

Recruitment

When I began my research, I set out to interview a range of people who were involved directly in the development or delivery of .b. This included: founders and developers; teacher trainers (those working for MiSP to train people to deliver .b) and .b teachers (those delivering .b in schools). As the research progressed, it became clear that the distinctions between the latter two categories were not clear cut. This is because .b teacher *trainers* were invariably also teaching .b in schools, and because three participants who were initially recruited as teachers were also involved in training. I also initially intended to speak with a number of prominent supporters of .b, (those listed on the MiSP website). However, this category turned out to be quite nebulous, including people with varying levels of involvement in .b, and as such I later decided to remove this category. A final category that I did not anticipate was people involved in MYRIAD. Two interviewees were working on the MYRIAD project. One had previously been teaching .b, while the other was working with schools who were delivering .b as part of MYRIAD research. Though MYRIAD employees were not currently teaching .b, they were as part of their current roles working with schools around the country who were delivering the programme as part of the trial. As such, their responses provided insight not only into how they personally perceived the purpose and value of the programme, but also how the programme was being received by educators and students in numerous school contexts.

Table 4.3 provides an overview of total numbers of interviewees in each category. I have indicated with asterisks where categories overlap. In order to protect confidentiality, I have not provided a list of pseudonyms next to these categories, though pseudonyms are used in the presentation of data throughout analysis chapters.

Table 4.3 Total Interviews

Totals	
Course developers	**2**
Teacher trainers	**4***
.b Teachers	**14**
MYRIAD Employees	**2****
Total Interviews	**17**

*All teacher trainers are also counted in the .b teacher total
**One MYRIAD employee is counted in the .b teacher total

It also became clear there were a range of professional roles amongst those teaching .b. This is due to MiSP's relatively open model of training, whereby .b teachers do not have to be current classroom teachers. MiSP deliver .b training both to those who are employed within schools and those who want to teach .b in a freelance capacity (something which I discuss in chapter 7). As such, my sample included four classroom teachers; an assistant head teacher; a special educational needs teacher; a retired teacher; two MYRIAD employees; one educational psychologist; and five freelance .b teachers, all of whom had other mindfulness-related roles (either teaching MBSR or MBCT or also teaching the primary version of .b, Paws B). My only recruitment criteria for '.b teachers' were that they were currently, or had recently been, teaching .b in secondary schools. Two of those interviewed had changed roles and were no longer teaching .b and one had recently retired, though all had taught the programme during the last two years.

There were three primary means by which I recruited participants for interviews: approaching people at conferences and meetings; emailing people who were known to my supervisor or others I had spoken with; and identifying .b teachers listed on the MiSP online database. This latter strategy was by far the most productive, accounting for ten out of fifteen of my interviews with .b teachers and teacher trainers.

Consent

All participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form prior to participating (see Appendix E). Before interviews, I explained issues around confidentiality and that participants had a right to end the interview at any time. Sixteen of the interviews were arranged ahead of time, in which case I provided information to participants on our initial point of contact. One interview took place at a conference and was not pre-planned, hence in this instance the participant was given information prior to the interview and was provided time to consider participation (the interview was arranged for a few hours later). This interview was conducted in an empty room to ensure confidentiality of the conversation. It was explained both on the pre-interview information and at the beginning of our conversation that no names or personal information of participants would be included in the thesis. As such, I have used pseudonyms for participants wherever quotes are used.

All other interviewees were given the option of speaking face to face, in a place of their choosing or via Skype/Facetime. Three participants requested that the interviews be conducted by telephone, and I was happy to accommodate this request to facilitate their participation, though this was less desirable as such mediums prevent the recognition of non-verbal cues. In addition to the interview at the conference, three interviews took place in cafes, one in the participants' place of work (at the end of the working day), and another two in participants' homes. Where conversations took place in cafes or in the participants workplace I did my best to ensure confidentiality. Both conversations which took place in cafes were some distance from both the participant's workplace and home. This minimised the likelihood that conversations would be overheard by someone who was known to the participant. In the case of the interview conducted in the participant's workplace, this conversation took place in a quiet room, after the working day had ended. In each of these instances, the location of the interview had been suggested by participants, and prior to the interview I discussed the research information sheet and checked that they were happy to proceed.

Ethnographic Observations: Conferences and Events

Over the course of the research, I attended a number of relevant conferences and events, including one event in summer of 2017 and another in the summer of 2018. The former event was not specifically focused on schools, but a number of relevant people attended, including various people who were working with MYRIAD. In addition, I attended two taster events for MiSP, one held in an events space in London and another at a primary school in Wales. Fieldnotes from these events were not included in the formal analysis. Nonetheless, they provided valuable insight into the sorts of 'problems' mindfulness in schools was thought to respond to and to the interests and concerns of speakers and attendees. In attending such events, I was interested in the discourses speakers and attendees drew on to frame .b, particularly in terms of the wider issues that the programme was seen to address. As these were public events, I did not gain explicit consent from attendees to observe and take field notes.

4.4.2 A pedagogy of the self

Chapter 6, which aims to examine the discourses and practices of the self within the .b curriculum itself, comprised of textual analysis of the .b teaching resources and was informed by my participation in the .b teacher training. The approach I adopted for each is outlined below.

Textual Analysis: .b Lesson plans & teaching guidance

The documents that I incorporated into my analysis were primarily lesson plans and teaching materials for .b, though a broader selection of materials (including website pages, conference brochures and promotional materials) informed the development of my ideas. These documents in part structure the wider discourse surrounding mindfulness in schools, by framing the problems that the programme seeks to address and articulating its role in particular ways. Moreover, lesson plans in particular can be understood as 'theories of practice' and 'programmes of conduct' (Foucault 1981; Kendall & Crossley 1996). These plans, with greater or lesser precision, attempt to direct the speech and bodily movement

of teachers and students within each lesson. Lesson plans are deliberately constructed to guide the thoughts, and at times even the feelings, of the lessons' participants.

Teaching guidance and lesson plans were given to me during the .b teacher training, in the form of 11 booklets. Ten of the books refer to the ten .b lessons (one introductory session and nine core lessons) and the eleventh booklet is entitled 'How to Teach .b'. Each lesson is designed to be conducted over 40 minutes to one hour, and the entire course is designed to be delivered over a ten-week period, though the introductory lesson is optional (see Figure 1.1 p.11). There is a PowerPoint for each lesson, and the booklets contain captures of the slides above a script for teachers and additional notes on delivery, as well as optional handouts and worksheets. The 'How to Teach .b' booklet outlines guidelines for teachers, including 'what .b is' and 'what .b isn't', instructions for delivering mindfulness exercises, and issues around safeguarding. Where relevant to the analysis in Chapter 6, I have included screen grabs of .b PowerPoint slides. All of these images were obtained legitimately (i.e. through the paid .b training course) and have been referenced appropriately. As such, and as I have only reproduced very small extracts of the lessons, I am within the 'fair dealings' guidelines of UK copyright law for research purposes (Intellectual Property Office 2014).

There were many more documents that could have been included. However, my interest in the lesson plans was precisely the ways in which ideas had been distilled: *what* messages the lessons contain and *how* they are designed to be delivered; what narratives, cultural tropes, imagery, metaphors and literary techniques are employed. Beyond this, I was interested in how the learner was constructed in terms of the stories that depict certain types of selves and in terms of how (anticipated) student-participants are positioned. As Prior (2016) has argued, texts structure and formalise ideas that circulate within a wider field of discourse. Thus, part of the intention of textual analysis was to examine the 'games of truth' through which certain knowledges are established (Foucault 1988, 1997).

Ethnographic Participation in b training

The .b teacher training I attended was delivered over 4 days from 9.30am to 5.30pm, during which time I participated fully in the course whilst also keeping extensive field notes. Each day began and ended with a guided meditation in a circle and, across the four days, all of the .b lessons and mindfulness practices were delivered in turn by the trainers. Lessons were delivered as they would be with school students, and afterwards we discussed issues concerning pedagogy. At various points throughout the day, trainees were split off into groups to deliver the mindfulness exercises to each other and give feedback. There were three course trainers and over 30 trainees. Less than half of trainees were school teachers and, of those, the majority were not working in the UK state sector. There were a number of teachers working in the independent sector and seven teachers from international schools. Other trainees included: adult mindfulness teachers, psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, yoga teachers and one ski instructor. The group appeared to be comprised primarily of upper-middle and middle-class professionals, mostly between the ages of 40 and 55, around two thirds of whom were women.

The purpose of participating in the training course was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how MiSP situate the purpose and objectives of .b and how they clarify

ideas within lesson plans. Participating in the .b training provided me with access to the full teaching materials for the curriculum, and insight into how MiSP formally expected the lessons to be delivered in terms of: learning objectives of each lesson, how these learning objectives linked to each other and to MiSP's broader objectives for the programme, the sorts of issues MiSP saw as potentially arising and how these are expected to be resolved, and the broader expectations MiSP have of teachers. As such, when conducting observations, I was interested in how trainers explained the materials and expectations of teachers, as well as the issues they positioned .b in relation to. In addition, I was interested in the sorts of queries that trainees raised and how trainers responded.

Access and consent

Gaining access and permission to conduct the research at the .b training was a protracted process that took many months of emailing back and forth to MiSP. I initially contacted MiSP in June 2017, to explain the research and to request access to the .b training course. As a result of this, I was asked to provide an overview of my research design and questions. At my request, I was introduced by email to the lead trainer at the training course that I had requested to participate in. As I had met .b's requirements of having a daily mindfulness practice and having completed an MBSR course six months prior, the trainer agreed that I could participate. This enforcement of the pre-requisites of personal practice amongst even researchers arguably reflects the emphasis amongst mindfulness teachers on personal experience (see Segal et al 2002). Nonetheless, this particular approach to gatekeeping arguably serves to protect the field from the investigations of 'outsiders' who may lack the 'embodied understanding' of the perceived benefits of the practice and may therefore be less sympathetic to MiSP's objectives. I felt that my experience of mindfulness practice and culture enabled me an insight into certain norms and expectations during the course training, whilst simultaneously feeling myself something of an 'outsider' in terms of age, profession and social class.

On the first day of the training, during the initial ice-breaker activity, I explained to attendees that I was present in a research capacity. The ethnographic notes from this training primarily informed my wider understanding of the framing of .b and the curriculum materials and was not a key site of analysis. I have ensured that there are no references to specific participants of the training within the thesis. As such, I did not obtain written consent from members of the course.

4.4.3 Silence and Stillness

Chapter 7 revolves around an analysis of my observations of the .b lessons at the four secondary schools that participated in the study and was further contextualised by my .b teacher training. In the following sections I outline key demographics of participating schools and clarify how these schools were recruited, explain the format of .b delivery within the schools and the structure of my observations, and the methods of consent adopted.

Observations of .b lessons

In total, I observed 45 hours of .b lessons across four schools (see Table 4.4). The majority of the school ethnography took place at two state, co-educational secondary schools.

School One is located in Central South Wales and School Two is in South West England, both in rural areas. At each of these schools, I observed an entire course of .b with three and two separate groups of students respectively. In total, then, I observed the entire syllabus run with five groups of students. In addition, a smaller number of lessons were observed at two other schools, both of which were also state-funded, co-educational schools located in rural South West England (School Three and School Four). Observations at School Three were conducted prior to the main period of ethnographic research and were intended to help refine my research approach. An opportunity arose to visit School Four much later in the research, and although it was not possible to observe the full course, I did not want to pass an opportunity up. Table 4.5 provides key demographics for each of the participating schools. In the table, I have included the percentage of children eligible for free school meals in each school as a (flawed) proxy for indicating socioeconomic differences and levels of deprivation at each school.

Table 4.4 Overview of observations

Schools	Class groups observed*	Lessons observed	No. of hours observations
School One	1 group of Year 7s 1 group of Year 8s 1 group of Year 9s	Entire syllabus*	24
School Two	2 groups of Year 8	Entire syllabus*	16
School Three	2 groups of Year 7s	Lesson Four	2
School Four	2 groups of Year 8s	2x Lesson 3 1x Lesson 4	3
Total no. hours			45

Table 4.5 Key demographics of participating schools

School	% Free School Meals	% Ethnic Minority(EM)/English Second Language (ESL)	Etsyn/ OFSTED rating*	Location
School 1 (Primary site 1)	27.6%	>3% (EM)	Unsatisfactory	Wales
School 2 (Primary site 2)	8.4%	3.7% (ESL)	Requires Improvement	South West England
School 3 (Pilot study)	10.4%	5.2% (ESL)	Good	South West England
School 4 (Additional data)	5.4%	1.4% (ESL)	Outstanding	South West England

School Two, Three and Four data taken from compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk. School One data taken from local council information site.
* Etsyn and OFSTED are the national inspection bodies for schools in Wales and England respectively.

In the classroom, I generally sat off to one side or at the back of the room. I was interested in how the lessons were enacted, from the ways in which the classroom space was organised (how tables and chairs were laid out and where the teacher stood), to how closely teachers followed the script, what ideas they drew on and which were omitted. Beyond this, I was particularly interested in how students and teachers interacted around the programme: the sorts of issues and questions students raised and the sorts of tensions that emerged through the delivery of the programme.

Recruitment of schools

Recruiting schools for the study was a lengthy process and fraught given difficulties identifying schools that were delivering .b, were within travelling distance, and which were willing to grant access. MiSP does not provide information about schools which are delivering .b. However, they do provide contact details of registered .b teachers who pay an annual membership fee of £90. As such, eventual access to each of the schools was gained through .b teachers who I contacted via email or whom I was passed onto by contacts I had met at conferences. I initially liaised with each school via email to provide information about the research (see Appendix F), and later held meetings with contacts at School One and Two.

I originally intended to recruit schools that would represent diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Perhaps as I had personally attended a highly diverse inner-

city secondary school, I was particularly interested in how the programme might be received in a context where students came from different religious, cultural and ethnic contexts. In practice, however, this was not possible. As was acknowledged by a number of interviewees, mindfulness has been predominantly adopted in the independent sector and amongst relatively privileged state schools. Indeed, this was born out through my recruitment process, both for schools and interviewees. I initially contacted all schools (both state and private) within reasonable travelling distance from my home. A significant number of private schools in each location claimed to be teaching mindfulness in some form, however, none were willing to allow me to observe the lessons. In contrast, the majority of state schools either did not return my calls and emails or responded, saying that they were not delivering .b. All of the schools recruited were within the state sector, three of which (School Two, Three and Four) were located in affluent areas of England, and one of which (School One) was located in a post-industrial area of central Wales. The marked differences in the socioeconomic demographics at these schools meant that it was possible to explore how issues of social class and relative social advantage/disadvantage played out within the context of the programme's delivery. Though I had hoped to explore the programme's delivery in diverse religious, cultural and ethnic contexts, in practice almost all students in the lessons I observed were white-British[6].

Consent

The process of gaining consent for classroom observations necessitated a careful negotiation between my own ethical commitments and practical limitations of conducting research in the school. Prior to the observations at each of the schools, a meeting was held with the key contacts to discuss the most appropriate approach for consent. At School One and School Two, I provided an information sheet and opt out form to be given to students a week before the lessons were due to begin (Appendix G). It was agreed that teachers would explain to students that the research would be taking place and what it was about on the basis of the information I provided to schools. It was made clear to students that they could choose not to participate by returning the form with a parents signature. No forms were returned at either school.

There are a number of limitations to this approach to obtaining consent. Firstly, students may not return the forms simply because they forget or because their parents forget and may simply 'assent' rather than making a considered decision (Morrow & Richards 1996). Using opt-out consent, moreover, established participation as the norm and, as such, students may have felt tacitly obliged to participate. Secondly, in asking parents to sign opt-out forms rather than student themselves, I to some extent bypassed students' agency (Coyne 2010). Given the centrality of issues relating to young people's practical agency to the thesis, this is an important limitation and, indeed, an ethical tension within the research itself. Following my discussions with the school, however, I felt that the opt-out approach would be the *least un*-ethical option. Teachers explained that students may forget to return forms and that many students could therefore be excluded from the research unfairly. It was also explained that this approach would likely result in only the most conscientious students returning consent forms. From my own perspective, this raised the serios concern that the research may be unable to sufficiently explore the experiences of marginalised

[6] Only two non-white students were present across the lessons I observed, both of whom were in a class at School Two, and both of whom were only present for the first two lessons of the programme.

young people. As existing research has been heavily weighted towards more privileged socioeconomic and social-class contexts (see Chapter 2), I felt that this would be a significant limitation of the study. Such an approach could ultimately mean that the experiences of less privileged students remain underexplored and that any difficulties such students experienced could remain unaddressed. Adopting an opt-in method of consent would have also required teachers to potentially devote significant amounts of time and effort to ensuring that those students who did want to participate did return the forms. Given that teachers were already generously giving their time and opening their classrooms up to facilitate the research, I felt it was important to recognise their perspectives on the most appropriate means of obtaining consent. In hindsight, however, whilst I feel that this approach was acceptable within the practical limitations of the research, I regret not providing an additional form for students to formally opt themselves out of the observations. In future research, I would try to negotiate with the school to arrange a full session with students to discuss the research with students prior to its taking place and a subsequent session to address their questions. Should key contacts at the schools be willing to facilitate this, such an approach would provide an opportunity to obtain verbal and written consent whilst minimising the likelihood that certain groups of students would be unfairly excluded.

At School Three (pilot study), students were told ahead of time that I would be observing the lesson and were provided with an information sheet to take home. Within this information, students were given the option to opt out of classroom observations and to opt in to participating in interviews. Five students returned the sheets to agree to participate in interviews, and no students opted out. The final three observations at School Four were supplementary data and were included as they provided an opportunity to view the programme being delivered with a teacher who was more familiar to students. Students were not the focus of these observations and no specific data was taken about students. The teacher of this lesson explained to students that I would be observing prior to my arrival and again on the day. As students here were not provided with the option to opt out, I have not made any reference to specific students at School Four in the thesis. In each of the four schools, at the beginning of my first lesson with students I was given an opportunity to introduce myself and my reason for being present.

Structure of .b delivery

Table 4.6 illustrates the basic format of mindfulness delivery in each of the schools, including whether the programme was targeted (delivered to particular students deemed 'vulnerable') or untargeted (given to whole form groups), and who was delivering .b.

Table 4.6 Overview of format of delivery across schools

Schools	Targeted /untargeted	Year Groups	Mindfulness delivery
School One	Targeted	Year 7, 8 & 9	Freelance mindfulness teacher*
School Two	Untargeted	Year 8	Behaviour support officer
School Three	Targeted	Year 7	SENCO**
School Four	Untargeted	Year 8	RE Teacher

*'Freelance' mindfulness teachers are those who are not necessarily trained as classroom teachers and do not work for the school directly.
**Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

Whilst the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) run training for .b, they do not have centralised control over how it is delivered in schools. As such, it became clear within interviews and during recruitment that each school had their own approach to delivery. This included differences in: whether the course is delivered by a teacher 'in house' or by an external mindfulness teacher; how the programme fits within the timetable (including whether .b is run during PSHE, form time, RE or another subject; the amount of time allocated per lesson; which year group receive the course and when during the year the programme is run; and whether the programme is delivered to whole year groups or students are selected on the basis of perceived need[7]). Nonetheless, all schools involved in the study were delivering .b on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during the school day. In all four of the schools, the programme was delivered in a typical classroom setting, usually with students sat in rows in front of the teacher (though in smaller classes at School One, chairs were occasionally set up in a semi-circle).

In School One, .b was delivered for selected students in years 7, 8 and 9. Students were selected by the Assistant Head for a range of reasons. This could mean students who appeared to be struggling with issues from anxiety to anger and behavioural problems. Selection was based on a number of factors (reports from pastoral staff; information about home circumstances; social or learning difficulties). .b was delivered to groups of between 12 and 16 students, separated by year groups. As there was no specific slot available for .b within the timetable, these selected students were excused from one lesson each week to attend mindfulness. The timing of the lessons was rotated to minimise disruption to students' subject lessons. All .b lessons were delivered by an external mindfulness teacher who worked at a number of other schools in the local area.

[7] Though MiSP explicitly recommend that the programme should be run with entire year groups rather than as a targeted intervention, through my conversations with school staff during interviews and throughout the recruitment process, I found that targeting was relatively common, with many teachers noting limitations in time and resources as constraining capacity to deliver the programme as a 'universal' measure.

In School Two, .b was delivered to all students in Year 8 as part of their PSHE lessons across one term. Two teachers at the school were trained to deliver .b and these teachers each taught half of the year group. In School Three, .b was being delivered by a Learning Support Assistant (previously a full-time teacher) with a 'nurture group' of Year 7 students. These were students who were felt to need additional help with the transition from primary to secondary school for emotional, behavioural or academic reasons. As such, these students received some of their general lessons separately from the rest of the year group. Finally, in School Four, the programme was being run by one RE teacher, with her Year 8 RE class.

4.4.4 Breaking the silence

The final discussion chapter, Chapter 8, comprises an analysis of student focus groups and interviews at School One, Two and Four. As with the previous sections, below I outline the format of these discussions, as well as my approach to recruitment and consent.

Student focus groups & interviews

A number of focus groups were conducted at School One and School Two after the students had completed a full syllabus of .b (see Table 4.7). Four groups were conducted in total, three at School One and one at School Two. All focus groups were with Year 8 students (aged 12-13). Focus groups at School One each took place over one hour, while there was only around forty minutes for the group at School Two. In total across the focus groups, eighteen students took part. In addition, four interviews (between 8-15 minutes) were conducted with Year 7 students (aged 11-12) as part of the pilot study at School Four. A fifth interview was conducted; however, the student was very shy and appeared more comfortable talking about other things, and as such I did not conduct the interview.

Table 4.7 Overview of Focus Group Participants

School	Focus Group	Female	Male	Total No. of Participants
School One	**Group One**	0	4	4
	Group Two	5	0	5
	Group Three	5	0	5
	School One Total	10	4	14
School Two	**Group Four**	1	3	4
	School Two Total	1	3	4
All Focus Groups		**11**	**7**	**18**

Why focus groups?

Observing mindfulness lessons provided some insight into the ways that students negotiate, endorse, struggle against and/or acquiesce to the ideas, norms and practices of the programme. However, the formal power structure in the classroom (regulations around posture and movement, of when to speak and what to say) constrains these interactions. Furthermore, the pre-eminence of a discourse of 'good behaviour' within education means that students are likely to shape their responses in line with a broader 'performance' (in the Butlerian sense) of their identities as 'good' or 'naughty' students (Butler 2013). My own presence as an observer is likely to exacerbate this dynamic. As such, I felt that it was particularly important to create a space for engaging with students' sense making practices outside of the classroom. Though focus groups themselves entail particular inequalities of power between researchers and participants, particularly in research with children, I nonetheless felt that this method would provide greater access to students' attempts to vocalise their experiences, and could allow me to negotiate a dynamic in which students were given 'permission' to express a range of views.

Recruitment and gaining consent

There has been significant debate around the process of gaining informed consent from young people for participating in research, particularly their ability to 'consent' as opposed to simply 'assenting' (Valentine 1999). In this sense, assent is passive, where consent is gained from a legal guardian and the young person does not refuse to participate, whereby informed consent requires actively engaging with young people to ensure they fully understand information and willingly choose to participate (Alderson 1995).

I felt it was extremely important that students who participated in focus groups and interviews self-selected to participate. As Spratt (2011) has argued, involvement with the

school alone may suggest a tacit acceptance of school values and a collusion with school agendas. Given the extent to which mindfulness programmes were valorized by some teachers, even the process of teachers (or myself) selecting students might have reinforced the impression that the purpose of the discussions was to 'sing .b's praises'. Not only would this shape the conversations in particular ways, but it would exclude students with neutral or critical views from the conversation and would contribute to the normative discourse surrounding mindfulness. It appeared within observations that many students were either resentful towards the programme or wanted to appear disinterested. As such, the extent to which I was perceived as a 'mindfulness person' would exacerbate the gulf between us and forestall my attempts to build trust (particularly as there appears to be a sense amongst some mindfulness teachers and practitioners that the purpose of research is to 'prove' mindfulness works). While I accepted that it would not be possible to displace the impression of my complicity with the school, I felt that the most effective way to negate it, and to demonstrate respect for students' desires, would be to ask students to self-select. As such, I insisted in my meetings at schools that students would need to self-select, even if this meant recruiting lower numbers overall.

As mentioned above, students at School Three were provided with consent forms prior to my arrival and only those who returned the slips took part. At Schools Two and Three, for each class of students, I delivered a short presentation during either the second to last or final .b lesson. At School One, I was given a full 10 minutes to talk and was able to use a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix H). In the two classes at the second school, I was not able to use the PowerPoint (the classes were taken outside to the field due to hot weather), and so I gave the presentation from memory. The intention of this talk was three-fold: to explain the meaning of research and the purpose of my project in an accessible way for students (Anderson 1995); to emphasise the importance of neutrality within research, and to engage their interest enough that some should want to participate. This was received with varying success. A slight difference in tone, the emphasis placed on a word, how energetic I was feeling, a twitch of my face, all seemed to affect students' appearance of openness or resistance. At the end of the talks, students were given an information and consent form which they were told they could fill in if they wanted to participate (see Appendix I). In School One, the pastoral staff agreed to send a reminder out to all Year 8 students who had taken part in .b (including those who had participated in lessons in previous terms). The information sent out included a summary of the information provided in the PowerPoint. This led to fourteen students agreeing to take part in School One, and four in School Two.

Allowing students to elect themselves to focus groups resulted in a slight skew towards female participants, overall, and a skew towards male participants at School Two. This does slightly limit the discussion of certain issues in Chapter 8, as the intersections between gender and class became a focal point of analysis. However, given what I perceived as the importance of discouraging the perspective that I was allied with the school or with .b, my hope is that this approach resulted in richer data than I would have garnered had students been selected by myself or their teacher.

Focus group approach

Within these discussions, I hoped to create a more permissive space for students to reflect on their experiences of the programme. Nonetheless, conducting focus groups with young people presents a host of issues in relation to dynamics of power (Alderson & Morrow 2011), which are further exacerbated in an educational context. As Ruth Emond has noted, participants generally make sense of researchers' position in terms of pre-given social categories which provide a model for interpersonal dynamics (Emond 2003). Though I explained 'what research is' and my own role to students, 'researcher' was not likely to be a meaningful category in their lives. Students were more likely to perceive my position in relation to other non-teaching staff that they are used to seeing in school, such as a Teaching assistant (TA), Learning Support Assistant (LSA), Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or other pastoral support worker. Thus, however equitable I attempted to be in my relations with students, these were ultimately structured by wider cultural hierarchies between adults and children (Alderson 1995).

Nonetheless, as a number of scholars have emphasised, adult researchers do not hold all the cards (Christensen 2004, Hemming 2008). Rather, young people may adopt strategies to subvert or resist adults' agendas. In my experiences both ethnographically and in my previous work as a TA, I found that young people continually negotiate and re-negotiate their position with school staff. Similarly, within observations and focus groups, students at times 'tested me', attempting to gauge my level of authority, and at other times engaged me in casual, humorous conversations. Students were also percipient to the subtle cues of myself and others about what was 'permitted' in our interactions. As such, I hoped it would be possible to create a dynamic in which students would feel comfortable to reflect on their experiences of .b. I wanted to do this in a way that was fun, collaborative and responsive to students' interests.

Extensive literature has been published regarding the use of creative and participatory methods with young people (O'Kane 2000; Veale 2005; Prosser 2011). It has been argued that such approaches may mitigate power asymmetries by disrupting the usual dialogic formulations between adults and children (Christensen and Prout 2002). Other researchers have argued that methods such as poetry writing, drawing, story writing or drama may tap into young people's creative capacities and facilitate deeper understanding of their views and experiences (Vaele 2005). Prosser (2011) argues that children's creative capacities enable a depth of expression which is otherwise limited by language. Nonetheless, others have warned that creative methods do not automatically lead to empowerment or deeper understanding (Hemming 2008; Gallacher and Gallagher 2005). As such, I adopted a structure for focus group that I hoped would disrupt the usual question-response formulation, whilst also giving maximum opportunity for students to explain themselves using their own words. My intention was not to 'find' students' perceptions or to preserve them in some apparently unadulterated form. Rather, I hoped to provide a space in which students could collaborate in 'making sense' of their experiences in new ways. With this in mind, I structured the conversations around a number of games, outlined below.

Introduction/Ice breaker

After explaining my position and reading out the 'Things to Remember' (Figure 4.1) students were each given a card and coloured pens to write name cards. Inside their name card, I asked them to write an answer to one of the 'about me' questions in Figure 4.2. Afterwards, we went around the group, beginning with myself, and read our cards aloud.

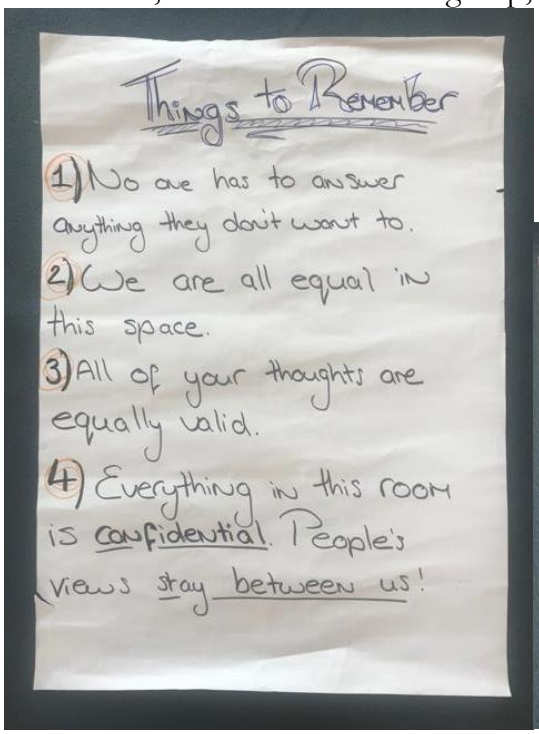

Figure 4.1 "Things to Remember'

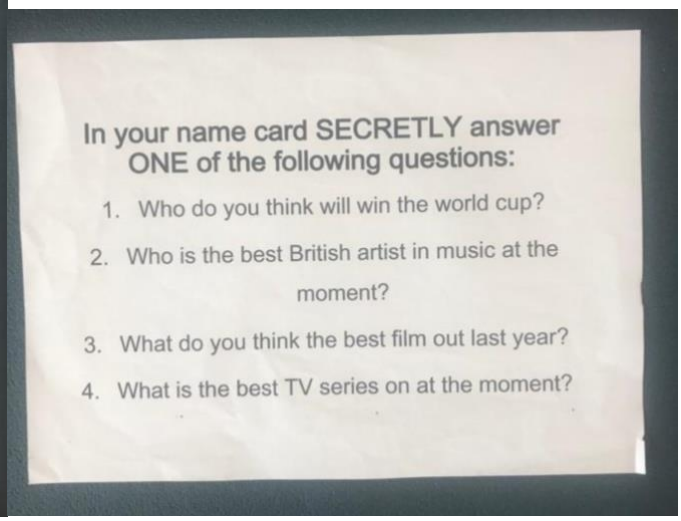

Figure 4.2 'about me' questions

The big picture

The first key task involved using two pieces of A3 paper to write down firstly anything that came to mind when they thought of mindfulness, and secondly anything they could remember about .b. Though I was cautious that this second question might seem test-like, it seemed important to get a sense of what was prominent in their recollections of the course.

Like/Nope

I placed pictures of a 'like' and 'dislike' emoji next to each other on the table (Figure 4.3). I then gave participants some scrap paper and asked to write down anything they liked or disliked about their mindfulness lessons and put them on the piles. At the same time, I asked them to talk to me about what they were writing down. Participants were not asked to write any particular number of things for each or to do them in any order.

The purpose of this section was to facilitate students to consider their views and to demonstrate (by my openness to both responses) my willingness to listen. I included this early in the session as I hoped that the equal weighting between 'like' and 'nope' would free up students to say both positive and negative things without fear of repercussion.

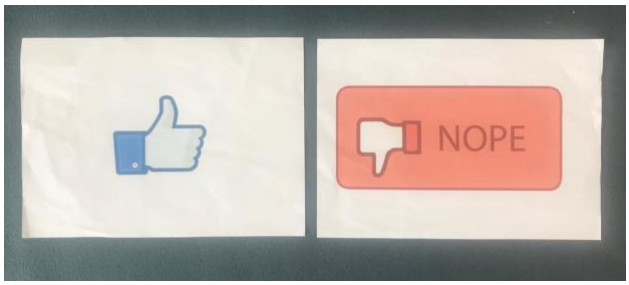

Figure 4.3 Like/Nope

Picture Game

In this game, I laid out six pictures on the table. On the back of each picture was a question, each of which related to a specific issue which I had felt to be important within observations and which I wanted to explore with students. I asked the group to take turns in picking a picture and read the question to the rest of the group. At this point, I checked in and said I could read the questions if they preferred. In all but one of the groups, students themselves read the questions. Part of the purpose of this game was to address specific questions I had following observations.

Figure 4.4 shows the pictures as they would be laid out on the table, and Figure 4.5 shows the questions that match up to the pictures (in the same order). Due to time limitations it was unfortunately not possible to play this game at School Two.

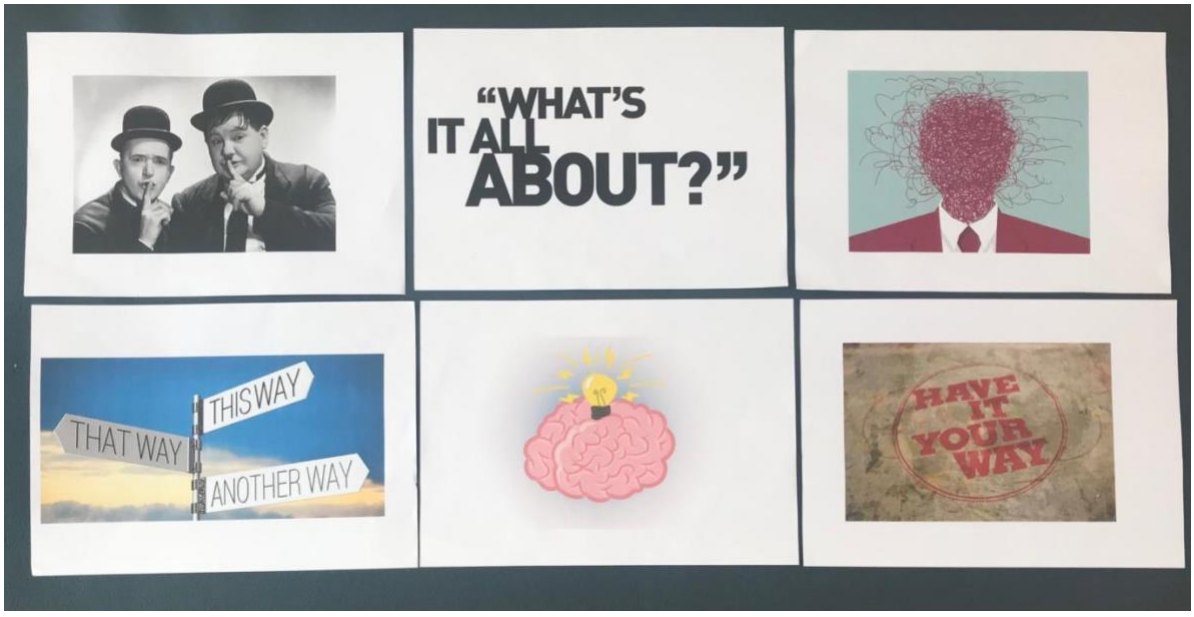

Figure 4.4 (above) Picture game - picture side.

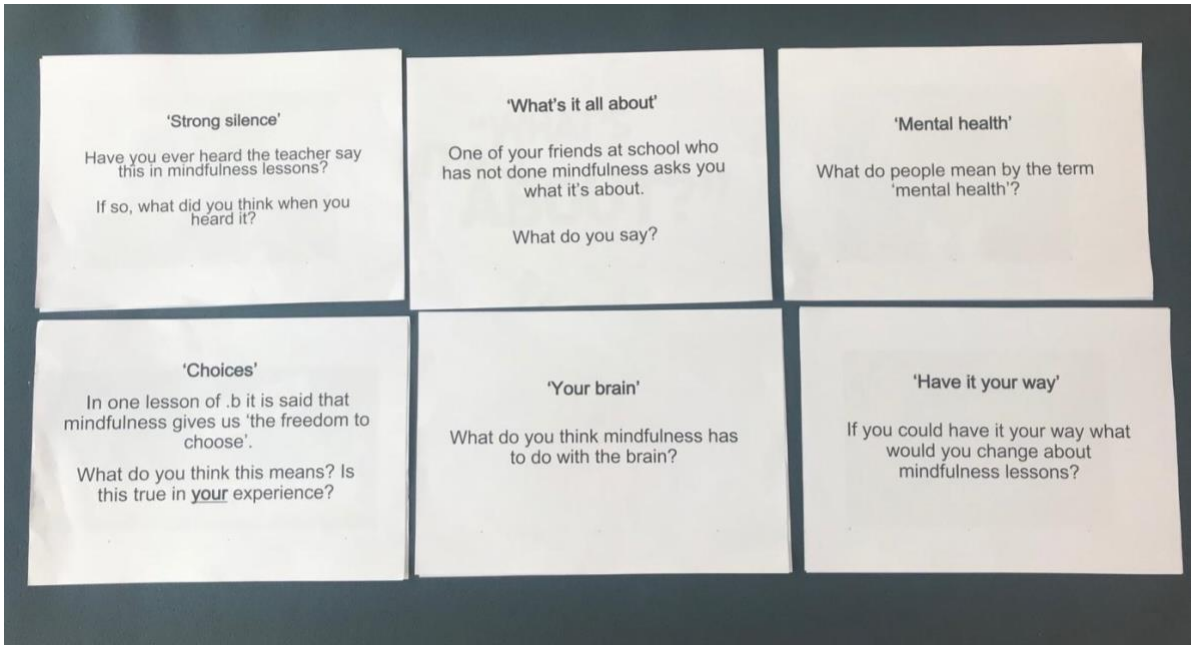

Figure 4.5 (above) Picture game - question side.

Music Game

The last five minutes of the session were devoted to a game in which I played clips of a song and students guessed the name and artist. The game was intended to be fun, to demonstrate my respect for their time and my desire to 'give back' in what way I could. Regrettably, due to the more limited period of time available at School Two, it was not possible to play the game in the final focus group.

Student interview structure

These interviews were conducted just after students had finished a lesson of .b (though they had already taken part in the programme earlier in the year). Our conversation began with me asking them what they thought of the lesson. I then asked the students whether they enjoyed the lessons; whether they used any of the practices outside of class, and if so, what for and why; what they thought the purpose of the lessons was; and finally, if they could describe mindfulness in three words.

4.5 Creating sense: analytic approach

In part due to the multiple methods and ethnographic site, my fieldwork involved a number of relatively separate phases, which provided the opportunity to reflect at various points throughout. The timeline in Table 4.2 (p.59) provides a sense of these phases of research. I conducted formal analysis after my first observations of .b lessons (the 'pilot') and early interviews (in June 2017) and again after my .b training (in November 2017). After having completed all aspects of the data collection, I then began an extended period of analysis between July 2018 and November 2018. Each dataset was then re-analysed when I came to write up the respective chapter.

Whilst I was broadly influenced by Foucauldian ideas regarding discourse, subjectivity and discipline, my approach to analysis was primarily informed by Thematic Network Analysis, as described by Attride-Sterling (2001). This approach entails gradually building up more

conceptually sophisticated ideas from concrete examples in the data. Initial themes develop from recurrent or apparently significant words, issues, metaphors or concepts within data, and are progressively organised until more overarching explanatory themes can be developed. In reality, the process was more iterative with categories, and the significance I attributed to them shifting and changing throughout. I took a broadly inductive approach, though this was guided by my prior reading and interests (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

In the preliminary stage of analysis, I coded the entire dataset by hand. I then wrote extracts of data (e.g. quotes of interviews or fieldnotes) on separate scraps of paper, and later added more abstract phrases that I felt to 'capture' some conceptual element of the data. I organised these (masses of) scraps of paper into piles and then wrote down any number of phrases which I felt could categorise the data both practically and conceptually (see Hailwood 2019). Subsequently, I organised these higher-level themes (Attride-Stirling 2001) and developed conceptual maps by blue-tacking them onto pieces of card on my living room floor (see Figure 4.7 & 4.8 for some examples). Over the course of the different stages of analysis, I produced masses of these conceptual maps, using card, A3 paper, and post-it notes.

Figure 4.6 (above) and 4.7 (below) examples of conceptual maps from preliminary analysis

During the later stages of analysis, I initially coded all fieldnotes and transcripts using NVivo, however I found the interface somewhat stifling, and so I returned to coding the documents by hand. I then organised the codes using tables in Word documents, which I re-analysed by hand and re-organised, and which were once again re-analysed and re-organised when I came to think about how to structure the chapters.

4.6 Ethical dilemmas

The 'field' for the social researcher is, by its very nature, structured by power (see Krieger 1991; Ribbens & Edwards 1997; Wilkinson 1998). Conducting social research involves, amongst other things, negotiating, bargaining, requesting, receiving, taking, colluding, affecting and being affected. Such interactions give rise to myriad ethical dilemmas. Those which I have considered below are by no means exhaustive but reflect those which I felt were most poignant or emotionally charged during the project. Broadly, these issues relate to: unequal gains; authority and representation; and managing identities within the field. The following sections outline my own attempts to reflect upon and 'work through' these dilemmas.

Of telling stories and owing debts

A number of authors have noted that while researchers and academic communities profit from research in terms of personal prestige and scholarly insight, participants are often left empty handed (Råheim et al 2016). As such, research arguably involves a form of exploitation that is sometimes in tension with some researchers' commitments to social justice. Nevertheless, financial reward is not always feasible nor desirable to participants. Within this study, adult participants appeared to be motivated in part by their belief that mindfulness in schools was positive and the hope to facilitate research that would affirm its benefits. Here arises another problem: how should researchers represent their research when participants are deeply invested in particular accounts?

Though ethnographic texts tell stories of other people's lives, researchers have the ultimate capacity to shape the narrative in terms of the questions they ask, the disciplinary frameworks they apply and the conclusions they draw (Ribbens & Edwards 1997). These 'tellings' gain authority to the extent that the researcher's argument is compelling yet may not reflect participants' own perspectives. Moreover, as Atkinson (2014) has explored, ethnographers employ literary devices drawn from more aesthetic genres to construct arguments. In response to these issues, some have argued that ethnographic texts should be acceptable to those whose lives are entangled in that which the research claims to represent (Denzin & Lincoln 2008). Nonetheless, the views of different participants are not always commensurable with each other. Such arguments not only reinforce the view of ethnographic research as striving towards the depiction of pre-existing social realities but fail to account for the power dynamics which *precede* research, which govern whose tellings are privileged. A key claim of this thesis is that students' accounts have been largely neglected from existing research surrounding mindfulness in schools and within decisions around programming and delivery of the .b curriculum. To have ensured that the findings were deemed satisfactory to schools and teachers would most likely have entailed downplaying or hedging the accounts of more critical students within focus groups.

Moreover, given that schools and teachers may have particular vested interests in the research presenting the curriculum in a positive light, I felt that it was important to maintain my independence in developing the analysis so as to protect the integrity of the research. Thus, in this thesis it is not my intention to simply depict (some) participants' perspectives, as to do so would simply reinforce dominant discourses that are themselves the product of power. Nor, however, is my intention to overwrite or discount such perspectives.

In order to manage participants' expectations, I provided information regarding the research project and its aims to interviewees and contacts at schools prior to their participating (see Appendix F). In this initial communication, I explained that the research was intended to examine how different stakeholders (including teachers and students) interpreted school mindfulness programmes. More specifically, in the earlier iterations of this information, I also stated that the research would examine conceptions of mental health and 'spiritual wellbeing' surrounding the programme (i.e. those of .b teachers, developers and within the curriculum itself). I later removed the word 'spiritual' which I felt to impose conceptual restrictions on the analysis that relied too much on my own preconceptions. At both School One and Two, I also held formal meetings with key contacts prior to the ethnographic research and again prior to recruiting for focus groups. In these meetings, I was very clear both that students would need to self-select to participate and the reason for this (i.e. so that the discussions were not 'skewed' in favour of more positive or more 'well behaved' students). In both instances, teachers explained that their primary interest in the research was to understand 'what was working and what was not'. While there was not an opportunity to hold formal meetings at School Three and Four, I spoke with the contact in person and via email respectively to discuss the project and provided the pre-research information sheet.

I agreed with School One and Two that I would provide a feedback report following the initial analysis. As such, I gave each school a comprehensive (8,000 word) report and a shorter executive summary of initial findings (the full report can be found in Appendix J). As analysis of ethnographic data at the schools was conducted later, the report was based on focus group data. This analysis was organised around themes that were of interest and practical use to the schools, including: 'engagement' (elements of the programme that students claimed to enjoy, factors appearing to influence interest), 'understanding' (how students described particular ideas and key messages in the programme), perceived usefulness and applications (what students claimed to have used the practices for and under what circumstances), and further issues (issues students raised surrounding their experiences of the programme e.g. criticisms and issues for the school to address). I did not separate the findings for each school in order to provide an additional layer of confidentiality for respondents and to minimise the possibility of offense to certain teachers where students were critical of the programme.

With regards to students, I felt that that the best available means that I had to 'repay' them for their participation was to candidly report back on their accounts to the schools. As I discuss in Chapter 8, I found that children's perspectives were largely absent both from my .b training and within existing literature surrounding mindfulness in schools. I sometimes felt, moreover, during casual conversations with teachers, that students' critical remarks or demonstrations of resistance were dismissed while positive statements or repetitions of the

teachers' words were presented as demonstrating comprehension. The gap between students' accounts in focus groups and the ways in which students' perspectives had been presented to me by teachers raised its own ethical issues. I had to consider carefully how to negotiate data that may be uncomfortable to people who had helped with the research, and who I respected and thought highly of. Nevertheless, I felt strongly that students warranted recognition, and, as such, I did not censor or omit anything from the data analysis of the thesis or from the report provided to schools.

Of power and positionality

Within this research, I occupied various social positions relative to participants (adult-child, woman-man, student-teacher and so on). These broader positions structured interactions in subtle ways and necessitated different approaches in terms of the management of my identity. Conducting interviews with male participants required me to be more assertive, whilst conceding some control over the steer of the conversation to avoid appearing confrontational (Arendell 1997). In interviews with .b's upper middle-class male developers, my sense of my social positioning, as a younger woman with a working-class upbringing, meant that I felt less comfortable to control the direction of the conversation. Interviews with female participants tended to be more conversational and my role became more facilitative and encouraging (Oakley 2013). Yet still, my role shifted when working in schools. With an older male teacher who was nearing retirement, I was deferential, and throughout, I was aware of my indebtedness to teachers for granting me access. Hence the research involved a continual process of reflexivity, of managing my own and others' emotions and negotiating varying status positions (Arendell 1997).

Of telling children's stories

Issues of power and representation take on another layer of complexity in research with children, and particularly in schools, where adults have both disciplinary and epistemic authority. Many of the ethical issues concerning research with children relate to, and how and whether children are conceptualised as agents. Below, I outline the conception of childhood that underpinned my approach to this research.

Over the past two decades within the sociology of childhood there has been a shift towards viewing children as actors with their own desires and perspectives (Beresford 1997; Hill 1997; Christensen and James 2000). This presents particular dilemmas for adult researchers who claim to 'voice' children's concerns (James 2007). As James (2007) argues, adult researchers are positioned as mediators, interpreters and translators of children's perspectives, hence reinforcing the adults' authority. Furthermore, whatever conception the researcher holds of the child, children's capacity for influence in their lives is practically constrained (Alderson 1995).

Moreover, much existing literature on the ethics of research with children tacitly adopts humanist notions of empowerment, seeking to extend the status of liberal subject to the child (see Alderson 1995; James 2007; Kirk 2007). This runs somewhat counter to the poststructuralist ontologies of the person as existing *within* discursive and social practices. To work from this perspective, however, is not to discount possibilities of children's agency. As discourses are multiple, conflicting and dispersed over space and time, each person is uniquely positioned relative to their influence (Rose 1998). Individual wants,

desires, feelings, urges and so on emerge *through* discursive processes. Nonetheless, taking a post-structuralist perspective does mean questioning whether these dimensions of subjectivity can be represented in a coherent narrative. Agency, from this perspective, is not a singular driving force derived from a rationally formed intention but is fragmented and mobile. From such a perspective, attempts by adult researchers to authentically 'voice' children's perspectives are inherently doomed.

This explanation of agency, however, does not alone sufficiently account for inequalities of power between adults and children. In this, the philosopher Miranda Fricker's (2007) notion of hermeneutical injustice may be useful. Fricker (2007) argues that certain groups are excluded from the production and circulation of concepts, and hence have fewer resources for framing their experiences. To use one of Fricker's examples, women's historical exclusion from the production of knowledge delayed the formulation of a concept of sexual assault, hence precluding women from understanding their experiences in these terms. Similarly, young people are primarily positioned as receivers, rather than producers, of knowledge. This is significant in qualifying the conception of agency presented above, as it acknowledges that available discourses provide differential resources for children making sense of their experiences, and for adults making sense of children's narratives.

Thus, three general premises guided my conception of childhood and informed my approach to research:

1. Relative to adults, children's practical freedom in their lives is restricted, and this is particularly so within schools (Alderson 2005).
2. Relative to adults, children have less practical influence over prevailing 'regimes of truth' than do adults (Foucault 1977).
3. Like adults, children are situated in relation to numerous overlapping cultures, social positionalities and discourses, through which they are able to create new possibilities for understanding.

Though my aim was not the 'accurate' representation of participants' perspectives, I felt that it was imperative to mitigate structural and hermeneutic inequalities where possible in the research. My approach to recruiting participants, outlined earlier, meant that students actively chose to participate in focus groups. Furthermore, through the use of participatory methods, I hoped to open up possibilities for students make sense of their experiences in new ways. Such strategies cannot erase wider social hierarchies that ultimately structure adults' interactions with young people and researchers' interactions with their participants. Yet, by adopting a student-led approach to recruitment I aimed to demonstrate genuine respect for participants, hopefully resulting in more creative conversations, and expanding possibilities for understanding.

4.7 Conclusion

In earlier chapters, I noted that existing research into mindfulness in schools has largely been conducted from a positivist perspective, attempting to 'measure' the efficacy of mindfulness for enhancing wellbeing, concentration or some other desired outcome (e.g. Huppert & Johnson 2010; Kuyken et al 2013). I have also noted that sociological literature

surrounding therapeutic mindfulness and psycho-educational programmes has largely focused on documentary evidence or is theoretical rather than empirically grounded (e.g. Ecclestone 2007; Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Purser 2019; Forbes 2019). As such, little is currently known about what school mindfulness programmes actually teach: what specific practices they instruct in and what ideas they convey. Beyond this, too little is known about how such programmes take shape within the mundane spaces of the classroom, how teachers and students take up or adapt these ideas and practices and how they are shaped by the wider discourses and practices of the school. As such, I have attempted to convince the reader that an ethnographic study of mindfulness in schools can address significant gaps in our understanding of such programmes.

Given the lack of existing sociological insight into school mindfulness programmes, and particularly .b, the ethnographic approach that I adopted enabled me to build an understanding of the programme from a number of angles. This approach was eclectic and pragmatic (Atkinson & Delamont 1995), and included: interviews with .b course developers (2) and teachers (15); participating in .b teacher training (4 days) and attending events and conferences relevant to mindfulness in schools; conducting textual analysis of .b curriculum materials; observing a full syllabus of .b lessons at two schools, and a number of lessons at two other schools (45 hours total); conducting 4 focus groups with a total of 18 students, and 4 additional one-on-one interviews with students.

This methodological approach, moreover, speaks directly to the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter. What I have attempted is to draw from the analytical tools and theoretical insights of post-structuralist thinkers, without resulting in an analysis that is fatalistic, or which reduces all to disciplinary power. Finally, by enabling me to engage meaningfully with the values presented in the programme, the practices that the programme gives rise to, *and* the 'experiences' and insights of those generally excluded from the production of knowledge (particularly young people), this approach is in line with the *critical but constructive* ethical framework I formulated in the previous chapter.

5. Risk and potential of young minds

5.1 Introduction

Perhaps the benefits of mindfulness have been so widely acclaimed that, at least for some, the question of *why* mindfulness should be taught in schools is redundant. So ubiquitous are the claims that practicing mindfulness can 'change our brains', improve concentration and make us happier (Williams & Penman 2011). So substantial seems the evidence for mindfulness to 'enhance wellbeing' (despite the cautionary remarks of researchers) (Gu et al 2015; Chiesa & Serretti 2009). And so obvious is the need for schools to move beyond the narrow, traditional emphasis on attainment to address the 'whole person'; to cultivate thriving individuals and a healthy citizenry (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser 2016). This was a perspective I frequently encountered during the course of my PhD. In casual conversations about the subject of my research, it was generally assumed that my contribution would be about the 'how' of mindfulness in schools (how to implement it? how effective is it?), rather than the 'why?' and the 'what (are the narratives that underpin it)?' Yet, the widespread acceptance of mindfulness as a pedagogic tool itself intimates the pertinence of such an investigation. Just a decade or so ago, the notion of a meditative practice being adopted in mainstream education would seem unlikely, if not absurd. What, then, are the narratives that have been drawn upon to establish such a compelling case for mindfulness in schools? What is the problem that it is intended to solve, and how? And what are the motivations of those who have dedicated time and energy to see the fruition of such a project? These are the questions I hope to shed light on in this chapter.

As a project intended to guide the subjective development of young people, I have argued, mindfulness in schools is inherently ethical: that is to say, the programme functions in part by portraying certain values about the ways of being that are desirable and the nature of the 'good life'. As such, it seems pressing to examine the underlying assumptions about the 'sorts of people' students 'should' and 'should not' be and the sorts of dangers mindfulness training is hoped to avert. The primary sources for this chapter will be my interviews with .b teachers and course developers. In addition, I will draw on my ethnographic research at relevant conferences and the .b teacher training course. When I speak of the 'rationalities' surrounding .b, I am referring to the particular logic that underpins the stated motivations of those involved with developing or delivering the programme. I will attempt to draw out some of the central ideas, as well as the nuances and discontinuities in these various stakeholders' perspectives.

As with earlier secular mindfulness programmes, the discipline that has been most influential over .b is psychology, or rather, various disciplines which fall under the umbrella of 'psy' (Rose 1998). Mindfulness enters schools directly *via* psychology. This is so in a number of ways. Firstly, the translation of mindfulness into 'secular' language is achieved through MBCT, which formed the primary source for the .b curriculum. That is to say, mindfulness as a *therapy* for adults both preceded mindfulness as an educational intervention and provided the grounds for its development. Secondly, educational mindfulness is situated squarely in relation to a modern predicament which is understood in psychological terms. .b is depicted as a tool for training the mind, one which can forfend against psychological suffering, improve wellbeing and enhance focus. And finally, .b is

positioned by interviewees in relation to a broader mental health and wellbeing agenda. By this, participants referred to the mounting concerns amongst educators, policy makers and the general public about the mental health of young people, fears that are given expression and animated within the media.

As I will argue, ideas of psychological suffering, both from mental illness and more general malaise, and of *vulnerability to* suffering have a strong emotive force for those involved with .b's delivery. These ideas were partly informed by an apparent public consensus about an ongoing 'mental health crisis' (Mellin 2009). Interviewees were further assured by the ostensible evidence for declining adolescent mental health and the efficacy of mindfulness techniques. Though two .b teachers had some involvement with Buddhism (one who regularly attended a Buddhist centre and one Buddhist nun), and a number claimed that their personal practice was in some way 'spiritual' (4), participants generally used psychologised and medicalised vocabulary in discussing suffering ('diagnoses', 'symptoms', 'medication' etc.), rather than drawing on Buddhist discourse. Reference to 'scientific research', and particularly 'neuroscientific research' served as a potent rhetorical device to assert the value of, and need for, .b (Sánchez-Allred & Choudhury 2016). However, interviewees were also informed by their claimed experiences of personal struggle and reprieve through mindfulness. A significant proportion of interviewees' own introduction to mindfulness was through experiences of depression, chronic anxiety or burn-out. Here, narratives of personal salvation commingled with ideas of empowerment and self-responsibility, as .b was presented as providing 'tools' for students to navigate adversity.

Somewhat paradoxically, however, interviewees generally resisted the idea that .b is 'therapeutic'. In fact, within the .b training manual, under the title 'what .b is not' it is stated that it is *"not therapy"* (HTT p.2). This position was recurrently emphasised during my .b training and within interviews. The programme is distinguished from therapy in part due to its breadth: its 'universality'. .b was seen as a tool for the mitigation and prevention of mental ill health, but also as enhancing 'positive mental states' and the capacity to achieve personal goals. Implicit within this is the notion of mental health as a spectrum: seen as spanning from 'suffering' to 'flourishing'. As one interviewee put it "when I hear mental health I don't automatically jump to mental ill health, I do think of wellbeing and that ability to thrive and flourish" (Jess). The spaces in between these two poles are characterised as inherently vulnerable: such is the fallible nature of the human psyche, and the ever-increasing risks of the digital age. There was a sense, then, in interviews of a hope that .b could 'bump students up the scale' of mental health, from whatever point they began.

This chapter builds on this scale for its structure. In the section titled *Vulnerability,* I argue that respondents broadly constituted the 'need for' .b in terms of an inherent human vulnerability to suffering and a perception of young people as increasingly at-risk. Subsequently in *Self-Management*, I explore interviewees' discussions of how .b was seen to mitigate vulnerability. I argue that, within this discourse, threats are internalised and individualised as 'psychological risk' that the student learns to manage through .b. Yet, whilst the individual is generally posited as the primary authority in terms of their own self-management, interviewees also depict adults, and educators in particular as having a moral obligation to intervene in children's development to build 'resilience'.

In the final section, *Flourishing,* I will consider the narratives bound up with this term in the discourse surrounding .b. I will attempt to illustrate how discourses of productivity and self-improvement, typical of discourses of the 'entrepreneurial self' (Rose 1992; Brunila 2012; Binkley 2018) sit alongside ideas of gratitude and self-acceptance. However, there was an additional narrative about the ultimate value of the programme. This final strand related to the sense that the flourishing of the individual could be 'scaled up' to wider society or even the planet. Thus, respondents frequently expressed the belief that .b cultivates kinder, less self-interested individuals, potentially capable of tackling the daunting problems of the 21st century. Rather than challenging dominant norms, however, .b appeared to bridge the gap between the economic need for enterprise and the desire for a more compassionate society. I also argue that it is this narrative of a 'greater good' that is partially used to justify the more coercive aspects of .b.

It is not my intention at this point to make judgements as to the validity of the stated motivations and perspectives of those involved with .b. Nor am I, in highlighting the conflicts and tensions within them, attempting to reveal them as asinine or misguided. Rather, I wish to sketch out and illuminate the stage upon which .b comes to play out and the multiple rationalities behind it. In later chapters, this will form part of the basis for examining how .b unfolds in practice, as well as its ethical tensions, dilemmas and implications.

5.2 Vulnerability

> Growing up has never been easy, but we can all recognise the added stress, worry and anxiety created by digital developments that have transformed the way we live. With stories emerging almost daily about the crisis in mental health faced by children and young people, programmes like ours can be life changing….We provide a lifelong toolkit for children...[O]ur materials are based on rigorous research in clinical psychology and neuroscience….We know that if we do not make children's mental health a priority today, the problems we are seeing now...will only get worse. (MiSP 2019b)[8]

This extract, taken from the 'million reasons to support us' page of the MiSP website, neatly encapsulates many of the discourses present in my interviews: the erosion of childhood through digital technologies; the ensuing crisis of youth mental health; the urgency to adopt preventative measures; and the potential for mindfulness to provide a 'tool' for dealing with difficulty. Whilst the degree to which interviewees emphasised these ideas varied, they were an ever-present backdrop to our conversations. That children's wellbeing forms the centre stage of the rationale for .b should not be surprising. As I have previously stated, mindfulness entered the popular Western imagination as a self-help tool and psychological therapy (Wilson 2014). But this extract appeals to our imagination in another sense. In its initial claim, "Growing up has never been easy", it invites the thought of our *own* childhood struggles, before highlighting the further dangers of the modern

[8] This copy on this page of the MiSP website has changed since this analysis was conducted.

world. In its reference to "transformations" in the way we live, the extract alludes to the sense of alienation implicit in much adult discourse surrounding modern technologies (Buckingham 2013). Finally, the extract underscores the import of MiSP's goal. There is a moral weight to the claim "if we do not make children's mental health a priority today…". And we know that "we", the adult reader, are complicit."[T]he problems… will only get worse".

Significantly, the organisational structure of MiSP (as essentially a training body) makes it difficult to ensure centralised control over the programme. Teachers, once they have trained, are ultimately free to interpret .b how they wish. The primary bargaining chip the organisation holds rests on their claim to expertise around educational mindfulness and knowledge of, and connections to, research (particularly to the Oxford Mindfulness Centre and MYRIAD). It is arguably for this reason that there appeared to be a bidirectional relationship between popular narratives about the predicaments of childhood and the problems .b purports to address. For example, the page I cited above was expanded over the course of my research, and the discourses I have highlighted significantly emphasised. MiSP is perceived to be a relevant authority by teachers only to the extent that it continues to address their concerns. Hence, as the language of 'mental health and wellbeing' has become inescapable in discourses of childhood, and as this forms the central avenue through which mindfulness is 'consumed', this language is mirrored in MiSP's positioning of .b. Throughout my interviews with .b teachers, I found that they often paraphrased or referred explicitly to the explanations given during the .b training, information on MiSPs website or teaching materials. Hence, whilst .b is not a singular entity, and whilst interviewees emphasise different hues of this discourse, there appeared to be a relatively coherent logic behind their explanations of .b.

That the above extract is taken from a page which explains MiSP's charitable aims and is intended to garner financial support is telling. The most emotive and compelling reason for mindfulness in schools relates to children's mental health. When one .b teacher told me that people were increasingly curious about his work, I asked what he thought was behind their interest. He replied, "I think a general concern for promoting better mental health...A lot of kids these days are really struggling…I think there's an immediate association with mental health" (Ant). This response is typical of the perspectives presented by interviewees in two ways. Firstly, as I have indicated, in positioning .b in relation to psychological concerns. Secondly, in expressing the firm belief that young people are 'struggling' in greater numbers than ever before.

Mental health is not the only, nor the first, issue that school mindfulness programmes were posited to tackle. Much research around educational mindfulness has focused on issues such as metacognition and attention (Flook et al 2010; Vickery & Dorjee 2016; Sanger & Dorjee 2016). Indeed, during my interview with one of .b's developers, he explained that promoting mental health was one of the three 'buckets' of the benefits of .b: the other two relating to attainment and behaviour. In my interviews with .b teachers however, these latter benefits were largely positioned as secondary. As one interviewee put it "I mean, there is an acknowledgement that you perform your best if you're happy and secure, but I don't think that academic performance is the main driver, I think the main driver is

wellbeing." (Ed). As has been noted elsewhere (Wright 2014), notions of 'mental health' and 'wellbeing' in these conversations were tightly bound together. Despite references to 'wellbeing', however, the perceived proliferation of mental ill health was drawn on most emphatically to highlight .b's importance. Respondents often referred to articles and statistics within the media to emphasise the urgency of addressing young people's mental health. As one .b teacher and course trainer explained:

> I mean we know that stress and anxiety is on the rise. I don't have the figures to hand but just last month *The Guardian* had statistics about the number of antidepressants being prescribed and it's grown… there's something like 500 cases in under tens (Jetsumna).

The emphasis on children's distress and the entanglement of mental health and wellbeing intimates two features of this conception of mental health. Firstly, that mental health is a spectrum of relative contentedness. Secondly, that mental ill health is almost entirely equated with 'suffering'. Throughout interviews and across ethnographic observations, though 'mental health' was inescapable, there were few references to intellectual, developmental or psychiatric conditions. There were of course exceptions to this – usually in relation to how the programme was received by children with autism. Ultimately, however, mental health appeared to signify, at a minimum, the absence of depression, anxiety or other 'emotional disorders'.

.b is, of course, geared towards enhancing 'wellbeing' rather than addressing developmental conditions (dyslexia, for example). Nevertheless, as it is positioned in relation to mental health, it appeared that the discourses surrounding .b came to also *inform* teachers' conceptions of 'child mental health'. These perspectives both feed off and fuel the emotive force of adolescents' 'suffering'. Furthermore, as mental health was configured as a spectrum, notions of suffering often infused the broader picture that respondents presented of adolescence. Interviewees often stated that through constant self-comparison, and over-stimulation, social media and digital technologies had eroded young people's capacity for dealing with difficulty. The modern world was depicted as perilous and young people increasingly fragile:

> I think that increasingly the world is a frantic place and the evidence of child depression, the average age of depression is getting lower and lower and lower. And the pressures that are put on kids and in particular a school like mine where there was academic pressure, parental pressure to do well but then also social media.... There was a frightening statistic when we were on the [.b training] course about how young kids were being treated for depression and they said in the olden days, when I was a kid, if you lived in a safe home when you went home you were safe. And that's not the case anymore, you know they're being bombarded all the time, with social media and pressure to look a certain way and be a certain thing and they never switch off…even down time is stimulating (Joyce).

In addition to the perceived risks posed by social media, teachers who were working at 'high achieving' state schools (Jake), schools located in affluent areas (Mike), grammar schools (Hannah) or within the independent sector (Mark; Joyce) claimed that students

were under significant social and parental pressure to achieve 'successful' exam results, which contributed to the anxiety of "conscientious students" (Hannah) (Walkerdine et al 2001). In both potentially reducing this anxiety and thereby possibly facilitating exam results, the programme could be seen to speak directly to concerns of particularly middle-class parents and educators (Ball 2003; Lucey and Raey 2010). Nonetheless, across discussions with teachers, rates of mental illness and myriad threats of the modern world were drawn on to depict a broader landscape of risk. .b was, as one course developer clarified, "not a clinical intervention" but a "universal preventative measure" (Andrew). The programme can therefore be situated in relation to a particular approach to governance which has been termed 'psychological immunization' (Craig 2007; Wright 2015 see also Pykett et al 2016). As vulnerability is universal, there is a moral imperative for adults to intervene before minor periods of distress snowballed into "medically diagnosable disorders" (Jake).

Moreover, there was a sense from interviewees that due to this increased risk there was need for not only greater provision but also greater surveillance of young people. Participants spoke of giving students wellbeing questionnaires, conducting social media surveys and expanding child protection measures. One Assistant Head explained a digitised system that the school had recently adopted for monitoring safeguarding issues, using a software called CPOMS. The following quote provides a detailed picture of how this software functions and precisely how it accelerates the previous system.

> We are seeing a vast increase in the number of students suffering from various diagnosable mental illnesses so both schools [I have worked in] have used an electronic recording system for safeguarding concerns called CPOMS...I don't know if you're aware of CPOMS or not, it's a child protection online monitoring system....So the idea is really that staff report low level concerns, rather than just '...I've got a concern I have to go and fill out a form' they have electronic access to it and they're just encouraged to report any concern that they've got and they can just log an entire sentence like 'this child's come to see me and they're really worried about this', or just things like 'I've noticed they're really scruffy and they're always hungry'. Just any kind of low level observation...it takes a while to get it going but once they're all reporting sort of low level concerns, what I can see is…a scatter graph I can see patterns of behaviour and concerns… and within that we can see obviously mental health related concerns. So of the current population of 1300 students, there's over a hundred already that I've got ongoing mental health concerns at the moment (Jake).

On their website, CPOMS claims that 8500 schools are now using their software and boasts it can enable senior leaders to "produce reports on vulnerable pupil groups...at the touch of a button." (CPOMS 2019). My intention here is not to argue that such surviellence programmes are self-evidently 'bad'. I do, however, want to illustrate how such technologies are implicated not only in the *monitoring* of mental health but also in the production of what 'mental health' is understood to be, and in the broader construction of childhood and adolescence. Such technologies function by a circular logic that *can only* reinforce the rationale for their own need. The inadvertent effects of these programmes are inevitably to *produce* an ever more detailed image of adolescents as vulnerable in as much

as they claim to protect them (see Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Furedi 2013). As this same respondent explained later in the conversation, the reporting of 'low level' observations served to highlight some ambiguities around the boundaries of mental health:

> ...if we're not careful now because of the increased coverage of mental health issues often as not we have life events that are being defined as mental health issues, so we'll have a member of staff reporting something 'this is a mental health concern', well it isn't...you know a grandparent has died for example and grief is part of the process and actually that doesn't have to be a mental health issue (Jake).

Thus, as mental health is tied to suffering, a vastly expanded range of experiences come to be perceived under the umbrella of mental health. Hence, when asked about the sort of things young people were dealing with, interviewees commonly mentioned things such as friendship issues and exam stress. Occasionally bound up with these discussions were issues such as bad manners, problem solving skills and fidgeting. As such, it seems that one implication of the notion of mental health as a 'spectrum' is a greater vigilance for deviance from what are perceived as optimal styles of behaviour. As Jake explains, once more:

> We need to do something about the growing rise in mental health related concerns or mental illness... You know that the evidence isn't going away...And so we need to do something about how to help young people help themselves. Give them some kind of life skills…Whatever the cause are I don't really know but it's definitely something has changed in the last five or six years in particular. And I noticed…there's no delayed gratification anymore…the young people are consuming media in batches and in isolation so and we're noticing that the Year 7s are coming in and...I don't think they know they're being rude, but they kind of want what they want and their attention span is a lot shorter (Jake).

During my analysis, I began to note down examples of what appeared to be an extensive and continually expanding 'mental health bureaucracy' within schools. Beyond .b, this could include: emotional first aiders, counsellors, mental health action groups, wellbeing mentors, pastoral support workers, student mental health ambassadors and student mindfulness ambassadors, peer mentors, safeguarding leads, and occasionally on-site clinical psychologists, in addition to the wider network of statutory psychological support including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and educational psychologists. Many interviewees explained the necessity of expanding such support as a result of increasing demand and the extensive waiting lists for CAMHS. As one respondent explained: "It really is a need because CAMHS is bursting at the seams and you've got to be almost beyond help to get into CAMHS. So the more tools we give young people to look after their mental health the better ." (Jetsumna).

The image of 'the vulnerable child' has been a potent and persistent figure in the popular imagination. Over the course of the 20th and 21st century, childhood has been subject to numerous near-existential threats, continually ensuring the need for protection on the part of adults (Buckingham 2000). Present concerns around a 'youth mental health crisis' are

therefore viewed by some as the most recent incarnation in a long line of moral panics about childhood (Kehily 2010). Others cite diagnostic statistics for mental illnesses as solid proof of an ensuing epidemic (Patel et al 2007). During the earlier stages of my research, I naively hoped I might solve this mystery - a sort of fortuitous bi-product of the thesis. When interviewees mentioned the issue of mental health, I asked about their personal experience in schools. I found that amongst many interviewees there was some sensitivity to the difficulties in tracing 'levels' of mental illness. Yet, amongst many, there was also a relative sense of conviction about the 'unmet need' in schools. As one respondent, an employee on the MYRIAD project, explained:

> ...I know in schools there are two camps, [one] who are saying we're trying to medicalise students who are just dealing with anxiety and stress, the normal stresses of everyday life. But I think there does seem to be a real groundswell of real difficulty in schools of schools being able to manage the symptoms that they are seeing.... That's certainly been my impression as I'm going around...I've spoken to a lot of schools across the country who are struggling with the symptoms that they're coming across in schools and not having really anywhere to go with that (Jess).

What became apparent was that trying to uncover the 'reality' of the state of child mental health in interviews was as futile as hoping to find 'it' in meta-reviews and statistical records. While interviewees claimed that they believed there had been changes in recent years, they frequently expressed the same uncertainties I felt myself. Often, certain respondents said, 'I think there's been a change' or 'it seems so', before acknowledging 'increasing awareness' and 'willingness to report' or referring vaguely to statistics in the media. This was sometimes the case even for those who, at other times, declared certainty about the decline in youth mental health. As such, it became clear that the actualities of children's experiences were not distinguishable from the social web in which representations of childhood are assembled and disseminated. This is *not* to say that the suffering respondents referred to was not 'real'. In contrast, I have no doubt that many respondents frequently encountered young people in distress. One interviewee recounted the tragic story of a boy in her tutor group who had committed suicide whilst on the waiting list for CAMHS. This story is a reminder that suffering; however we define or diagnose it, is very 'real' (see also Lears 2015).

Significantly, many respondents, as well as many of those I spoke with during my .b training, had begun to practice mindfulness to alleviate their own experiences of distress. The following experience, recounted by one interviewee, was not untypical:

> I'd always suffered from depression since I was a teenager...and then my last bout of depression about 7 years ago...my GP said 'oh there's this mindfulness course that you might be interested in doing'…she was very persistent and sort of said 'there's a lot of evidence to suggest that is very helpful'. So I went along to the course and did it, quite sceptical, but then found that actually it was making a difference...I found that actually it got me out of this cycle which was really quite amazing. So then I thought well I have to teach this to the students where I was

> working...I wanted to be able to stop them falling into the same trap that I had (Mike).

Not all of my interviewees were forthcoming about their personal histories. Recognising the sensitive nature of the issue, I did not always ask respondents why they started practicing mindfulness. However, of my fourteen interviews with .b teachers, three explained that they had come to mindfulness through experiences of depression; two due to chronic anxiety; and two more as a result of burnout or work-related stress. Such respondents often claimed that mindfulness had helped them during these times of difficulty. Thus, the discourse of 'vulnerability' that was so prominent throughout discussions was not an abstract idea based on heresy. Rather, for many, it appeared to be grounded in lingering memories of pain and an acknowledgement of the inevitable vicissitudes of life.

When I asked one respondent whether practicing mindfulness had changed his perspective on things, he replied "Oh without a doubt...[it's given me] a much deeper understanding of what it means to be human. And that all of us have problems in our life. And there are different ways of being able to deal with them" (Ant). Thus, whilst the modern world is rife with danger and children are particularly at risk, vulnerability is not confined to childhood. Rather, adversity is inevitable. Mental health was therefore positioned not only as the absence of disorder, but also as reflecting the individuals' responses to, and ability to cope with, adversity. In turn, mental illness was widely depicted as an incapacity or failure to appropriately manage difficulty, and the resulting experience of excessive or incapacitating 'suffering':

> …mental illness is when...young people or adults become unable to cope with those life issues and then that has an adverse effect on the rest of their lives and their overall wellbeing which could spiral into a medically diagnosable condition like depression or anxiety…being mentally healthy is being able to recover from pressures and stresses and life issues which are a part of life (Jake).

As mental health is bound not simply to developmental and intellectual norms but to relative contentedness, and as 'bad things happen', to be mentally healthy entails a form of reflexive self-management. Within this discourse, the implicit influence of particularly modern interpretations of Buddhist notions of *dhukka* appear to intertwine with a contemporary discourse of psychological risk (Binkley 2016). Whereas within traditional Buddhist schools of thought suffering itself is considered inherent to sentient life (Gethin 1998), within the discourses surrounding .b there is an emphasis not so much on the inevitability of suffering as the universality of vulnerability to psychological distress. Vulnerability is endemic to humanity. Hence .b is posited as providing 'tools' that the individual may draw on to support them in times of difficulty: as a strategy for mitigating vulnerability. The following extract is taken from my interview with a .b teacher who is also a Buddhist nun:

> You know, there's so much of our external world that we can change but shit is always going to happen to every human being on the planet so what you gonna do then? And that choice between responding and reacting, you know, it comes back

> to that. So we can either do what we've always done and have a knee jerk reaction, which ultimately is going to cause us two problems - then you've got the shit that's happened and you've got a response...Or we can see it as an opportunity to, we talk about creativity in Buddhism…[a] creative state of mind which is a resourced state of mind. So you might not be able to change the first - sometimes it's talked about the first and second arrow. So the first arrow is what happened, you can't change that, and the second arrow is the attitude we approach it with (Jetsumna).

Jetsumna draws upon a popular Buddhist story from the *Salatha Sutta* to explain that we do not have control over the world, but we can control our responses, and these responses can either exacerbate or ease our suffering. The student of .b is implicitly depicted as both an archer, armed with a second arrow that is marked for self-sabotage, and a risk-manager, whose primary remit of agency is their 'internal world'.

5.3 Self-management

One outcome of this configuration of vulnerability is the moral imperative for the development of children's 'skills' of 'self-management'. Adversity is largely unavoidable: beyond the remit of control. Suffering, in turn, is internalised and individualised as 'psychological risk'. When I asked whether she thought .b was effective in achieving its aims, Jetsumna went on to explain "yes because you're giving them the opportunity to develop the toolbox which they can use when they find themselves in times of difficult mental states or just experiencing difficulty". Recurrently throughout interviews, respondents used language that could have been drawn directly from the discourse of risk management ('regulation', 'management', 'strategies', 'resilience') as well as ideas about proficiency and capacity ('skill', 'effectiveness', 'tools'). As Jess explained, reflecting on her experience of working with children in a CAMHS unit "some of our children weren't able to get out of the house and the techniques were really helpful to help pupils to re-engage... this idea of regulation, self-management...it was this idea of helping the children to self-regulate and to self-manage their own emotions".

The intensification of rationalised management of risk in late modernity has been highlighted in a number of key scholarly works of the past three decades (Beck, Lash & Wynne 1992; Giddens 1999; Lupton 1999). Arguably, the increasing emphasis on children's vulnerability to mental illness and the conceptualisation of mental health in terms of 'management', illustrates one incarnation of intensified risk management. Here, educators are positioned as managing risks to society as a whole, those associated with the costs of mental illness and the 'health of the nation'. Children, in turn, must play their own role in the management of psychological risk: developing resilience by learning to manage emotions, adopting an optimistic attitude and using strategies to de-stress.

During a conference that I attended on the subject of mindfulness in schools, talks by relevant experts in a range of domains related to mindfulness were interspersed with 'voices of experience' from teachers, parents and pupils from schools around the country. These included teachers and students who had prepared a short statement to explain how the .b curriculum had benefited them. Within these talks, speakers often explained how

mindfulness helped them to manage their emotions or to manage anger. Given the focus and positioning of the conference, these statements appeared to be intended - to put it crudely - to illustrate that .b 'works'. As such, they provide valuable insight into the popular interpretation of what mindfulness in schools is intended to achieve. Thus, central to the logic of .b is a sense of the individual as engaged in an ongoing management of self. The programme's role is to facilitate this management such that the individual can minimise suffering associated with adversity, enhance positive emotions and reach personal goals. In what follows, I will expand upon this logic, and illustrate how .b is considered to achieve this end.

During interviews, respondents frequently made comparisons between mental health and physical health. They usually did this to illustrate the variability in mental health: that it represents a broad spectrum of experience. At times, participants depicted the scale in terms of degrees of happiness. "You can have good mental health, where you're in a good place and your brain's functioning efficiently and you're feeling good about stuff" (Joyce). At other times, the spectrum related not simply only to feelings but what was commonly referred to as 'resilience'. This latter understanding incorporates notions of psychological risk in that there is a recognition that "everybody will have their ups and downs" (Joyce). Optimum mental health is therefore not positive feeling but the ability to "deal with [difficult] events and thought processes...effectively" (Jake). As one .b teacher explained "mental health is something which should be...maintained rather than fixed when it's broken" (Angela).

Such respondents explained that, just as with physical health, there are things we can do to maintain our mental health and wellbeing, and mindfulness is positioned as one such 'strategy'. During these discussions, teachers often drew analogies with physical education or with learning about nutrition. Educating students in ways of dealing with emotions appeared to be a logical extension of the various disciplines which guide ways of caring for one's own person.

> So you can teach diet and nutrition, you can teach exercise and the benefit of exercise, [and] you can teach the benefit of dealing with stresses in certain ways. And I think mindfulness is part of that...actually the mindfulness course for me is really about teaching about how to deal effectively with stress and anxious thoughts and also to enhance your attention and to notice when you get distracted (Jake).

How then, does .b achieve these goals? What is it about mindfulness, and .b in particular, that teaches students to 'deal effectively with stress' and to 'enhance attention'? In relation to this question, I found that there is a relatively formulaic logic, one which builds upon understandings within 'secular' adult mindfulness courses and self-help literature (Wilson 2014). There are three means by which practicing mindfulness was depicted as alleviating suffering and facilitating wellbeing. These are: by focusing on the present moment and reducing rumination; by enhancing positive emotions; and at 'deeper levels' of practice, by enabling insight into patterns of mind.

Being in the present moment

During interviews, when asked about the value of .b, one of the most strongly and consistently emphasised benefits was the capacity of the practice to reduce worry. Given the particular manifestation of the perceived threats to children's mental health (over-stimulation, social comparison, cyber-bullying etc.) this would seem to be a significant advantage. This benefit is linked to one of the core ethical claims of .b: that the 'present moment is all we have', that it is somehow more real and more valuable than 'thoughts' and 'memories'. This is an ethic that I will explore in more detail in Chapter 6. Here I simply wish to demonstrate how this logic plays out. The following quote from an interviewee, in response to me asking 'how she explains mindfulness' is particularly illustrative:

> So I do go for the Jon Kabat-Zinn, you know... paying attention in the present moment, non-judgmentally...I do like to talk about the fact that...often we're brains on sticks and, and this is a way of connecting with our bodies and [to] notice any signs and clues that our bodies [are] trying to give us about how we are today...and I do like the idea of the mental time-travel so I say, you know, we do lots of mental time travel. You might look like you're here but actually you're either thinking about something in the past or worrying about something in the future, so this is a way of bringing you to this moment (Hannah)

Like Hannah, a number of interviewees explained that continually returning the mind to the present and avoiding judgement of our experience reduces rumination. It was explained that this is beneficial both in the immediate - by interrupting our 'mental stories', thereby alleviating anxiety, and in the long term - as the practitioner trains the 'muscle of attention' and so is less likely to worry.

Furthermore, mindfulness is linked to *"connecting with our bodies"* or turning our attention to physical sensations. Hannah explains that, in doing so, we may notice clues about *"how we are"*. The implication here is that feelings provide signs as to mental states. This reflects a particular understanding of emotions as partly comprising of somatic processes, which has, in modern interpretations of meditation, been perceived as a key point of accord between Buddhist philosophy and contemporary cognitive neuroscientific research (McMahan 2008; see also LeDoux 1998; Damasio 1999, Thompson and Varela 2001). Moreover, the identification of emotions via the recognition of physical feelings allows the self to make itself an object of reflection. Imperatively, in this conception meditation is situated as enabling the self to realise a central ideal of modernity (Taylor 1989), one that has been accelerated in advanced liberal societies (Rose 1990; 1999). That is, the ideal of a self that may, through discipline and self-reflection, create itself in an image of its apparent choosing, to make rational choices to shape its life according to its own desires (Rose 1990).

What is also accelerated within the particular logic of .b, however, is the inherent tension within this conception of the liberal, self-creating agent. That is, that the individual's freedom is tied first and foremost to their creation in the image of a person who acts in socially appropriate ways, a person constrained by the norms and values of their society. The reflexive, agentive self is thus so only because of those norms that constrain her in a

world that she must perceive in terms of a series of 'choices' (Rose 1999). This tension is heightened in .b for two reasons. Firstly, because as an educational programme its participants are governed by behavioural codes that are more explicit and that are designed to shape particular kinds of persons. Secondly, because, as we will see below, it is bound up with an intensification of interest and educational investment in children's dispositions and emotions.

Cultivating positive emotions

Beyond the role of training the attention, some respondents explained how .b helped to cultivate 'positive emotions'. Here there was a sense that positive feelings could provide a counterweight or latent resource that children could draw upon during times of difficulty. During my interview with Jetsumna, she explained the importance of emphasising 'flourishing', as opposed to simply the avoidance of negative feelings:

> It's like...we all have this negativity bias so if something happens that's bad we think that's the truth, that's what life is really like and ok the Buddha did say life is suffering but, you know, that's more to do with our mental craving. But equally, so how do we reset that negativity bias and it is to reset that positive emotion. You know, the fact that, when something good happens we can just enjoy it and savour it and feel gratitude and be open hearted and love and receive love and all of these things that really make us healthy, happy human beings...That is what really gives us more of a balance against times of difficulty, we can weather them better because we're buoyed up by the positivity, positive emotion (Jetsumna).

Jetsumna's explanation reflects a particular interpretation of Buddhist ideas that has brought them into contact with positive psychology. In this formulation, meditative practice is geared towards happiness in this world, as opposed to renunciation of this-worldly pleasures and the achievement of Enlightenment (knowledge of 'ultimate truth') (Gethin 1998; McMahan 2008). Hence, the inclusion within .b of mindfulness practices of 'savouring' and 'gratitude'. Nonetheless, as mindfulness moves to a pedagogic context, there is arguably another, subtle shift in this narrative. That is, here, the cultivation of positive emotions come to be explicitly tied to the notions of 'self-management' that I have explored. Emotions come to be more specifically a site of intervention, an aspect of self that should be guided (by the individual and via educational intervention) in line with desirable norms. An extension of this logic can be seen in the extract below, in which one interviewee explains to me how she administered wellbeing questionnaires to her students before and after .b.

> I did give them a kind of well-being/happiness questionnaire before we did the course and then I did it again after we did the course and there was marked improvement. It was their perception of how happy they were…So there were questions about how they felt about school work and there was a spectrum of very happy, unhappy and they could put themselves on a line. How they get on with their peers, all sorts of questions about general school kiddy-type things that they had to do. And interestingly, they were all pretty happy in the first place [laughs]…I

did say to them I'm not going to give you your individual scores but we're going to work together to see. And the class average went up! (Joyce).

Whilst the ostensible role of such questionnaires is to *monitor* students 'wellbeing' (and certainly monitoring is one dimension) they arguably serve an additional function. Such measures carry subtle messages: it is better to be happy; mindfulness is supposed to make you happy; your happiness is being monitored by people in positions of authority. Certainly, my interviews suggested that .b involved a shifting away from a model that posits attainment as education's paramount objective, at least for teachers involved with the programme. Yet, though the 'ends' may have shifted, the fundamental structure of education remains the same. This is, I would argue, far beyond the influence of MiSP, and by and large, of .b teachers. Nevertheless, as mindfulness is re-packaged as an educational intervention via .b, and as it is interpreted by teachers in different school contexts, it is (re)configured in line with their assumptions about their role and the purpose of education. Hence, positive emotions and the self-management of wellbeing, when situated within the educational remit, are subject to monitoring and evaluation.

As with other aspects of education, this monitoring and evaluation is at least as much about monitoring the monitors as it is about monitoring students. Schools are obligated to facilitate children's development and therefore evaluations are regularly undertaken by inspection bodies to indicate how effectively the school is achieving this end. As I have noted within the literature review, mindfulness programmes follow a long line of initiatives in recent years that have explicitly focused on emotional literacy and related skills. Whilst the cultivation of certain kinds of citizens is woven into the project of education (Rose 1990), some have argued that the present emphasis on emotions reflects a new interest in the molecular level of the subject (Gagen 2015). Gagen, for example, argues that this new focus is facilitated by developments in neuroscience and its growing influence on education policy. Advances in technologies for visualising and analysing the brain have led to new understandings of brains as amenable to influence throughout the life-course, particularly during adolescence (Blakemore & Choudhury 2006). These ideas surfaced within interviews: as references to a brain that is malleable to influence by the self, through self-discipline and reflexivity, and by others, as a more calculated strategy to guide development. In the following extract, Jetsumna is talking to me about MiSPs primary school programme 'Paws b':

Jetsumna: I think it's so powerful for a young person to understand: I do this not because there's something wrong with me or because I'm stupid or bad or something it's just the way my brain's wired and actually I can do something different. I make another choice which is going to kick in another different part of my brain so I just think that's a very powerful message to have really.

Interviewer: So do you think it, it works like a metaphor or it works-?

Jetsumna: I think it works literally you know literally getting them to understand...I mean there's a story where… there's this kid went up to the teacher and said…I wanted to hit him Miss and that was my amygdala but then I stopped, and I did a Paws B and that was my prefrontal cortex or something like this

The 'power' of understanding the brain, as Jetsumna explains, is that it absolves us from guilt: it naturalises the behaviour. Yet, understanding the brain opens up the possibility for our rational intervention into these natural processes. In response to my question 'do you think it works like a metaphor?' Jetsumna clarifies that it works literally. In the story that follows, the child is presented as wielding agency both over their behaviour and their brain (Choudhury & Moses 2016; Sánchez-Allred & Choudhury 2016). Nonetheless, whilst at times the child was presented as the ultimate authority over their brain, as in the above, they were also, at other times, construed as brains-under-construction through education. In this latter formulation, .b is presented as a 'tool' not only to children themselves but to schools (and perhaps governments) for the shaping of young brains. As Andrew, one of the developers of .b, explained:

> I mean….one can make a case that younger minds, younger brains their habits are less ingrained perhaps than with adults. That neuroplasticity is at its maximal stage and that getting mindfulness into primary schools and secondary schools feels like that's a time when you have a great deal of impact on shaping people's life habits. So one could say that is the most precious or the greatest opportunity is to shape young minds, or to give them tools to shape their own minds (Andrew).

In his closing remark 'to shape young minds, or to give them tools to shape their own minds' Andrew stumbles upon this core tension: who is being shaped and who is doing the shaping?

5.4 Flourishing

Early in my research, I noticed the frequency of the term 'flourishing' on the MiSP website and promotional materials. It was a term that frequently arose within interviews. It struck me as an interesting word: it seemed compelling, emotive and intuitively good. Often, it appeared that interviewees used it in this way: to point to the irrefutable value of the programme. Similarly to the threat of suffering, the image of children's (potential) 'flourishing' appeared to provide a positive driving force for many of those involved with the development and delivery of .b. Whilst respondents situated the import of the programme in relation to concerns about mental health, they explained that a focus on this alone was too narrow. Often, interviewees noted that senior leaders and other teachers tended to assume that .b was only for *"children who need it" (Jennifer).* In contrast, interviewees argued that the programme was not simply palliative or preventative but was beneficial for students across the spectrum of mental health:

> There was a danger that we were slipping towards a deficit model you know 'mindfulness is there to solve your problems' when actually it's not. Actually mindfulness is there to help you flourish, to get more out of life (Mike).

Thus, the compelling yet hazy notion of flourishing could be seen to encompass the more positive psychological benefits of .b and, more broadly, apical states of mental health and wellbeing. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the educational context, bound up with discussions of flourishing were references to performance in exams, sports or arts. It was often

explained that the practice of mindfulness could help to improve attention and concentration, which are "the currency of the classroom" (Andrew). .b was thought to facilitate the individual in achieving their 'potential' in school work and extra-curricular activities by improving focus. Beyond this, however, the practice was thought to aid students in "achieving [their] best" (Jennifer) by alleviating stress:

> I mean you know there's obviously the attainment… but what does attainment mean? Is it just ability to focus or is it having the mental fortitude to even get into an exam in the first place, to calm and steady themselves, I mean what we say is broad flourishing…it's not at all about fixing somebody but allowing them to flourish, so things like music, the arts, sports anxiety things like that (Jetsumna).

Thus, stress and anxiety present an impediment to children's achievement and may prevent them reaching their true potential. Here again, ideas around stress were frequently illustrated in neurological and evolutionary terms. A number of respondents explained that these reactions that have been *"programmed through evolution" (Ant)* to keep us safe and are underpinned by neurological processes:

> We've had quite a few stories of kids having panic attacks in exams or they've had what we call 'brain freeze', where they just can't think of an answer when they know they know it. And then they just breathe, drop attention to the feet. ..restore the connection with the prefrontal cortex and bingo off they go again (Mark).

In Mark's explanation, the cultural trope of 'brain freeze' is reified within processes in the brain. Moreover, the meditative practice enables the student to regain agency over the brain, to overcome a natural stress reaction that is detrimental to their success. In doing so, .b is seen as helping students to meet the demands of academic pressure. Nevertheless, such pressures were also widely presented as one of the *dangers* to children's wellbeing against which .b was hoped to protect. As Mark continued:

> …So there's a sort of cognition aspect to it that schools are interested in 'cause it might improve their results, but that we're obviously cautious about because it's exams that are causing the anxiety in the first place. So there's a double-edged sword with that one (Mark)

The frustration with what was often called the 'assessment culture' of education was a frequent theme of conversations amongst teachers at my .b training course. There was a sense from many teachers that .b could provide for more valuable lessons than academic studies. For example, a number of teachers who spoke at the conference I attended in the summer of 2018 said they were more concerned about children's emotional skills than their grades. One interviewee told me how he had given up his role (and salary) as a head of department to take a position as a learning support assistant (LSA), in order to teach mindfulness full time. He explained that:

> School culture has gone away from kindness and compassion…towards criticism, feeling inadequate, not being good enough. Not being good enough is one of the reasons I stopped being a secondary school teacher because I can see .b there as

> easing the problem that so many young people are facing, and yet I was part of the problem… I was part of this system which to my mind was making children feel not very good, making children feel that they weren't ever going to make the standards that were expected of them (Mike).

In Mike's explanation, .b is a counterweight to the 'culture of criticism', the emphasis on standards and striving, within education. This positioning of .b as an antidote to the detrimental impacts of a culture which functions on the basis of testing, grading and ranking sits uneasily with its positioning as a tool that enables students to rise to such demands. Whilst respondents were often sensitive to this tension, ideas of achievement were almost always present in discussions of flourishing and of .b's ultimate benefits. This may be seen to reflect not only the structures of education, but the fundamental difficulty of conceptualising ideas of 'living well' outside of socially recognised success.

Whilst the notion of flourishing appeared to be intimately related, in complex ways, to that of success, they were not reducible to each other. Rather, at other times, flourishing was presented as the capacity to call into question the very standards by which we are socially judged. In this sense, flourishing was not simply an 'upward growth' along the axes of societal expectations, but a 'looking inwards' to discover what we truly want from our lives.

> I guess…in a deeper way, what I try to do with the young people is to get them to really question what is genuinely meaningful in life. You know is it, do they really want to spend their life chasing after money and fame and the things that our consumerist society suggests that we should value or is there something actually else that's more important to them than that? (Tom).

For Tom, there is a 'deeper' lesson from the programme, which involves a form of self-questioning: to recognise our true personal values rather than those of consumerist society. In part, Tom's explanation may be seen to reflect a popular interpretation of meditation as "connecting with what's going on inside" (Jennifer) (see also McMahan 2008). The person contains an 'inner world' that is unique and yet not fully knowable to them (Taylor 1989). Such ideas take form within a number of cultural strands that have influenced modern interpretations of mindfulness: in psychoanalysis, as drives and urges stored within the unconscious (see Fromm 1960); and in the alternative spiritualities, Theosophy and the New Age movement as the notion of 'true self' (McMahan 2008). More fundamentally, these ideas reflect a strand within modern thought in which the self is perceived as the site of moral reasoning (Taylor 1989). The self comes to rely on its own 'moral compass' and as such, is liberated from external moral authorities. Thus, while at times .b is presented as enabling students to flourish *in terms of* societal expectations, at other times it is arguably construed as a means of 'deconditioning' from the more pestiferous narratives of our time.

There is an additional way in which this discourse of flourishing infers a liberation. Respondents often spoke of the practice of mindfulness as enabling greater control of emotions. Gaining freedom from emotional impulses was linked to a capacity to make rational choices that support one's wellbeing and personal goals: "giving them tools where they can choose how they want, they want to be, rather than react, is a really powerful thing [so] they could take charge of their own wellbeing." (Jetsumna). Here, flourishing is related

to proficiency at the forms of self-administration I discussed earlier. Moreover, as it is derived from 'self-management', flourishing is not reliant on external conditions, rather it is about the individual maximising their wellbeing regardless of their circumstances:

> I suppose the vision for dot b is that it, it is.. something which kids in schools remember learning as, sort of, one of the most useful things they'd learn… which allows them to feel at one level sort of anchored in the chaos of youth but also flourishing…in whatever circumstance they find themselves. So it's giving them choice, it's giving them freedom to choose their response… in whatever circumstances they find themselves (Mark).

Thus, flourishing appears to be a state of perfect autonomy: unconstrained by material circumstances, external expectations and one's own emotional volatility. It is part a capacity for rational reflexivity, overcoming obstacles and reaching personal goals, and part an ineffable sense of living a 'truer', more meaningful life. In some senses, then, flourishing could be seen as the full realisation of advanced liberal notions of freedom:

> …the problem of freedom now comes to be understood in terms of the capacity of an individual to establish an identity through shaping a meaningful everyday life. Freedom is seen as autonomy, the capacity to realise ones desires in one's secular life, to fulfil one's potential through one's endeavours, to determine the course of one's own existence through acts of choice (Rose 1999 p.84).

This conception of freedom infuses therapeutic discourses that have structured contemporary interpretations of mindfulness (perhaps epitomised in concepts such as 'self-actualisation'). This emphasis on a self-creating, self-expressing, self-discovering self, that is pivotal to therapeutic cultures has been criticised by some as promoting a culture of narcissism (Lasch 2018). Moreover, it has been noted that these ideas stand in notable contrast to Buddhist conceptions of *anatta* or no-self: of the self as a delusion and as the source of all suffering (Purser 2019; Forbes 2019). Such tensions were noted by Mark, who explicitly noted the divergence between Buddhist and 'secular' mindfulness in relation to ideas about the self. Yet, despite awareness of this tension, the difficulty of conceptualising the 'benefits of mindfulness' outside of notions of individuality and selfhood are apparent. As Mark continues:

> You get kids who just intuitively understand that there's something richer, deeper, fuller, living, being fully yourself, that end of the spectrum comes into it. Less transactional and more about identity. I'm not sure identity's the right word, about, well identity and agency are in there as words but it's more about feeling fully human, about being truly yourself, about being grounded, anchored (Mark).

Here, Mark dances between ideas of identity and humanness. It seems that the two are intimately related. To flourish is to at once feel 'fully human', whilst simultaneously 'truly yourself'. The interweaving of notions of individuality, freedom and universal humanity is a common theme within modern humanistic religions and alternative spiritualities (Woodhead and Heelas 2000). Within this discourse, 'humanness' is largely perceived to be beyond, or beneath, culture: an essential nature which connects us all (Woodhead,

Partridge and Kwanami 2003). Such ideas are evident in contemporary interpretations of 'Buddha nature': as our 'true' nature, as connected with all life and as fundamentally 'good' (McMahan 2008). A number of respondents explained that mindfulness *"is infused with a sense of kindness, compassion and ethics"* (Andrew), and that through frequent practice, people became more considerate of others and their surroundings. As such, beyond the emphasis on individual freedom, there was a sense that the benefits of mindfulness could be 'scaled up' to wider society and even the planet. Whilst not all respondents spoke of the more global benefits of the practice, for some, the notion of a 'greater good' appeared to be a strong driving force:

Ant:	Even though I earn my living teaching mindfulness, I don't teach mindfulness because I can earn a lot of money… I think it has a much wider purpose. I think it's just good for humanity, if you like. And the more people we can get practicing mindfulness, maybe the better place the planet will be.
Interviewer:	In what way will the planet be better?
Ant:	Well… there's a very strong link to compassion and self-compassion. And I think that if people are using practices that develop and cultivate compassion that it's almost unavoidable that there will be a knock-on effect in society.

Both at conferences and at my .b teacher training, environmental degradation and political turmoil were common themes of conversations. Often, teachers and trainees expressed their hope that learning mindfulness could prepare young people to deal with global problems: to resist the urges of interminable consumption, to lessen self-judgement and judgement of others, and to counter a politics of hate with compassion. One interviewee, Tom, told me how he had given up his previous position within an environmental charity and his work as an activist to focus on teaching mindfulness:

> …and the more I've gotten into [mindfulness] the more I've realised that there is a growing…school of thought, or even economists now are arguing that actually probably one of the most useful…approaches for climate change and sustainability is in fact mindfulness, because people who practice become more content, they consume less, they are more aware of their impact on other people. They are more aware of their impact on the environment, they are more likely to be vegetarian, they're just more aware in general (Tom).

Indeed, just over half of interviewees discussed wider societal benefits of mindfulness in schools, which were generally explained as resulting from greater social awareness, empathy and ethical behaviour of those who learn the practice. For some of those interviewed, then, teaching .b appeared to be not simply a route to success and fulfilment of the individual, but to an ethical global transformation, one child at a time.

5.5 Conclusion

During interviews and within my ethnographic research, I heard frequently about the obstacles .b teachers faced in implementing .b. Schools lacked funding, senior leadership

lacked will, and mindfulness carried too much baggage: as fluffy, *"hippy-dippy" (Jennifer),* or simply *"not a priority" (Hannah).* It is important to note, then, that in spite of the widespread acclaim surrounding mindfulness, those I spoke with were often fighting against the tide to 'bring mindfulness' into schools they were working with or in. They had taken part in training courses in their own time, often paid from their own pockets, and frequently had worked many additional hours after school and in lunch times to deliver the syllabus outside of timetabled lessons. These respondents all had their own histories that led them to believe so strongly in mindfulness that could not be reduced to a single narrative. Amongst these discussions, I heard stories of personal salvation, of resolute faith in scientific evidence, of fears around the pace of social change and expressions of hope for a better future.

There were continuous strands of logic that threaded through these conversations, ideas informed by and largely epitomized within, MiSP trainings and promotional materials, which formed a core reference of 'expertise'. These ideas fed from a particular understanding of childhood and of humanity that reflected a bricolage of cultural strands: in which Buddhist ideas are interpreted in-line with liberal ideals of personhood, popular understandings of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, and common-sense ideas around risk and social change. Through these narratives emerges a child that is inherently vulnerable, yet who simultaneously possesses the capacity for ultimate agency over their life and their wellbeing. It is through the personal administration of subjectivity, enabled by mindfulness practice, that the self averts the psychological risks of the modern world and steers towards optimal states of 'flourishing'. That the child is conceived in terms of such states of potential (the *dangers of* suffering, the *potential for* flourishing) reflects broader ideals of childhood as a site of 'becoming': situated in reference to what might be as opposed to what is (Steedman 1990). This becoming is not limited to individual growth, but is extrapolated outwards to encompass society, at times even humanity, as a whole.

Underpinning these ideas, is a notion of humanity as joined in a way that runs deeper than culture: through evolution, the materiality of our biology and brains, and through our 'essential nature'. There is a sense that both personal development and wider human progress are characterised by the enhancement of agency. Thus, .b is largely positioned in terms of augmenting the individuals' control over the self (through the provision of 'skills', 'tools' and 'strategies'). The dangers facing humanity, in turn, are largely presented either as resulting from a lack of restraint (as with unbridled consumption and climate change), or at least as potentially mitigated through the cultivation of discipline (as with digital technologies and advertising). Childhood, then, is a site of potential for our collective thriving or entropy. The child must thus be worked upon, and must be enlisted in working upon itself, to realise the ultimate freedom of self in service of the good of all.

6. Pedagogy of the self

6.1 Introduction

> What we hope to do is give you the skill of understanding what is happening in this amazing mind/body complex. Much of the time will simply be spent...simply OBSERVING...investigating, exploring how this mind and body relate to each other.
> (Teachers script, Introductory lesson .b p.11)

In the analysis that follows, I examine how students of .b are taught to understand and situate themselves in relation to the *"mind/body complex"*, looking specifically at the content of .b lessons. I have argued in previous chapters, that as a curriculum that aims to teach students how to relate to themselves in a 'healthy way', .b positions itself as a form of authority on the self. The programme conveys messages about the nature of human beings, of how we should perceive the world and how we should learn to conduct ourselves within it. Nonetheless, the programme is concerned with presenting an approach to 'living well' rather than a scientific or philosophical investigation of 'the self'. One consequence of this is that the ontological and ethical commitments of the programme remain largely implicit. As such, I want to explicate and bring to light the notion of the person that is the tacit object of .b. What is it that 'makes up' the person, according to the syllabus? What explanations are given for human behaviours and characteristics? What techniques are students taught for acting upon themselves and in the service of which ideals and values?

As the opening quote illustrates, the programme revolves around a reflexive examination of subjectivity, that is: the student of .b is both subject and object of study. The programme is designed to inform students' self-understanding and encourage particular styles of self-care and self-cultivation. My aim in the discussion that follows is to analyse how selves are discursively constructed within the curriculum (through what terms, metaphors, images and narratives and with reference to what epistemic authorities and bodies of knowledge). Furthermore, I examine the practices that are described within such materials, through which students' behaviours are guided, through social and disciplinary practices and the imparting of methods of introspection (Foucault 1991).

It may be objected that in the context of .b, the use of the term 'self' is somewhat problematic. The programme avoids explicit reference to 'selves' outside of subject pronouns and this may reflect the Buddhist influences in the course. As noted in Chapter 3, the divergence between the Buddhist notion of *anatta* or 'no self' and '*the* self' in its popular modern usage (as an apparently coherent and enduring entity), has been a subject of contention as mindfulness has been 'mainstreamed' and 'secularised'. For some Buddhist scholars, the lack of exploration of the unstable nature of selfhood within secular mindfulness therapies denudes the transformative potential of mindfulness practice (Purser 2019; Forbes 2017). Contrarily, other scholars have argued that Buddhist conceptions of no-self remain implicit in secular mindfulness programmes and that such programmes therefore constitute 'Trojan horse Buddhism' (Brown 2016). It seems, then, that the secularity or religiosity of mindfulness programmes hinges in part on the concepts of self that underpin them and the practices of self-cultivation and self-transformation that

they prescribe. Indeed, this was raised in my interview with one of .b's course developers, who explained that:

> What mindfulness is doing in a Buddhist context is precisely drawing your attention to the instability of the self and the fact that... there is no essense to self, there is nothing fixed or permanent or enduring about the self and it's actually the fact that we identify with the self that makes us unhappy. You know, it's the loosening of our attachment of self which is the key to the Buddhist path of liberation. And that's not something which secular mindfulness goes into...what I suppose I'm getting at...is that there is an underlying philosophical aspect of Buddhist mindfulness, which is absent, which is largely absent in .b (Mark).

Mark went on to explain that the lack of attention to this 'underlying philosophy' of the self, was "*important [for]...keeping it secular"* and because *"if you tell someone who's suffering from depression that there's no enduring self, that can feel like quite a bleak message".* As such, the developers of .b, like others who have brought mindfulness into new cultures and spaces have pragmatically reworked understandings of mindfulness to suit the percieved needs of their audiences (Wilson 2014, Kucinskas 2018). I would argue that though the programme does not explicitly address questions regarding the nature of 'the self' it nonetheless prescribes a certain kind of 'philosophy of life' (Hadot 1997). It therefore implicitly conveys ideals of selfhood to which students aspire.

As I have explained in earlier chapters, my interest in .b is not whether the programme is 'Buddhist', or the extent to which the understandings of selfhood within it are consistent with traditional Buddhist ideas. This is in part because I see .b as a product of pragmatism and eclecticism. Indeed, through my ethnographic participation in the .b training and analysis of the curriculum materials, it became clear that the programme drew influences from a wide range of sources, including positive psychology; popular interpretations of neuroplasticity and evolutionary psychology; cultural views about the afflictions of childhood and, tacitly, from Western liberal philosophy, as well as (and perhaps via), MBCT and MBSR. Moreover, given that these wider intellectual currents have been part of the ongoing translation of 'traditional' Asian Buddhist ideas into modern Buddhism over the course of more than a century (McMahan 2008), it seems misguided to draw sharp lines between what is Buddhist and what is not in the context of mindfulness. That said, in order to more fully explore the ideas presented in the programme and their implications, it is at times helpful to clarify how they take up or adapt certain intellectual influences, particularly when these are influences that were not explicitly recognised in interviews or within promotional literature surrounding .b.

As I argue below, the content of the programme leans heavily on scientific, psychological discourse. Narratives of salvation and wider social transformation, which were so prominent in interviews, are largely absent from the curriculum. Rather, what comes through is the ideal of a radical individual agency, an image of empowerment, whereby the self is able to overcome inherently human vulnerabilities deriving from our evolutionary design and the certainty of life's difficulties. The present moment features as a space of possibility and the plastic brain as the 'ethical substance' through which the self is able to

recreate herself in such a way as to support her own wellbeing (Pickersgill 2103; Sánchez-Allred & Choudhury 2016).

As with other chapters, the 'spirit' of this analysis is what other scholars have called 'critical friendship' (Rose & Abi-Rached 2013). This reflects the perspective I outlined in Chapter 3, whereby I noted the need for researchers to take seriously the values that are meaningful to people in any given context, whilst also recognising that those values will reflect and reinforce existing distributions of power. As such, my intention in this chapter is to render the values, and the wider discourses in the programme through which 'selves' are constructed, more visible and more open to scrutiny, such that it is possible to reflect on their implications. This will also provide some grounding for the following two chapters, in which I will look at how .b is enacted in practice, and explore the discourses evident within children's discussions of the programme.

The primary sources for this chapter will be the .b teaching guides, which include ten lesson plans (one introductory session and nine core lessons), and one booklet titled 'How to Teach .b'. Teaching guides comprise a script for teachers written below screen grabs of the PowerPoint slides for the lesson. In addition, the booklets include notes to guide the teacher with delivery and student management. Teachers are not expected to learn the script word for word and there is some license with the materials (some slides and worksheets are optional). However, the plans are exhaustive and there is an expectation that teachers stay as close to the script as possible. In addition to PowerPoint slides, lessons contain short animations that have been designed to illustrate key messages, and a number of video clips from popular movies and YouTube channels. All of these elements were included in the analysis. Unless otherwise noted, quotes used will be from the teaching script within the teaching guides, and these will be annotated 'L0' for the introduction, L1, for lesson one, and so on, with the page number. Where I have referenced text in the PowerPoint or teaching notes this is noted.

Teaching materials and lessons plans serve numerous functions (to inform, to instruct, to persuade and to deflect critique) for numerous audiences, both immediate and remote (from teachers, students and senior school leaders to parents and the public). My primary interest in them here is as a map for the structure and content of .b lessons: for understanding what and how students are taught in the programme. Throughout, I have tried as best as I can to bring to life the dynamism of a lesson through reference to the text. Lesson plans are not two-dimensional: they are intended to be played out in the reader's mind, to be visualised 'in action'. As such, I have analysed guides as they are intended to be read: as an approximate model for the lessons. Nonetheless, the analysis of the lessons is presented thematically rather than chronologically. This is because ideas are frequently introduced in one lesson and then built upon in another and because themes weave throughout. My understanding of the lessons is further contextualised by my ethnographic participation in the .b teacher training, in which each of the lessons was delivered by the trainers to the group of trainees. Whilst these field notes are not my primary materials, I occasionally make reference to these to further explicate information in the teaching guides.

An index of all materials analysed for this chapter can be found in Appendix A. Figure 6.1 shows an overview of the core .b syllabus.

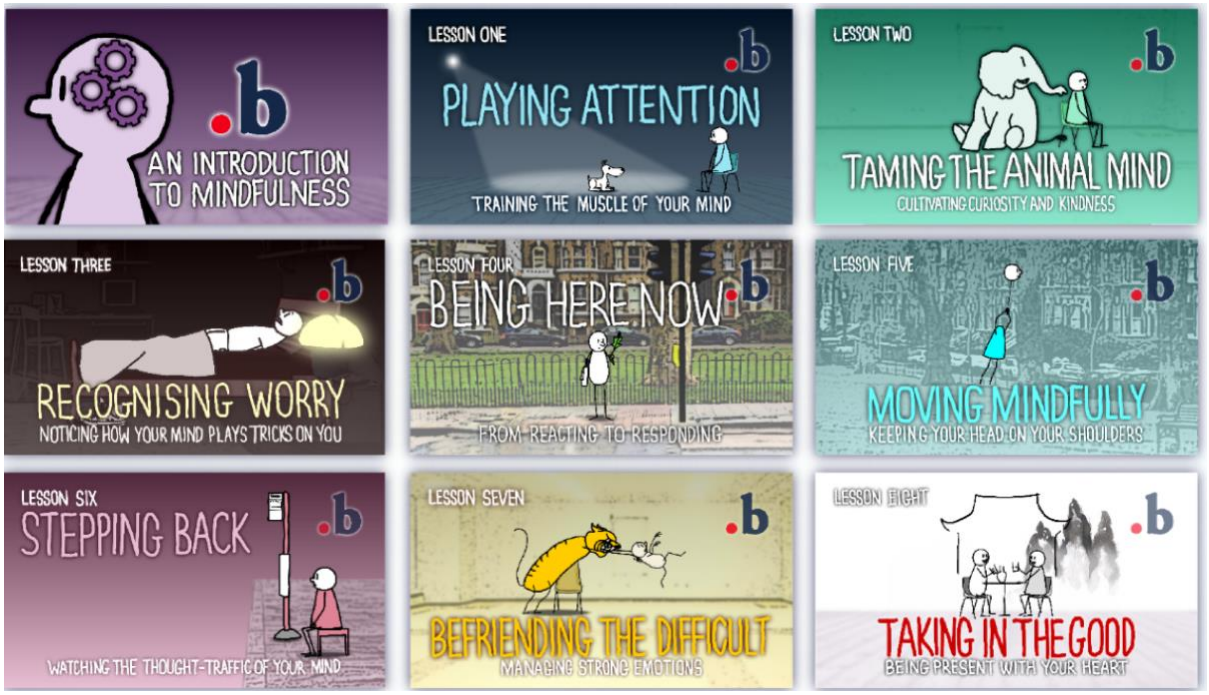

Figure 6.1: Overview of .b curriculum

In the first section of the chapter, *The neuroplastic self*, I argue that the programme constructs selves as fundamentally underpinned by biochemical processes, yet paradoxically irreducible to such processes. Through habitual thought patterns born out of an evolutionary past, the self unwittingly shapes neurological structures in ways that hamper her capacity for wellbeing. Yet, the practice of mindfulness enables students to retrain their neural pathways and restructure their brains in order to produce happiness.

Subsequently, in *The observer,* I explore how, students are taught to disaggregate their experience into its various components (thoughts, feelings, urges, actions) to facilitate a precise, affectively-imbued and embodied form of reflexivity (Taylor 1989). It is this separation that enables the self to adopt a form of moral agency, which is not restricted to their actions in the world but turned back upon themselves as responsibility for wellbeing. Thus, in *The freedom to choose,* I argue that the programme is characterised by an ideal of an agent who is equipped, through mindfulness, for the maintenance of their psychological wellbeing. In the final section, *Tools and strategies,* I examine the techniques by which the programme guides students' self-understanding and behaviour. These comprise in part the mindfulness exercises, which are at once embodied, 'introspective' and externally directed, as well as a range of techniques that encourage particular ways of relating to thoughts and feelings. The programme adopts an approach that interweaves the techniques and objectives of pedagogy and therapy. It is at once an 'education' that is inherently normative, whilst simultaneously a pre-emptive therapy.

6.2 The neuroplastic self

In the introductory lesson of .b, one of the opening slides depicts an illustration of a London black cab in dim, purple shades. In the foreground of the image is a stick-person, drawn in the characteristic style of the programme (Figure 6.2). Visible through the stick person's head is a stick-person brain, and at the centre of the brain is a slightly more detailed, though still cartoon-like sketch of the limbic system.

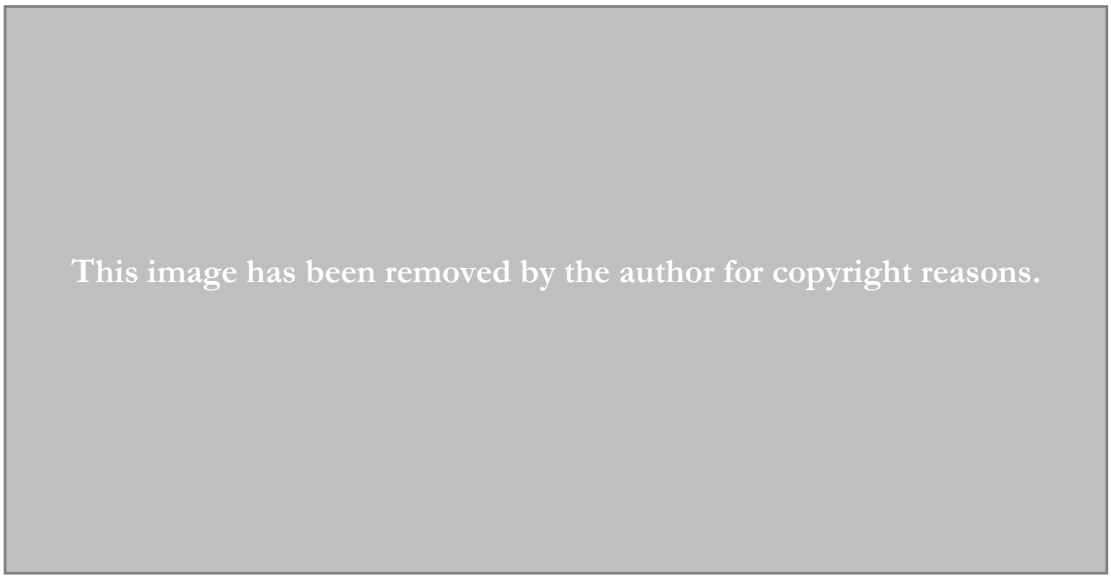

Figure 6.2: Slide from Introductory Lesson (L0 p.7)

As the slide is shown, the teaching script reads: *"[w]hy do you think I am showing you a photo of a London cab and why is there a brain in the picture?"*. Students are invited to give their answers, before the script clarifies the relevance of the image. *"Taxi drivers given brain scans by scientists...had a larger hippocampus compared with other people…[the hippocampus is] the part of the brain associated with navigation in birds"* (L0 p.7). It is further explained that the size of the hippocampus increased as drivers spent more time working (Maguire et al 2000). *"So"* it is concluded *"we can train our brains to get better at certain things."* (L0 p.8).

The core objective of this lesson is to *"help persuade your class that it is a good idea for them to learn mindfulness"* (L0 p.1). Hence, the primary function of highlighting the study is arguably to raise interest in mindfulness rather than to facilitate understanding of neurogenesis as such. It has been widely noted that neurological ideas have a particular allure for people in attempting to make sense of subjective processes, perhaps because the materiality of the brain appears to represent something objectively knowable (Pickersgill 2013). But, the message of this example is not just that the brain holds keys to self-knowledge or even that the brain is 'plastic'. Rather, the study is interpreted to mean that we can influence our brain's development and hence that we are responsible for shaping it in certain ways. As is clarified in the lesson summary: *"You are, to some extent, responsible for your own happiness. You can physically change the way your brain works for the better."* (L0 p.1).

There is a subtle shift in this interpretation from that which is outlined by Maguire and colleagues (2000). The researchers indeed interpreted the study as illustrating the malleability of the brain in response to our activities and environment. However, in the

lesson it is interpreted as indicating that we can influence the development of our brain in a relatively predictable manner, such as to promote our happiness. Though the intention of the statement may not be scientific accuracy, it reflects a pivotal tenet of the conception of self underlying the programme. That is, that our experiences of happiness and unhappiness are underpinned by processes in the brain, but we are not reducible to such processes to the extent that these experiences are inevitable. We exceed them to some degree such that we are able to intervene, to alter the structure of our brains in desirable ways. Significantly, the agency that is wielded over the brain is individualised: the onus of responsibility is, at least "*to some extent",* on the student.

The view of children's brains as under-construction through education is not new (Gagen 2015; Sánchez-Allred & Choudhury 2016). Nonetheless, what is interesting here is not that the brain is shaped, but that students themselves are positioned as partly driving such changes. At other times during the course, the notion of agency over and outside of the brain appears conflicted. In Lesson Six it is claimed that *"we have one of these things sitting inside our head...controlling all that happens"* (L6 p.14). Here, the brain is the architect of experience. And yet, despite this, the ultimate message of this lesson is not that we are reducible to our brains or are powerless, but that we shape the brain through our habitual thoughts. The 'objective' of the lesson is to *"[e]ngage students with a description of the brain and how they are making their own neural 'motorways'".* (L6 p.1) The self then, is entangled in a complex relationship with the brain: as both its producer and its effect. Through responsibilising the student with the construction of the brain for happiness, the 'self' emerges strongly as a site of *potential* agency. Yet, this agency is conflicted and, as I explore later, the self easily disintegrates into an unfolding of neurophysiological processes. That is, the curriculum explains that in our ordinary state we are 'programmed' to mindlessly react to our fears, drives, and environmental conditions.

Throughout the programme, psychological tendencies are largely construed as the result of evolutionary mechanisms designed to promote our survival. In lesson seven, a short, humorous animation is shown to illustrate the effects of stress on the brain and body. The clip begins with an image of a stick person at a desk as though they are sitting an exam. As the character bangs their head on the desk the narrator says: *"life isn't always easy...and when something difficult or stressful happens our body reacts in the same way it's done since the stone age".* As she speaks, the exam paper morphs into large sabre-toothed tiger, that turns to loom over the student. The narrator continues *"...Fear takes over and our body kicks into fight-flight-or freeze mode...there's no time for us to think, using our prefrontal cortex, the bit of our brain which talks us through our problems...The brain's panic button – the amygdala – sounds the alarm and sends signals straight into the body"* (A7). The clip continues with an explanation of some of the biophysical effects of stress: increased heart-rate and blood flow, emptying the bowels etc.

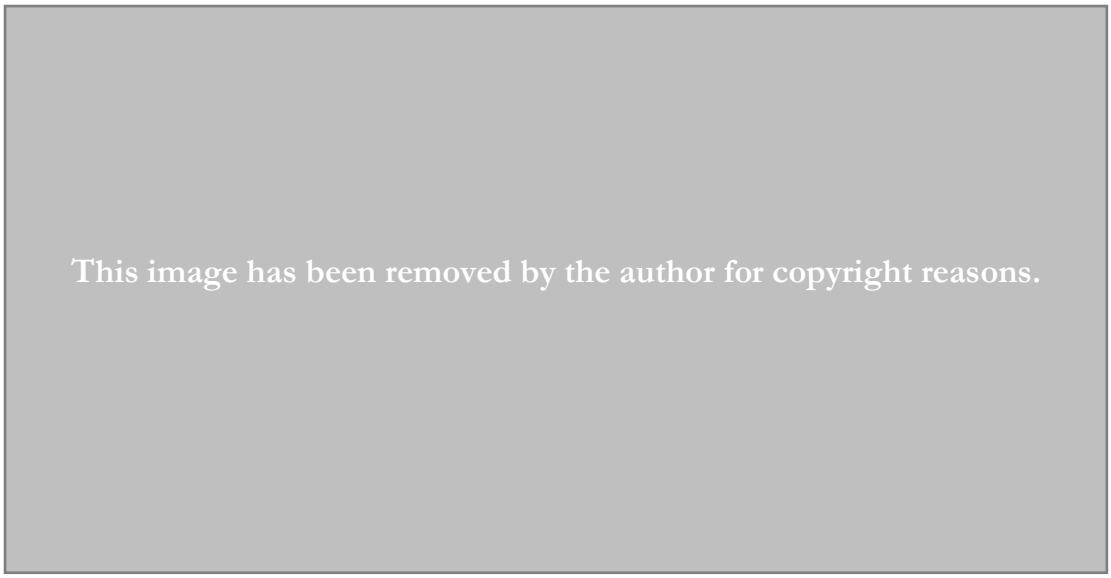

Figure 6.3: PowerPoint slide L7 p.6

During this animation and at other points in the programme, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala become figures in their own right: the "*sensible team leader"* (L7) and the *"panic button"* (A7) respectively. They are not just structures in the brain but represent two poles of our potential experience: rational control versus a primitive 'mindless' irrationality. Again, as the programme does not claim to be a scientific study, the animations are presumably not intended to provide a nuanced depiction of neurological processes. For example, the amygdala (like all parts of the brain) has numerous functions, including a possible role in positive emotion (Hamman et al 2002), and whilst stress may trigger automatic physiological processes, the prefrontal cortex is still highly active, though processing in certain areas may be hindered (Davidson et al 2002). Nonetheless, evolutionary and neuroscientific tropes are drawn upon to the extent that they reinforce particular ideas about persons (Choudhury 2009). That is, that we are creatures of evolution, that we were not designed for modern forms of stress (Harrington 2008), and that in difficult circumstances we often do not feel in control. The animations are not lessons about the brain so much as parables with neuro-characters, through which children are taught to understand themselves.

At other points in the programme it is explained that the brain's evolutionary design can further impede our wellbeing as we focus on negative experiences (to learn from dangers and monitor threats) at the expense of positive ones: *"Brain scientists say that 'the mind is like Teflon for pleasant experiences and Velcro for unpleasant ones.'"* (L4 p.8) Thus, excessive stress and rumination are largely presented in terms of an evolutionary lag between our own historical period and the stone age. As the lesson goes on to explain, through mindfulness we can protect against the evolutionary flaws that render us at risk of psychological pain. By *"noticing the small details of our experience"* (A4) and intentionally focusing on the good we can *"put the 'mmm' back into experience"* (L4 p.9).

The focus on the biological space of the self may be, in part, a recognition of the classroom context and a deliberate attempt to avoid sensitive, personal or religious discussions. Though the objectives and content of the programme are largely derived from therapeutic contexts, the didactic, classroom-based approach of its delivery renders

problematic the more specific, dialogical elements of traditional therapeutic practices. Hence, neurological ideas form the basis of a psychoeducational approach that aims to shape students' understanding of their experiences whilst forgoing extensive personal disclosure.

6.3 The observer

Whilst the self within .b is situated as having the capacity for agency over the structures of their brain, this agency is neither immediate nor direct, but the result of gradual training. A number of times throughout the programme, the script explains that we are not able to control thoughts and emotions. One of the opening slides of Lesson Two states that *"the mind has a wild and uncontrollable life of its own"* (L2 ppt p.5). The objective of the lesson is in part to illustrate that we cannot force certain thoughts or feelings away. Instead, we are told that through mindfulness we are learning to *"change our relationship"* (L2 p.9) with them. We learn to do so by adopting a particular stance towards our subjectivity, that could be characterised as a non-coercive monitoring *"with curiosity and kindness"* (L2 p.1), sometimes described as simply "being with" (L2 p.1) what is present.

> What we're learning is to notice that ALLOWING whatever we're experiencing and however our minds are behaving – giving them space to be as they are – can help to calm our minds down (L2 p.9).

Here and elsewhere, the student is depicted not *as* their experiences but as an 'observer' of them. The student is disentangled from subjective processes, becoming instead that which oversees them, and in doing so helps to 'calm the mind down'. Much of the course is devoted, in various ways, to exploring our 'relationship with' thoughts, feelings and mental states: through identifying physical feelings in the body; learning to visualise mind states in terms of metaphors of animals, traffic or weather and so on. These elements of the course can be seen as attempting to facilitate and encourage 'metacognition', a term which is introduced in Lesson 6 defined as *'thinking about thinking'* (L6 p.8). After the term is introduced, students are led through a mindfulness exercise developed from the 'sounds and thoughts' practice in MBCT (Segal et al 2002). As with other exercises in the course, the script first briefly draws students' attention to sensations in their feet. After this, they are asked to become aware of various sounds, beginning with sounds further away, gradually moving closer towards, and finally inside the body. The script then draws students' attention *towards* their thoughts. What follows is an abridged version of the script for this exercise:

> So let's practice **bringing our attention to the traffic that's coming and going in our minds right now**…
>
> Beginning by sitting comfortably in the chair - upright but also relaxed...Feeling the sensations of your feet on the floor and the weight of your body on the chair...And turning your attention first to the **sounds that are coming and going.** You may notice the mind wanting to label them...Exploring instead what it's like to direct your attention to the **texture** and **qualities** of each sound...Letting all sounds come and go…

> **Something else that comes and goes is thoughts.** As you sit here you may notice that thoughts appear in the mind, stay for a bit, and then go. If this is happening, you can practice just letting them come and go, allowing the traffic of thoughts to flow through your mind…(L6 p.11-13 bold in original).

Throughout the exercise, students are encouraged to notice the transience of sounds and thoughts, 'simply observing' rather than attempting to fix, name or hold onto them. Part of the purpose of the exercise is to reinforce an idea introduced in lesson three that 'thoughts are not facts' - that they are not necessarily accurate reflections of reality (Ibid). Hence, students are taught to perceive themselves as 'noticing' thoughts, rather than as reducible *to* them (see Figure 6.4). Through the practice of mindfulness, the self, who is otherwise caught up in unhelpful ways of perceiving, entangled in her thoughts, learns to *'step back'* (L6 p.1), to gain distance and hence develop a clearer, healthier, perhaps more reliable picture of experience. However, this observational stance is also investigative and percipient. As in the extract above, many of the mindfulness exercises in the course attempt to cultivate a somewhat detached but meticulous form of reflexivity: encouraging students to notice with greater curiosity and precision the finer details of their experience.

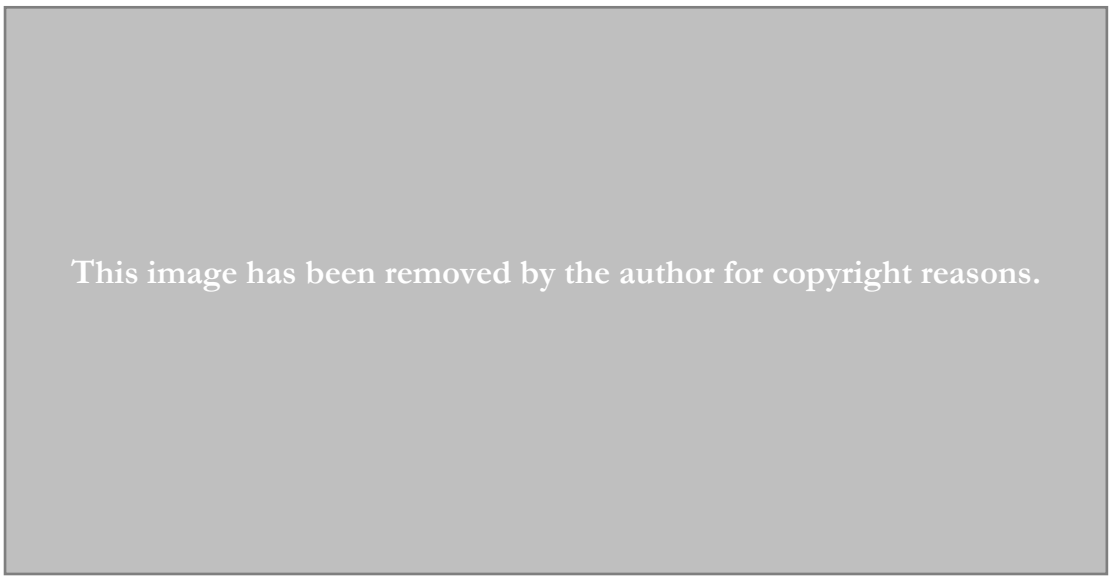

Figure 6.4: PowerPoint slide L6 p.6

In Lesson Three, students are introduced to "the 'Hot Cross Bun' of...experience" (L3 p.12), which depicts the various dimensions of our subjectivity (see Figure 6.5).

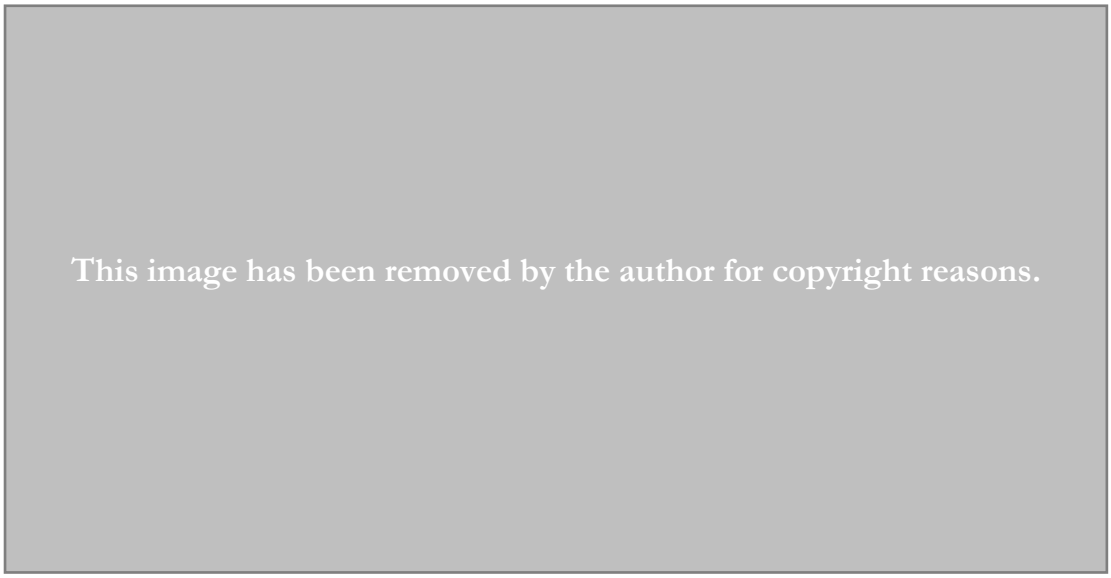

Figure 6.5 PowerPoint slide L3 p.12

The teaching script explains that thoughts, actions, feelings and body sensations represent the *"four dimensions of experience"* (L3 p.12) which, without our awareness, are entangled in complex networks of reactions. That is, each different aspect of experience can trigger others, leading to a potentially damaging cycle of hyper-stimulation and reactivity:

> The four dimensions of our experience tend to feed each other. Without us being aware of it, they work together in a way that drives us further into worry, stress, obsession, anger that can make our lives difficult. (L3 p.12)

The expectation is that, through disaggregating the components of experience, the student will be better able to understand their emotions and emotional responses. Within my .b teacher training, it was further explained that this hot-cross bun model is a key teaching tool throughout the curriculum. That is, trainers explained that, when students mention that they have a certain thought, teachers should ask what feelings or urges they noticed alongside the thought and so on.

The 'hot-cross bun' model has some notable parallels with Buddhist conceptions of the aggregates of experience (Davis & Thompson 2014). Across Buddhist schools of thought, the experience of self is seen to comprise of 'five aggregates', or different domains, which include: physical senses, feelings, mental activity, desires and finally consciousness or awareness (Gethin 1998). Given the familiarity of .b's developers, and at least some .b teachers, with Buddhism, this may have been an influence upon how this model is interpreted in the programme. Nonetheless, the hot cross bun model in particular is drawn from a CBT technique, outlined in a therapeutic manual by Greenberger and Pedaskey (1995). As noted in Chapter 3, a number of scholars have explored how psychological disciplines, and particularly cognitive psychology and behaviourism, build upon Western philosophies of mind from Descartes through to Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke (Taylor 1989, Billig 2008). The hot-cross bun of experience and the concept of metacognitive awareness arguably hinge upon Cartesian thought with regards to the rational, self-reflexive capacities of the self. That is, Descartes saw the self as capable both of separating herself from and objectifying her experience, and of separating abstract phenomena into discrete elements. McMahan (2008) has argued that this strand of

Cartesian thought, deeply ingrained within Western modes of thinking, tacitly structures contemporary Western interpretations of meditation.

Hence, embedded within the concept of metacognition is the notion of a self that is capable of making itself the subject of dispassionate reflection. *"[W]ith metacognition, rather than being caught in the middle of, or tangled up in your thoughts, you can step back and notice your thinking, observing your thoughts coming and going."* (L6 p.8). Recurrently throughout the course, mindfulness is presented as facilitating a form of 'distance' from experience, such that the subject can obtain a perspective that is implicitly more reasonable, desired and measured. Again, this understanding is likely indebted to the influence of Cartesian thought upon cognitive psychology and modern readings of Buddhist ideas. As Taylor explains, for Descartes:

> [W]e have to focus on the first person experience in order to transpose it....Instead of being swept along to error by the ordinary bent of our experience, we stand back from it, withdraw from it, reconstrue it objectively, and then learn to draw defensible conclusions from it....we fix experience in order to deprive it of its power, a source of bewitchment and error…These [assumptions].. have become so strong in certain departments of modern culture that they seem the only possible construal (1989 p.163).

Here, it is implied not only that we can step back from our experiences, but also that when we fail to do so we are bound to be mis-led by them: that things which appear to us as true may be the deception of our emotions. There is both an impression we have of the world, that is muddied by our subjective experience, and a 'truth' that lies outside of it. Such ideas have been particularly influential on modern interpretations of meditation as 'direct experience' (Sharf 1995). That is, facilitating 'contact' with things 'as they are': beyond our culturally and emotionally mediated interpretations. These notions of mindfulness as enabling contact with 'reality' are apparent within the course, through references to the practice as enabling us to come into contact with the *"raw sensations"* (L1 p.22) of our experience. The 'present moment' is defined by a sort of sensory immanence: not just things around us but also experiences within our own body.

It is worth exploring in more detail the resonances and dissonances between the mindful reflexivity depicted in the programme and the Cartesian 'radical reflexivity'. This is both because to do so will enable us a fuller picture of the particular style of subjectivity that is encouraged, and because the Cartesian mode is that which is arguably dominant in contemporary Western understandings of the self (Taylor 1989). There are perhaps two particularities of the reflexive stance presented in .b *vis a vis* the Cartesian mode. The first has to do with the notion of control implicit in each. From the Cartesian stance, by stepping outside of our experience we derive a more rational perspective, such that we are able to *alter* our emotional state. That is, in order to adopt a more rational position, "*[y]ou try to strangle the reaction by treating it just as a reaction: not a valid perception* (Taylor p.168).

In contrast, in .b, the intention is not to reject but to *"be with"* (L7 p.20) the various dimensions of experience, without being *"tangled up in"*(L6 p.8) them. It is explained that by 'accepting' the emotional state the mind may *"settle down"* (L2 p.8), but there is no direct

attempt to change the emotion. Yet, the notion of rationality is still implicit in this perspective (particularly in elements of the programme which discuss emotional and behavioural "*reactions and responses",* discussed in the following section.) Moreover, the self that is depicted in .b still obtains a form of control, and it is still largely the purpose of the exercise to alter our dispositions that we become calm and measured in our actions. This control is simply *deferred* (gained through gradual training) and perhaps less certain than the Cartesian form.

Another particularity of the form of reflexivity encouraged in .b's relative to the Cartesian position, is that while both separate apparently 'raw' sensory material from mental properties, .b appears more inclined to consider emotional states *as* raw material whereby the latter mode is highly suspicious of affectivity. This may generally reflect the centrality of the body within contemporary mindfulness practices (Pagis 2009). As such, in .b it seems that emotions, when unacknowledged, may drive us to act in ways that we would otherwise not desire, but that if we can come "*into contact"* with them, we gain the capacity to act in more skillful ways. In .b it is thoughts, rather than emotions, that appear to have the capacity to *deceive.* And yet, a final distinction is that, in .b., the observational stance is adopted not so as to scrutinise our knowledge of the world, but because it is perceived as more conducive to our subjective wellbeing: a training for our mind and brain in the service of happiness. Furthermore, as I will explore in the following section, there is an implicit but fundamental sense of moral weight to this position.

6.4 The freedom to choose

As I have illustrated, .b depicts an image of a self whose behaviours are underpinned by neurological processes, themselves shaped by evolutionary design. However, it also presents a self who has the potential to influence themselves at the most fundamental level of their being. In this section, I want to examine further the ideal of the agentive self that is at the core of the programme. I argue that the present moment is presented as the space in which the self may gain a capacity for an agency which transcends the inevitable unfolding of evolutionary programming and habitual responses. While unpleasant emotional and mental states are initially naturalised and rendered blameless (as a feature of our humanity and as proceeding awareness), responsibility is salvaged through mindfulness. Moreover, the present moment appears, at times, to be perceived as instrumental to wellbeing, whilst at other times it seems as though to have a more sacred value, representing a manner of being *"fully alive"* (L4 p.6).

Lesson four, *"Being here now: from reacting to responding"* is described within the opening slides as "*perhaps the most important [lesson]...so far"* (L4 p.6). At the beginning of the lesson, teachers are instructed to play students an animation in which a character is getting ready for school. The character stares gormlessly into the distance as he showers and eats his cereal. When he leaves the house, he floats above the ground, missing the sights around him and the people who wave as he passes by. The entire scene is depicted in shades of grey. Then, as the figure approaches a crossing, a single, brown leaf falls to the floor beside him. The character notices the leaf, and as it touches the floor, the animation fades into colour.

The objective of the animation is to introduce the concept of 'autopilot', a key idea within MBSR and MBCT (Crane 2017; Segal et al 2002). The script explains that when we are in autopilot we are *"doing whatever we're doing unconsciously.... almost as if we're sleepwalking"* (L4 p.7). The significance of understanding this 'mode of being' is to recognise its impact on our wellbeing. When we are in autopilot *"[w]e miss what's good – we don't notice the richness of each moment"* and *"we magnify what's bad – we overreact by catastrophising and getting caught up in...negative feedback loops"* (L4 p.8). Autopilot, then, is living without 'noticing' what is going on in the moment. In this mode we are entangled in the flow of instinctive, habitual reactions of which we are not even aware. These negative feedback loops comprise the components of experience explored earlier in the 'hot cross bun' model. Hence, when we are on autopilot, thoughts, feelings, emotions and urges feed off and fuel each other in a way that can be detrimental to our happiness. This cascading of chain-reactions begins as *"tiny tingles of liking and disliking"* (L4 p.14) in the body (See Figure 6.6).

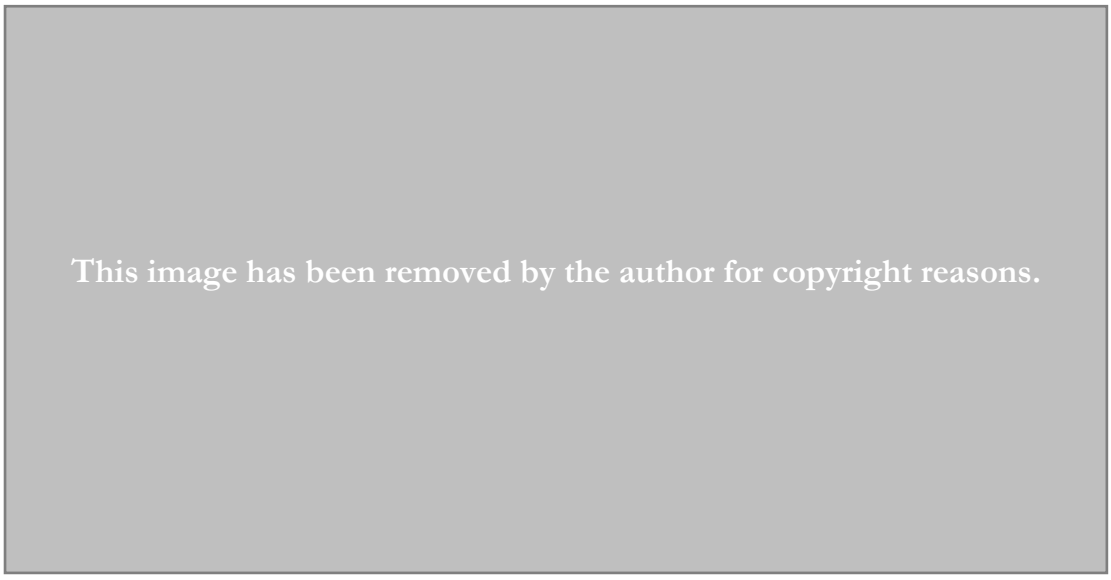

Figure 6.6: PowerPoint slide L4 p.15

These 'tingles' not only propel unpleasant emotional and mental states, but they are often unconsciously driving our actions:

> You may never have noticed these sensations but...they have been driving your behaviour since the moment you were born and are completely automatic. What this means is that for much of the time we dance like puppets on the strings of our impulses (L4 p.16).

Hence, in our daily lives, whilst we may presume ourselves to be the authors of our actions, we are in fact simply 'floating through life', much like the character in the animation. The implication here is interesting. It is not just that we are sometimes drawn into these chain reactions, but that they *characterise* our lives. This, it seems, is the self that has been programmed by our evolutionary past and which has not caught up with modern ways of life. As is explained in Lesson 4, this can be problematic when we are faced with difficult situations, as our reactions may cause us further distress (Figure 6.7).

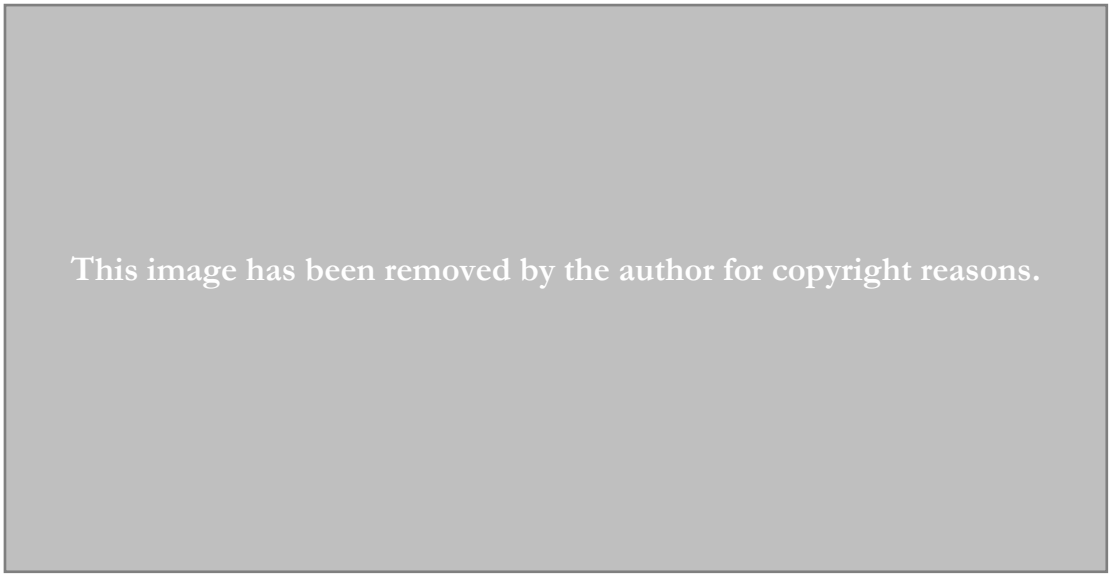

Figure 6.7: PowerPoint slide L4. p.17

The language surrounding the distinction between mindfulness and mind*lessness* in the programme - *"sleepwalking"* (L4 p.7), *"waking up"* (L0 p.27), being *"fully alive"* (L4 p.6) - indicates that there is some greater value to mindfulness than simply supporting wellbeing. This discourse of 'awakeness' may arguably be seen as a remnant of the Buddhist legacy within .b. Within traditional Buddhism the path of awakening is generally interpreted as coming to recognise and understand universal "truth" and hence gaining freedom from the cycle of rebirth. Yet, in modern Buddhism and secular mindfulness, this path has come to be understood in terms of a gradual training in the capacity to turn the mind towards *"the actuality of present moment sensation"* (L0 p.19; McMahan 2008). This new formulation of 'awakening' nonetheless retains a strong moral hierarchy (Wilson 2014). There is no doubt that this form of living should be considered more desirable, and there is a sense, even, that our ordinary state is somehow more primitive in comparison. Prior to mindfulness, we are simply swept up in the unfolding of neurophysiological processes, continually reacting to the world and to our own thoughts and feelings, and it seems that there is no 'self' that could be taken to be the agent or overseer of our actions**.** In some senses, this would seem to be a startling diagnosis of our condition, one which would jar with the usual sense of personhood, but which would perhaps find some support within the neurosciences (Wegner 2002). What is perhaps more extraordinary, though, is that the agentive self appears to re-emerge through mindfulness: that coming into contact with the present moment enables us to *"step out of autopilot"* (L4 p.9). It is not my purpose here, and would be far beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explore the possibilities for or implications of this statement.

Nonetheless, mindfulness, as an 'awakening', appears within the discourses of the programme, to have two simultaneous effects. Firstly, it becomes a medium for fully appreciating life, living a life that is somehow richer, more vibrant. In this sense, the programme draws heavily on the tendency within modern culture to valorise the 'ordinary life' (Taylor 1989). This narrative, McMahan (2008) argues, has been a central medium through which mindfulness has been popularised in the West: by translating it from a practice of asceticism and renunciation to one of deep appreciation of life, a technique for *"enjoying, relishing...savouring"* (L4 p.9) experience. There is a sense, at certain points in the teaching guides, that mindfulness is something of an art for meticulously engaging with the *"small details of our experience"* (L4 p.9). These details, it seems, are of instrumental value, by

preventing the mindless unfolding of negative thought patterns and emotional reactions. Yet, there are also hints, at other times, that these details are themselves miraculous and sacred: that through connecting with the mundane features of our lives we somehow feel more connected to something greater than our own experience: *"Notice now, that you are breathing. Feel your feet on the floor, grounded on planet earth. This is what it is to be a living, breathing human being."* (L8 p.7)

Furthermore, within the present moment emerges the possibility for moral agency. Simply becoming aware of our bodily sensations, it is explained, may enable us to dislodge ourselves from the instinctual trap of mindlessness:

> If we can notice the way we are reacting automatically then we can start to break free from it. Developing...mindfulness helps us to become aware of this reactivity, at the level of physical sensations. This can bring us out of autopilot, allowing us to...respond rather than react, giving us the...freedom to choose our response. (L4 p.18).

Figure 6.8: PowerPoint slide L4 p.18

Hence, mindfulness is not only a practice of enhancing our awareness, but a state in which we gain the capacity for choice. As such, it is through mindfulness that we gain both the capacity to manage our wellbeing and also the responsibility for doing so. It is explained, moreover, that this capacity and responsibility are vital, not only because our ordinary state renders us vulnerable to distress, but also because our lives inevitably present us with difficulties:

> Difficulties in life are not somehow a mistake....Difficulty is **part of every human life.** Bad stuff happens! The question is: when bad stuff happens, are we going to react...or...respond?...Given we KNOW that bad stuff will happen, the whole quality of our life depends on whether we react to it or can learn to respond (L7 p.3-4).

Difficulty, therefore, is a universal human experience and, as such, the *'quality of our life'* is not so much a question of the presence or lack of difficulty, but of the manner in which we respond to it. This viewpoint arguably reflects the broader tendency within popular mindfulness applications to diagnose suffering as resulting from faults of the individual mind, rather than being due to social conditions:

> Underneath its therapeutic discourse, mindfulness subtly reframes problems as the outcomes of choices. Personal troubles are never attributed to political or socio-economic conditions, but are always psychological in nature (Purser 2019 p.41).

Moreover, within .b, it seems that our ability to choose our response is independent of our circumstances. As we cannot prevent difficulties from occurring, the capacity for choice, enabled through mindfulness, is a form of empowerment: *"You can't control what happens to you, but you CAN decide how to respond to it"* (L4 p.14). To illustrate this, in Lesson 4 we are introduced to a quote from a book by the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl who wrote a memoir following his experience of imprisonment in Auschwitz during the Holocaust. The teaching script explains that through observations of his fellow prisoners Frankl *"noticed that whilst people couldn't change what the Nazis were doing to them, some did manage to choose the way they responded."* (L4 p.14). A short excerpt from Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning* is quoted, in which he speaks of the few prisoners who, even in such destitution, would give away their last piece of bread:

> ...they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances... (Frankl 1992 [1946] quoted L4 p.14).

Frankl's book is an interesting choice, one which is surely chosen to drive home both the poignancy of the message and the apparent potency of our capacity for choice. It perhaps also, however, exposes a more uncomfortable side of such a vision of empowerment. Frankl's work has been criticised by some scholars precisely for over-emphasising the weight of individual 'spirit' in his narrative of Holocaust survival (Langer 1982; Pytell 2015). In Frankl's depiction, the individual's capacity to *choose* their attitude transcends all reasonable expectations given their circumstances. This notion of agency ('against all odds') is not the product of environmental conditions or, as we have seen earlier, of predictable neurochemical processes. Nor does it, as a *choice* that is made by the individual, stem from a wider social sphere within which the person is situated. As such, in this instance, the programme appears to depict an ideal of a radical, transcendental agency as that to which the student should aspire and through which they ensure their own mental wellbeing.

6.5 Tools & Strategies

In the previous sections, I have attempted to outline what I see to be the core features of the concept of self which underpins .b. In doing so, I have also indicated some of the ways that the programme influences its participants. That is, by prescribing a framework for understanding '*what* I am' and certain norms of selfhood, the programme guides students'

understanding of themselves and the characteristics to which they aspire (Foucault 1998; 19988a; Rose 1998). By pointing out certain features of human beings, the programme creates certain 'truths' about them. That is not to say that these truths are false, but rather that, by conveying certain ideas in an authoritative space and by generating educational practices through which students are taught to relate to themselves in particular ways, they are brought into being as 'truth' (Ibid; Hacking 2006). In this section, I explore some of the practical ways students are acted upon and are taught to act upon themselves. In part, this involves exploring some of the mindfulness exercises and the ways in which they are conducted. These exercises, though heterogeneous, centrally involve a form of embodied reflexivity (Pagis 2009), whereby the student is taught to bring attention to physical sensations in the body.

However, beyond mindfulness practices, and bound-up with them, are a number of other techniques intended to facilitate reflexivity, which largely build on the techniques and practices of MBCT. I explore these in more detail below. However, in sum, these include what I am terming 'simulation and emotion regulation' strategies (that is, 'conjuring up' certain thoughts or emotions to practice approaching them with mindfulness), 'normalisation strategies' (labelling certain experiences as 'normal', and the omission of experiences deemed 'abnormal') and, to a lesser extent, 'psychologisation' (teaching students to label subjective features of experience in psychological terms). A final 'technique' through which subjectivity is influenced in the programme relates to the manner in which teachers are encouraged to engage with the class and the specific style of discipline that they are encouraged to adopt. This final aspect will be returned to in the following chapter.

Each .b lesson involves one to two mindfulness exercises. Across the curriculum, these practices include: mindful breathing, mindful sitting, mindful movement and exercises which involve some sort of imagination. Despite the variation amongst these exercises, each entails some form of instruction about the physical body (sitting comfortably, sitting tall, standing, or placing/moving arms or legs) and directing attention towards some aspect of experience. As with the mindfulness exercise quoted earlier, drawing attention to the body or breath is frequently the first part of signaling the movement from general classroom activities to a specific exercise. Though not all of the exercises involve focusing on the body throughout, a degree of sensory awareness appears fundamental to the way in which mindfulness is presented in the programme. This is apparent in Lessons 3, for example, where students are taught to distinguish *"thinking mode"* of our ordinary state from "*sensing mode"* in mindfulness (L3 p.6 Figure 6.9):

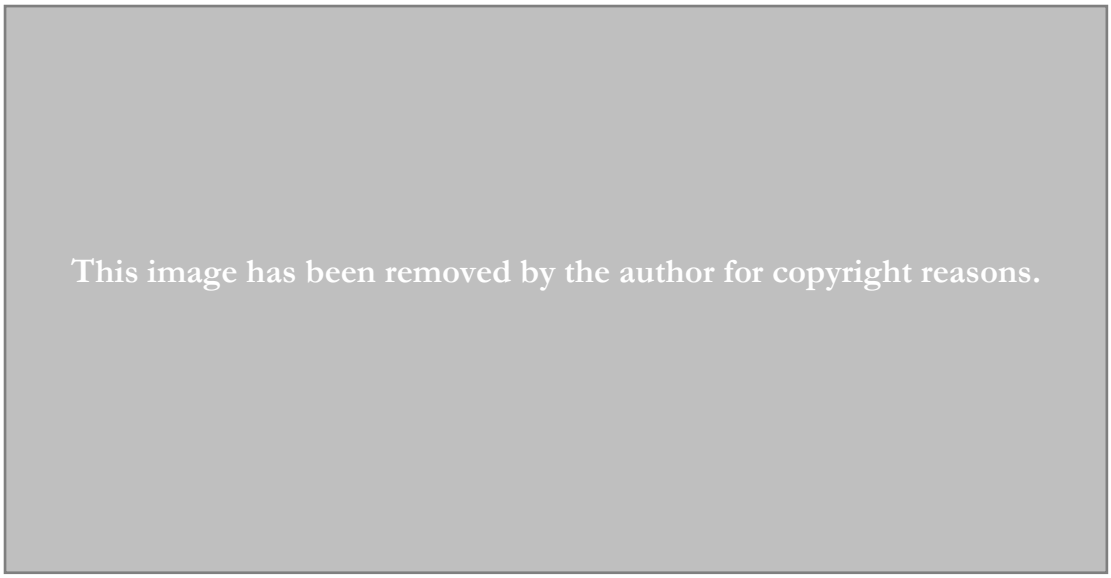

Figure 6.9: PowerPoint L3 p.6

As this slide is shown, students are told: *"we spend a great deal of our day in Thinking Mode...With mindfulness you're learning how to...switch into the sensing mode...with practice…[we can even] be in both modes at the same time."* (L3 p.6). Mindfulness, then, is not *only* sensing, but comprises a greater degree of sensory awareness than our ordinary state. Beyond this, it is explained that by placing our attention in particular parts of the body we can influence our emotional state: *"One of the best ways to calm and slow yourself down is to take your attention into the lower half of the body"* (L2 p.11). The following is an extract from one of the key practices in the programme, the FOFBOC ('Feet on Floor, Bums on Chair'), which is introduced in Lesson 2:

> As you sit here, begin by bringing your attention to the **feet.** Really tuning in to the **sensations** of your feet...noticing **what it's like to be wearing socks and shoes**...Feeling now the **weight and texture of your legs**..really letting yourself explore what the legs...what does sitting feel like from the inside? How is your weight distributed? Listening to the lower half of the body...receiving its textures as they change moment by moment.
> (L2 p.12)

Here, again, the student is positioned as conducting a meticulous investigation of her experience, bringing into awareness 'feelings' otherwise unrecognised. Within the teaching guides, exercises are scripted in such a way as to presume compliance whilst appearing non-authoritative. Hence instructions are primarily worded as suggestions *"let's explore…"* (L1 p.19), *"I'd like to invite you to practice sitting well"* (L0 p.9)*;* are written in the present continuous form *"Feeling the full length of your body" (*L3 p.20)*; and/*or are constructed as passive *"allowing your eyes to gently close"* (L6 p.11). A combination of the genre of the text (as meditative guidance) and the context and hierarchy of the classroom enables the assumption of a more-or-less compliant and *pliable* subject. That is, the script assumes a certain power to affect the real bodies that are the anticipated receivers of the instructions. In phrasing directives as statements, the script appears to both describe and evoke experience: *"[t]he intention is to allow the body to rest – to allow the texture of the body to really soften and let go."* (L3 p.20).

Whilst strict adherence to the script is not compulsory, the importance of language and its power to generate physical feelings amongst participants was explicitly emphasised within .b teacher training. For example, in the teaching guidance it is suggested that, when delivering mindfulness exercises, teachers should *"[u]se sensuous, experiential language...use words that prompt their enquiry into felt 'texture' of an experience"* (HTT p.14), before a list of suggested 'feeling' words is provided. Thus, language is employed deliberately with the intention of guiding the experience of the anticipated audience. Unlike in the meditation guidance, however, within the teaching notes the subject emerges as a distinct, self-investigating agent: as she who is 'prompted to enquire'.

As explored within Chapter 2, one of the key assumptions about the link between mindfulness and mental health is that mindfulness training may facilitate emotion regulation (Chambers et al 2009). It is assumed that bringing mindful awareness to the feeling of an emotion as opposed to necessarily repressing or avoiding such feelings may help reduce the valence of the emotion. Though emotion regulation is not explicitly mentioned in .b, it is implicit within discussions surrounding mindfulness in teaching guides. Students are encouraged to *"be with whatever is present...even if that is agitation, anger, stress, sadness, the urge to fidget"* (HTT p.3). Here, 'being with' may be seen to infer non-reaction to such feelings. Moreover, there are a number of exercises that are intended to stimulate an emotional reaction in order for students to practice bringing mindful attention towards their feelings. One of these is the 'stress ball' activity in lesson seven. The activity revolves around a small electric device which sends out mild electric shocks intermittently as students pass it around. Within the guides, the teacher is encouraged to build anticipation around the game amongst students by implying that it is risky. As students pass around the ball, they are recurrently asked to turn their attention towards physical feelings, particularly of their breath and in their feet if they become excited or 'stressed': *"the intention…[is] to gradually increase stress levels (within a safe environment) so that the pupils can pay closer attention - literally 'attend to' -what stress is like for them and learn how to manage it"* (L7 p.17). Exercises such as the stress ball therefore provide a form of 'simulation' for developing strategies of emotion regulation in daily life.

Though much of the programme centres around teaching 'skills' for managing difficult emotions, other elements of the course encourage students to pay attention to positive dimensions of experience. The premise behind these exercises is to work against the 'negative bias' of the mind. The first such exercise is in Lesson Four in which students are asked to 'savour' the experience of eating a piece of chocolate - bringing all of their attention to the sensations of eating:

> One way of 'savouring' is by turning the searchlight of attention and exploration to small details of our experience that we would normally rush past without noticing. Savouring…helps to wake us up out of auto-pilot...helping the mind to feel brighter and fresher. (L4 p.10).

In part, the activity is intended to demonstrate that being in 'autopilot' drains the pleasure out of our daily experience. However, there is also a more active sense of enhancing the sensory quality of pleasant experience, of *"enjoying, relishing, tasting, savouring"* (L4 p.9). As in

our ordinary state we tend towards overthinking and rumination we must consciously develop a more positive stance: *Deliberately paying attention to what is going well is not easy. Finding the stuff to be happy about...can sometimes take a conscious effort; we sometimes have to CHOOSE to turn towards the positive in our lives* (L8 p.12). Lesson eight 'Taking in the good' therefore comprises of two gratitude practices, in which students are asked to actively bring to mind things that they are grateful for or attempt to generate appreciation for seemingly mundane aspects of life.

The basic premise for .b, as explored in Chapter 2, is to reformulate the principles, ideas and structure of MBCT for a non-clinical, adolescent audience. In part, this is achieved through the use of colourful imagery and light hearted animations to illustrate certain ideas. However, in adapting the programme for an educational context .b also adopts a more didactic approach than MBCT, with the majority of the lesson following the structure of the PowerPoint. Within the basic structure of MBCT, group meetings generally involve extended periods of discussion which are referred to as 'enquiry' (Segal et al 2002; Crane & Stanley 2016). These enquiry elements entail the group discussing their experiences of mindfulness, particularly in relation to difficulties *with* the practice or that come up *during* practice. Through these discussions, teachers gently guide participants and reformulate their responses to the group towards a shared understanding of the key learning objectives of the session (Stanley & Crane 2016; Stanley & Longden 2016). However, within .b the key learning objectives are outlined prior to the mindfulness practice and discussion, and teachers are encouraged to keep enquiries brief. The lesson plans therefore contain little time for students to discuss, question or challenge the ideas within the programme and as such students largely appear as passive recipients.

In addition to illustrating the learning objectives, within MBCT these enquiries are intended to provide reassurance about the issues that participants raise. The discussion provides an opportunity for common experiences to come to light and for the teacher to assure participants that their experiences are normal (Segal et al 2002). Such discussions allow the teacher to model non-judgement and acceptance, which are felt to be a key part of why mindfulness training reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety (Ibid). Nonetheless, such discussions open the possibility for sensitive or personal issues to be raised. As such, .b teaching guides emphasise the need to clearly delineate boundaries of conversations in accordance with what is deemed appropriate for classroom discussion. Primarily, within the script, this is achieved by asking students to think about issues that are 'typical' or 'common' amongst people their age.

Such discussions occur at various points throughout the course, most notably in Lesson Three (in relation to 'worries'), in Lesson Six (in relation to rumination) and in lesson seven (in relation to stress). For example, after the concept of rumination is introduced in the PowerPoint, the guide suggests that the teacher could give a personal example of a recent rumination that they have experienced, before suggesting that students may do the same either *"in pairs, groups or as a class"* (L3 p.17). The teaching script then reads *"Can you give an example of ruminating you've done yourself recently?...Nothing too heavy or serious, but something which is typical of people your age."* (Ibid). At certain points in the course, specific suggestions are provided as what are presumably seen to be common causes of concern for students. For example, in Lesson Seven:

> In what situations do YOU feel stress? Exams? Sport/music/drama performances? Arguments at home? Difficult friendships? Too much homework? (L7 p.6)

Thus, in addition to inverting the typical format of enquiry of MBCT (with the learning objective being outlined prior to discussion) the discussion becomes didactic in another sense. The teachers modelling of a rumination both serves to reinforce the idea that rumination is natural and provides an example of the 'sort' of rumination that is appropriate to share. In circumscribing the discussion to things that are 'typical', the script asks the students not only to think of a rumination that is pertinent to them, but to reflect on the extent to which that rumination is likely to be 'normal' and whether it is 'appropriate'. This is arguably a particularly subtle and sophisticated form of reflexive emotional management, given that ruminations are, by their very nature, often highly personal and given that, for students who have experienced any form of serious difficulty, those are likely to be most salient. Hence the discussion, it's delimitation, and the modelling by teachers arguably serves a *normative and instructive* function as well as potentially providing reassurance for some students. Moreover, in drawing attention to particular experiences (of exams, music, drama etc.) and in providing terms through which those experiences can be interpreted ('stress'), elements of the programme may be understood as instantiating certain 'looping effects' (see p.31), shaping the way in which students perceive themselves and their social worlds (Hacking 1995).

6.6 Conclusion

It appeared, in my analysis of the .b teaching materials, that the ideals of social and spiritual transformation that shone through interviewees' accounts were largely cleansed from the curriculum in favour of an emphasis on psychological and mechanistic discourses. Underpinning these discourses is the notion of a self that is defined in terms of universality. The internal, biological body of the human being is one that is apparently shared by all: a space which may give rise to different experiences, but which derives from the same 'substance' (Bemme & D'souza 2014). Nonetheless, there remained a sense across the lessons that the present moment provided access to an almost transcendental form of agency. By 'becoming the observer', we are no longer reducible to unfolding biochemical and physiological processes, we step out of the mindless, mechanistic and primitive web of bodily reactions to the world around us and the difficulties it presents us. We come to take charge *over* our brains, even as we are in part constituted by them. The syllabus explains that by practicing mindfulness, by engaging with our momentary, sensory experience, 'we step outside of' our usual state, turn back towards it and systematically, meticulously examine our experience. We transcend those processes which, in our ordinary state, define us in our totality.

It not clear within this account how the subject first emerges out of the sea of biochemical and physiological processes from which she was previously indistinguishable. That is, it is not clear how the agency of the subject is realised in the instance such that she is able to turn back, to 'see' things as they are. This may seem like an abstruse metaphysical question, but it seems one that is germane given the claim that our brains are in fact products of our own creation. There is a subtle shift in the interpretation of neurogenesis within the

programme from that of the neuroscientific research it sites (Maguire et al 2000). Within the curriculum there emerges a distinct subject who is 'creating' her brain. And accordingly, it is this subject who appears to have the capacity to choose her state of mind despite the difficulties of her circumstances. Given the apparent pedestalling of neuroscience as an epistemic authority on the mind within the curriculum and given the general scepticism around the capacity for what is commonly thought of as volition within the neurosciences, this formulation of radical agency is arguably somewhat incongruous (see Libet 1999; Walter 2001; Haggard 2008, 2017).

The programme prescribes and attempts to facilitate a form of reflexivity that is *felt:* embodied and emotionally entuned. There is a subtle dualism within this formulation, whereby the embodied and emotional dimensions of reflexivity appear to be constituted as 'representations', as information acquired by a dispassionate and rationalistic subject (Taylor 1989; Billig 2008). These practices, moreover, draw heavily upon MBCT and appear to be largely conceptualised in terms of cognitive behavioural theory, though they are more significantly delimited than would be the case in a therapeutic context. As such, in addition to the mindfulness exercises, the curriculum entails worksheets and classroom discussions for reflecting upon issues such as stress, worry and rumination (thought busses), though these discussions are curtailed to issues considered appropriate for the classroom. However, this delimitation of discussion results in a structure or model for interaction that is somewhat didactic. As such, the child who is positioned as radically agentive in her capacity for 'choosing' her subjective states is constituted within the practical instructions of the curriculum as docile, as a largely passive recipient of lessons.

7. Silence and Stillness

7.1 Introduction

> 'Monkey mind' is a term often used to describe the restlessness of the mind, jumping around from idea to idea, from worry to anxiety...joy to excitement...like a monkey swinging from a tree. With mindfulness we can learn to bring the monkey out of the trees, to sit quietly on the jungle floor for a bit.
> (.b teaching notes, script, L3 p.6)

> [Y]ou are very carefully steering the direction of a lesson towards the practice part; the flow of each lesson gently but very deliberately steers the students towards being able to sit quietly.
> (Hot to Teach .b, p.6)

Throughout the previous chapters, I have argued that .b provides tools through which students' subjectivities are guided by the teacher and strategies that students are taught for managing themselves. Within the classroom, the exercises and activities of .b are led by teachers, drawing upon the course materials, their training and previous experiences. However, they are also suffused with bodily affects and shaped by tacit understandings, recent interactions and patterned relationships of teachers and students. These exercises call for bodily actions (postures, engagement and relaxation of muscles, facial expressions), inculcate various 'feelings' in participants and are hoped, over time, to sediment patterns of thinking and feeling that are deemed to be healthy and which henceforth feed back into experiences of exercises themselves (Stanley & Kortelainen 2019). These myriad intra- and interpersonal processes and mundane objects (teaching guides, lesson materials, things in the classroom) make up the assemblage that is .b at any one time. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explore how .b took shape within the relational and material space of the lessons I observed. How are the discourses and practices of .b drawn upon in the constitution and regulation of particular kinds of subjects? Furthermore, following the ethical focus on 'tensions' I have outlined, I will particularly explore tensions that play out between ideals of the subject portrayed in discourses surrounding .b and the relations of subjects within the practical assemblages that constitute these lessons.

The primary data for this chapter were field notes from the observations of .b lessons at the four schools I visited. The extracts discussed are reconstructions of events that are inevitably fragmented, affected, recollected and imbued with subjective meanings rather than objective reflections of 'events'. The extracts are taken from extensive field notes that I hand wrote during observations and later typed up each day. Extracts from the .b teaching guides are drawn on to contextualise field notes and arguments. In addition, although I am primarily focusing on my observations of lessons, I will occasionally draw on my ethnography of .b teacher training. Examining these field notes alongside classroom observations will help to shed light on how certain issues were discussed by teachers behind the scenes, and to consider how these issues played out in the lessons observed. Moreover, the focus and unit of analysis for this chapter is 'practice'. Here, I am drawing from the work of a number of theorists and by 'practice', I broadly mean activities that carry the imprint of norms which govern certain spaces and relations, and through which those

spaces and relations are shaped (Bourdieu 1990; Ortner 2006). When I use the term 'practices' I am referring to all of those activities and interactions which relate to the programme, as well as general practices of the classroom. Importantly, such practices are always both repetitive, citing pre-existing ideas and norms, and innovative, responding to an immediate context (Deleuze 1994). Where I refer to 'exercises', I mean specifically those practices that are termed 'mindfulness' within .b.

Existing literature on mindfulness pedagogy in adult MBSR courses has noted a tension between the need for the teacher to guide learning in line with curriculum objectives and the dictum that the student is sovereign 'knower' of their subjective experience (Crane et al 2015). Such literature recognises that the mindfulness teacher occupies a position of relative power in her capacity to steer the conversation and shape particular forms of 'insight'. Research using conversation analysis has explored how teachers negotiate these tensions to more-or-less collaboratively produce subjectivities that align with mindfulness discourse (Stanley & Crane 2016; Stanley & Longden 2016). As such, part of the purpose of the chapter will be to explore how teachers draw on the programme in interactions with students to facilitate the construction of mindful, self-reflexive subjects. However, in notable contrast to adult mindfulness courses, students within the lessons I observed were not voluntary participants. The educational context is characterised by a particular inequality of power whereby students' bodies are regulated by school staff, who themselves are situated within a broader system of monitoring and evaluation.

Student-teacher interactions around .b were therefore framed by teachers' strategies for 'classroom management' and norms of conduct. That is, discourses and practices of .b became interwoven with institutional strategies for the management of students' bodies, speech, dispositions and emotional expressions. These strategies cannot simply be seen as authoritative discipline but related to the ways in which teaching staff negotiated institutional obligations with the requirements of delivering .b. This entailed mediating tensions between the therapeutic orientation of .b and the educational context. That is, teachers needed to preserve their position of authority and ensure the continuity of the lesson, sometimes against students' will, whilst maintaining the appearance of compassion. Additionally, particularly during discussions around 'difficult emotions', teachers needed to guide and delimit discussions to deflect personal disclosures whilst simultaneously appearing open and supportive. These strategies may have been, at various times, more or less conscious but always embodied and unfolding within relational space. These tensions and mediating strategies form a central focus of the chapter.

Analysing the embodied practices of .b necessitated an expanded repertoire of tools than I employed for analysing data in previous chapters. Throughout the analysis that follows, I have drawn on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) to conceptualise space as affective and relationally constructed. Here, affect refers to flows within and between bodies: the capacity for bodies to affect each other and be affected. Drawing on the notion of affect enables an analysis of mindfulness as embodied and somatic but not purely 'internal'. Space, from this perspective, is the product of relations between people, their histories, imaginaries, sentiments, and their interactions with material structures and artefacts (Buchanan & Lambert 2005). Spaces are shot through with and shaped by affects. Nonetheless, given the centrality of notions of 'emotion regulation' to .b, 'emotion'

remains an important concept. Where I simply use the term 'emotion', I refer to a presumed internal state (as it is presented in .b) but also how that state is given value and defined socially (Lupton 1998). The field notes in this chapter are presented as reconstructions of 'affective-discursive practices' (Walkerdine 2007, 2010; Wetherell 2013), that is human interactions that are embodied, socially and spatially embedded and semantically encoded.

Before I go on, a number of caveats must be noted about what this chapter does and does not set out to achieve. Firstly, it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive exploration of .b lessons, which would be unproductive and tiresome. My focus is narrowed to explore how teachers and students draw on the programme to shape practices and values of subjectivity (or ways of being and ways of valuing beings) and struggles that coalesced around these interactions. The examples I have chosen are not intended to be representative of any totality that is '.b'. Rather, I have drawn attention to moments that expose tensions around ideals and practices of the subject in .b, particularly because these mark spaces for ethical reflection and progress. To draw on mindfulness discourse, this could be thought about as 'leaning into discomfort' at a social, rather than intrapersonal, scale. I am not comparing approaches to delivery across the schools on any terms. Nor am I evaluating the appropriateness of teachers' teaching or interpretations of the programme. Instead, I explore some of the possible interpretations the programme permits and the ways in which it becomes enmeshed with mundane practices of the classroom.

The remainder of the chapter is split into three overarching sections. The first section, *Setting the scene,* provides practical details about the programme's delivery across the schools and outlines some of the various differences and continuities across the lessons observed, including those between schools and amongst different students. The latter two sections (*A raisin in one hand and a stick in the other, Turning towards difficulty)* cover, in turn, tensions surrounding discipline, authority and the self-creating subject that is depicted within the course, and those surrounding notions of emotional flexibility, suffering and normativity. The central argument builds on the tensions identified between ideals of the programme as a practice of self-exploration and the disciplinary regimes of education. In particular, I argue that the notions of universal humanism which infuse the programme are translated in the pedagogic context to a form of therapeutic normativity that is fundamentally exclusive.

7.2 Setting scenes

As I explored in Chapter Three, the circumstances of the delivery of .b varied significantly across the four schools in the study. Often, teachers explained that their approach to delivery was pragmatic: constrained by timetabling priorities and staff numbers (only one or two teachers were trained to deliver .b per school). Though I am not comparing the schools, the different formats of delivery shaped the lessons I observed in significant ways. For example, the degree of familiarity that students had with the teacher and each other, the circumstances in which they were assigned to the programme and the social demographics of schools shaped the social and affective landscape that lessons came to play out in. In total, I observed nine groups of students (three at School One, and two each at School Two, Three and Four), taught by four teachers (one teacher at each school). Each

of these teachers explained that they practiced mindfulness daily, that they were motivated by concerns around students' wellbeing and that they perceived mental health to be of greater importance than academic attainment. Nonetheless, the settings in which these teachers taught differed markedly. In what follows, I attempt to sketch out key differences across the schools and some of the overarching differences in how students responded to and were positioned within .b lessons.

The format of delivery across the schools is summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Overview of format of delivery across schools

School	Targeted /untargeted	Year Groups	Mindfulness delivery
School One	Targeted	Year 7, 8 & 9 (1 group observed in each year group)	Freelance mindfulness teacher*
School Two	Untargeted	Year 8 (2 groups observed)	Behaviour support officer
School Three	Targeted	Year 7 (2 groups observed)	SENCO
School Four	Untargeted	Year 8 (2 groups observed)	RE Teacher

The entire syllabus (excluding the introductory lesson, which were delivered in assemblies) was observed with each group at School One (N24) and School Two (N16).
Supplementary observations were conducted at School Three (N2) and School Four (N3)
**Freelance mindfulness teachers are those who are not necessarily trained as classroom teachers and do not work for the school directly.*

Continuity and divergence
In both School One and Three, the programme was delivered with a targeted group of students that were felt to have particular needs. In School One, the students were selected from throughout each year group (from Year 7-9, separated by year group) and therefore did not have any other lessons together as a group. Students could be chosen for various reasons, from perceived anxiety, to behavioural issues, to problems at home. In an initial meeting at the school, it was explained by a member of staff that this approach had been adopted to ensure that those perceived to be most in need could access .b, given that there was no slot available within the timetable. These classes were taught by an external mindfulness teacher, who also worked with adults and at a number of other schools. Lessons were usually conducted with a member of the pastoral team present in the room. Both classes at School Three were in a 'nurture group', separate from the mainstream school, and both were in Year 7. This group included those with diagnoses of learning difficulties, and a number of other students who were felt to be 'struggling'. Here, .b was delivered by a learning support assistant who the students were familiar with.

At School Two, the programme was delivered with all students in Year 8, and the lessons I observed were conducted by a behavioural support officer who was familiar to some students in the classes (primarily those perceived to have learning or behavioural difficulties). This teacher also worked outside of school as a counsellor for adults and young people. Finally, in School Four, the programme was conducted by an RE teacher with her two Year 8 RE classes. The teacher was well known to the students and also ran a mindfulness lunch club, which I visited, and which was popular with a small and apparently committed group of students. The teacher had received part of her funding for .b training from the parents' association, which had also made requests for her to run a mindfulness course for parents. From this and other conversations, it became apparent that many parents at this school were supportive of and interested in mindfulness. It was at this school, and under these conditions, that the affective practices within the lessons most resembled the ideals prescribed in .b lesson plans: in which bodies were eager and compliant, emotions were expressed and contained in ways that adhered to both syllabus objectives and institutional norms.

As I visited School Four towards the end of my research, I was surprised by the enthusiasm with which students contributed to classroom discussions around experiences of mindfulness and worries. At other schools, students often seemed interested and willing to contribute to general discussions around the lesson but were generally reluctant to discuss 'common worries' or experiences of mindfulness'. During initial observations at School Two, a few students confidently offered their experiences of exercises, but this willingness waned throughout the course (perhaps due to fears about the impressions of other students). In many observations, such discussions were met with silence, sarcasm and some reluctant contributions. This was not always the case. However, many students appeared reluctant to say anything that could be perceived to relate to them personally. This is something I will return to later.

The greater level of engagement from students at School Four was reflected in the general dynamism of the lesson and the time that was spent on these discussions. That is, a much greater proportion of the lesson was spent on discussions, mindfulness exercises, and worksheet activities than on covering the material within .b PowerPoints. As this material is quite extensive, the majority of time within School One and Two was spent covering the PowerPoint. As was noted by a number of teachers (in interviews and schools) the breadth and format of these materials means that much of the syllabus is largely didactic. Nonetheless, the greater familiarity between teacher and student and amongst class members at School Four may have facilitated a sense of safety and openness in which both teacher and students felt comfortable to linger on discussions for longer.

However, intersecting with differences in delivery were issues relating to socioeconomic demographics and the murkier but pertinent issue of social class. In Table 7.2 below, I have used free school meals as a (flawed) proxy for gauging socioeconomic differences across the schools.

Table 7.2 Key demographics of participating schools

School	% Free School Meals	% Ethnic Minority(EM)/English Second Language (ESL)	Etsyn/ OFSTED rating
School 1 (Primary site 1)	27.6%	>3% (EM)	Unsatisfactory
School 2 (Primary site 2)	8.4%	3.7% (ESL)	Requires Improvement
School 3 (Pilot study)	10.4%	5.2% (ESL)	Good
School 4 (Additional data)	5.4%	1.4% (ESL)	Outstanding

Data taken from government or local government sources

Schools Two, Three and Four all have lower proportions of students on free school meals than the English national average of 13.6% (DfE 2018).[9] The percentage at School Four (5.4%) is less than half of this average. As noted in Chapter 1, interest in educational mindfulness within the UK initially emerged within the public-school sphere. Moreover, through my recruitment, interviews and .b training it became apparent that uptake of .b was still primarily limited in the state sector to high achieving schools in relatively affluent areas. The tendency of parents to deploy strategies to enhance educational capital has long been acknowledged as a hallmark of the middle-classes (Bourdieu 1984; Ball 2003; Vincent & Ball 2006). As such, the relative interest amongst parents at School Four (their willingness and capacity to fund the teacher's training), may be seen as reflective of the particular class demographic of this school.

The demographics of the schools were broadly reflective of geographical patterns of inequality around the UK. Schools Two, Three and Four each sat on the edge of pretty villages in Southern England. By contrast, School One was situated in a post-industrial town in Central Wales, with high levels of unemployment and low wage employment. As these schools were funded by local authorities, disparities in socioeconomic demographics were reflected in available resources. Financial struggles were, of course, not unique to School One. Teachers at a number of schools spoke about the scarcity of resources and the extreme strain that this placed on teachers. Nonetheless, the visible traces of financial struggles were more apparent at School One, where corridors were unheated throughout

9 I have used the English national average for free school meal eligibility as a benchmark, as the majority of the schools were in England. The national average of children both eligible and registered for free school meals in Wales in 2018 was 16% (Children's Society 2018). Specific figures for different Assembly constituencies in Wales can be found at statswales.gov.wales.

winter and metal shutters were pulled down to keep the warmth in. This school was in the process of undergoing significant structural changes as cost saving measures at the behest of the local authority. Teachers at this school were therefore providing for a far greater number of students in difficult circumstances, whilst themselves working under conditions of transition and precarity.

Bodies that feel, bodies that convey, and bodies that push back

Across the schools, students at School One demonstrated most open resistance to the programme. Indeed, a number of students at School One who were selected to participate refused to attend, and three Year 7 students were eventually removed from the programme as a result of disruptive behaviour. In other schools, whilst degrees of participation in discussions and exercises varied, only a small number of students actively disrupted exercises. Students who were likely to comply with the teacher on other matters were also those who demonstrated most active interest in the programme, and the same is true in reverse. Whilst this may seem unsurprising, it demonstrates how tightly interwoven the programme was to the existing system of school authority, despite the fact that the programme is differentiated in its emphasis on wellbeing from the traditional educational agenda. I frequently heard teachers explain to students that the programme was *'something for you'*. This, in itself, is interesting given that all aspects of education are theoretically intended to be in the interests of the student. As such, .b may have been distinguished in this way because students are thought to prize their subjective happiness over future success and because the programme is not directly linked to school attainment targets. Despite this framing however, students did not *choose* to participate and, as such, it became apparent that compliance or resistance to the programme was tantamount to compliance or resistance to the school and teacher.

Resistance was communicated by students both physically and vocally. At times, this resistance could be minor and subtle: slumping, wriggling, eye rolling and coldly staring and at other times more overt such as by banging things, throwing things or leaving the classroom. Vocal expressions of resistance included groaning, sighing, sarcasm, or coughing, whistling, shouting or singing during exercises. Yet, forms of resistance are not only conscious and intentional, but are bodily experiences and expressions that are mediated by the meanings *attached* to bodies (both students and teacher): how these bodies are identified and how they are positioned. That is, 'who' students were, how their subjectivities were made intelligible through the daily practices of the school arguably shaped students 'openness' to the programme on a visceral level. Moreover, these bodily expressions loop back into the ways that students were subjectivated in the classroom: as signifiers of who was 'good' and who was 'naughty', as read and responded to by the teacher, other students and myself as I attempted to make sense of the practices in terms of the available discourses of schooling.

In attempting to understand how social positionalities shape students relationships to schooling, Gillborn (1990) draws on the notion of the 'ideal student'. He argues that this ideal is the white middle-class professional (rational, intellectual, complaisant) student, and that learners' identities are largely constituted in relation to perceptions of their relative distance from this ideal. This ideal is frequently directly opposed to those of student

subcultures, as those who are marginalised construct opposing frameworks of value (Youdell 2006a; Skeggs 2011). Thus, for example, ideals of white working-class masculinity, (assertive, playful, anti-authoritarian) sit in opposition to those of the good student (as calm, attentive, complaisant) (Youdell 2006a). For students who fall markedly short of educational ideals, resistance to schooling may therefore form an essential condition for the maintenance of status within student subcultures. Thus, as mindfulness is validated within the normative framework of the school and given the conspicuous similarity between characteristics associated with mindfulness and those of 'good behaviour', for some students, engagement with mindfulness becomes a battleground in which status and identity are arguably at stake.

These insights could go some of the way to explaining why some students were immediately resistant to the programme and why such students were more preponderant in School One, in which the majority of students were from working class backgrounds and where participants had been specifically targeted on the basis of a perceived need. It has been argued that affectivities and dispositions are themselves mediums of communicating value (Skeggs 2004). Working class students are not only further from the tacit ideal subject of education, but the greater emphasis within white-British working class cultures on present conditions, familial and community relations and tangible experiences of pain and pleasure are at odds with the values of personal value accrual and self-improvement that are axiomatic to neoliberal education and which subtly suffuse .b (evident, for example, in ideas of 'training the mind' for lesser reactivity and greater attentiveness) (Skeggs 2011; Zizek 2000). Moreover, a number of sociologists have argued that confessional and therapeutic practices have been bound up with the emergence of a particular middle-class subjectivity, and as such there is a greater predisposition amongst the middle and upper classes to learning practices of abstract reflexivity, public self-expression, and 'self-enhancement' (Rieff 1966; Lears 1981; Pfister 1997; Skeggs 2011).

The normative valuation of therapeutic practices of self-enhancement encourages the perception that students who are less engaged in mindfulness are less capable of recognising its inherent value. Yet, the different responses of students across the schools can therefore be read precisely in terms of struggles over value. To be clear, that is not to say that mindfulness exercises are not or cannot be beneficial to working class students. Rather, it is to say that when such exercises are packaged within a broader system from which such students are alienated and devalued, the exercises themselves become a site of struggle.

The field note below is taken from my first observation of a Year 8 class:

> Mr Williams and I arrive at the lesson before most of the pupils and he chats to a few students in a friendly manner as they enter the room. There is quite a lot of fuss at the beginning of the lesson, which does not start for some time while we wait for all of the students to arrive. As students assemble into the room and take their seats, two students ask Mr Williams why they have to take part in the programme, and another three students say that they have completed it in previous terms. It becomes clear that students have not been told why they were asked to come to the room. Mr Williams explains that he has not selected them to be there, but that if they have

done it before he will speak to the Assistant Head about why they have been asked again. He tells them that if they have been told to come they have to stay. A teaching assistant enters the room and says to Mr Williams '*I'm on behaviour'* and he briefly discusses with her which students should be joining the class.

After a few minutes, another student, Ella, enters the room and glances around. She says, *'what are we doing here?'* and Mr Williams explains that they are there to do mindfulness. Mike, a student who is sitting in the back row, throws his hands in the air dramatically and says, '*I hate mindfulness!'* before humming *'mmmmmmm'* and miming meditation: eyes closed, arms bent aside his head, thumb and forefinger together. Ms Frith, takes the seat next to him but says nothing.

Mr Williams ignores this and tells another student to spit his gum out. The boy huffs and exclaims *'what!?'* before skulking to the bin. While Mr Williams is recounting the school policy on gum, Mike shouts '*why are we doing this?'*. Mr Williams, turns to him, keeping his cool, and says he will explain shortly. As this is going on, Ella explains to Ms Frith that another girl refused to come and asks if she can go and get her. Ms Frith says that isn't necessary before explaining to Mr Williams that two students refused to come, and one is absent. He tells her that it is compulsory: they can't refuse to come, or they will need to speak to the Assistant Head.

Within this first lesson, the students' targeted conscription to the programme arguably generates an initial tone of resistance. Their demands to know why they have been asked to come reflects frustration at, but relative resignation to, their lack of choice about the routine activities of school life. Though a number of students have completed the programme before, they are reliant upon Mr Williams to relay their grievance to the Assistant Head, yet their frustration is largely directed at him as the figure of their confinement. Mike's ridiculing, commenting on the 'strangeness' of mindfulness, precedes his question '*why do we have to do this?'*. The lack of choice about participation, the enforced spitting out of gum, and the positioning of an adult body next to that of an unruly child, are not particular to .b, but are common classroom practices which mark the boundaries of students' freedom within that space. They are the deep striations which etch out the social space in which this lesson comes to play out. They are not prior to or apart from, but fundamentally enmeshed within the assemblage that is '.b' within this classroom at this time, and through which the affects of the various practices of the lesson on students' bodies take shape.

1.3 A raisin in one hand and a 'stick' in the other

The statement '*a raisin in one hand and a stick in the other'* is the subheading for a section on classroom management in *'How to teach .b'*. The phrase is a play on a metaphor about discipline (replace 'raisin' with 'carrot') via reference to a popular mindfulness exercise of eating a raisin. The saying infers that the most effective way to influence behaviour is through balancing rewards and (potential) punishment. The playful style of the statement reflects the general light-hearted tone of the teaching guides. Within this guidance, teachers are encouraged to adopt a marginally more liberal style of discipline than is typical in the

classroom, whilst nonetheless upholding their position as a steward of order. The following extract is taken from this guidance:

> [Y]ou are trying to embody mindfulness...Students will almost certainly fool around, call out, go off the point, fidget, fall asleep and so on. You need to be able to resist pulling them up on every little thing...help them to see these lessons as different from the norm. At the same time, ground rules and boundaries are required to safeguard the learning environment and the emotional security of the class, as well as supporting your authority as a teacher.
> (How to Teach .b, p.4)

By stating that the teacher should try to 'embody mindfulness', the extract is indicating that they should model a certain disposition as an example to students about the attitudes that they are trying to inculcate. Moreover, the extract encourages teachers to be more lenient than usual to mark the lessons as *'different to the norm'*. Within observations, teachers generally, though not always, adopted a more relaxed approach to discipline than I am used to seeing in secondary school classrooms. I rarely saw students reprimanded for wearing uniforms incorrectly, for 'calling out', or for sitting with heads on desks. At the same time, there was, in most schools, a subtle, low level monitoring of bodies (the removal of things being fiddled with, telling students to move seats, asking them to stop speaking and so on), controls geared towards minimising distractions to the 'learning environment' (Eggermont 2001).

In addition to modifications to expectations of bodily conduct, teachers often adopted non-directive language to hedge the appearance of their authority (Mercer 2004). Frequently, mindfulness exercises were introduced as suggestions (such as *'Let's do a practice now'*). These exercises were not optional, but teachers did not enforce participation with students who did not comply. At times, teachers drew on ideas within the programme about the naturalness of mind wandering to avoid reprimanding students for minor disruption during exercises. The following field note is taken from the first lesson with a group of Year 8 students at School Two, as the teacher is running through a mindfulness exercise. The majority of students spoke very little throughout the lesson. Hayley and Charlie were the two most vocal students and often laughed, joked or made noises during exercises:

> When it comes to the finger breathing exercise, Mr Thomas demonstrates on his fingers. Holding his hand out, he explains that they should trace their finger up the outside of thumb on the inhale, and down the inside on the exhale, and so on for each finger. He tells them that they don't need to sit in a particular way for this, but that they need to do it quietly so that they can concentrate. He begins *'so just starting to feel the feet on the floor…and now becoming aware of the breath*'. During the exercise, Charlie laughs loudly and a few students around him also start to giggle. Two girls close to me start giggling silently and smirking in Charlie's direction. When Charlie becomes very lively, writhing about and tapping his feet on the floor, Mr Thomas walks over and stands next to him, continuing to lead the exercise with the class, and Charlie quietens down. However, the giggling seems to have disrupted the

exercise, and so Mr Thomas says that they will do it again, this time with their eyes closed. He runs through the exercise a second time and the class are more settled.

After the exercise, Charlie wriggles about even more than before. He taps his feet and shakes and shouts out things at random. Mr Thomas looks over to him and says, '*Do you need a bit of time?'* Gesturing outdoors. He explains, '*I'm not sending you out, but do you need a bit of time?'* His tone is gentle. Charlie says *'No, I'm fine'* and becomes slightly more settled.

Hayley, who is sat in front of Charlie, breathes loudly in an exaggerated manner, laughing and pretending to count on her fingers. Mr Thomas, looks over to her and says, firmly but gently '*You ok?'* Hayley says, '*I found it really hard!'* Mr Thomas says, '*I know'*. She says, '*I kept laughing'*. And Mr Thomas says, '*I know'*. Then he turns to the class and says that if they found it hard, he's not going to get them in trouble, that it's very normal at this stage, and he just wants them to think about why it was hard. He asks them to think about this as they fill in the worksheet.
(School Two, Group two, L1) `

In this extract, the 'contemplative mood' that the exercise is arguably hoped to generate is disturbed by Charlie's laughing. Mr Thomas' instructions call for students' bodies to soften, to synchronise in both movement (of one finger tracing another, of inhaling and exhaling) and feeling (feeling the feet on the floor, noticing the breath*)*, with his guidance - which is delivered not as demands but as expressions of what already is (becom*ing* aware). By laughing Charlie not only refuses to feel and to do as instructed but makes its own claim on the bodies of members of the class. Bodies re-stiffen, and attention is drawn back to the noise. Charlie's laughter, and later Hayley's mocking, mark a rejection of the exercise that is returned by the smirking of other students. The laughter breaks the spell of the teachers' instructions and simultaneously carves out new lines in which compliance or non-compliance arguably signifies an allegiance: are you with us or with 'sir'?

Mr Thomas's response serves to reassert his control over the class whilst avoiding direct confrontation with the offending students. The statement *'You ok?',* formulated as though checking on Hayley's welfare, seems to say not really 'how are you?' but rather 'I see you': a reminder of his oversight and authority. The meaning of his questions is captured in what is unspoken: *'Do you need a bit of time* [to get it together and behave appropriately again]?', *'You ok?'* ['Can you control that behaviour?]*'*. The ambiguity of the response serves a disciplinary function (to mark the behaviour as inappropriate, to assert his position as a monitor of conduct), whilst avoiding the need to explicitly reprimand. Moreover, by formulating his responses as questions, Mr Thomas re-positions the student as the custodian of their own behaviour. He implicitly relays a choice: will you comply now?. Finally, both Hayley and Mr Thomas frame the laughter in terms of difficulty rather than disobedience. In asking the students to think about 'why they found it difficult', he situates the students as investigators of their experience, probing them to be reflective about the emotional response that provoked the laughter, and in doing so subverting the students' acts of resistance as a pedagogical tool for developing mindful reflexivity. Thus, here the discourse of mindful reflexivity enables Mr Thomas to constitute Charlie's and Hayley's displays as within the realms of acceptable conduct.

For Charlie, mindfulness exercises frequently sparked agitation, and his outbursts resulted in him recurrently being removed from the classroom. Though Mr Thomas was clearly uncomfortable about excluding him, Charlie's dramatic movements and noises pulled on the attention of others too strongly for the exercises to continue 'effectively'. Across the schools, there were times where exercises stilled bodies and silenced voices in a way that was striking, and in which a space emerged such that the words of instructions *(Dropping attention into the feet…)* landed on bodies and appeared to produce the feelings they described. And yet, on one such occasion, or as I interpreted it, the teachers' signalling the end of the exercise was accompanied by gasps of relief and groans of annoyance. Thus, within the classroom, calm and compliance were tightly bound and difficult to disentangle.

Perceived tensions between authority and mindfulness were a central topic of conversations during my .b training. During these discussions, a number of attendees noted that, in schools, many aspects of mindfulness - silence, stillness, 'paying attention' - are associated with commands or reprimands. Within lesson plans, there is an attempt to playfully subvert these connotations, positioning the student not as a disciplined subject but as she who chooses to be mindful in the interest of her own wellbeing. For example, the first lesson of .b is called 'Play Attention', and the behavioural regulations for the course entail an attempt to reconceptualize silence as 'nourishing'. These behavioural regulations are themselves subversive: though they follow the basic formulation of 'ground rules' (an enumerated list of rules and expectations) they are called 'For Best Results' and are constructed as wise choices the students make to maximise the benefits of mindfulness.

The first instruction in this list, 'Choose strong silence', is particularly interesting. Teaching guides reference the work of Helen Lees (2013), who defines 'weak silence' as when students are *told* to be silent and 'strong silence' as a choice that students make for themselves. The inherent contradiction in framing regulations and obligations as student preferences, is marginally obscured by the phrasing of ground rules as 'wise choices'. However, in practice within the classroom, silence is arguably a central site for struggles over power (Gallagher 2011). Generally within observations, silence was not chosen by students but was initiated by teachers via suggestive statements: *'Let's do a strong silence', 'Let's have a strong silence please'* or more subtly *'Let's settle down'*. When students were particularly noisy, silence could be more directly enforced by reprimanding students who continued to make noise. However, silence could also accompany an atmosphere of discomfort where attempts to engage students in interactive elements of the class were met with reticence. Prolonged periods of quiet could signal a challenge to the teachers authority, leaving them exasperated and imploring: *'if you guys contribute we're going to get along a lot better!'* (Mr Wilson). Here, the threat of the figurative stick is implicit: now is not the time to be silent, contribute or someone might get in trouble.

At still other times, silence retained its explicitly disciplinary function. Hence, in a lesson at School One in which the classroom buzzed with noise and excitement that refused to quieten at the teachers' requests, and in which some students left their seats and others left the classroom, silence was imposed as a part-exercise, part-retribution. Here, the noise and disorder of the classroom and the challenge to the teachers' authority marked the limits of

the choosing subject and thus instructions were phrased as directives: *'Close your eyes. I don't want to hear a sound other than the sound of my voice…'* (Mr Wilson).

1.4 Turning towards difficulty: navigating emotional space

As I have argued in the previous chapter, the techniques and exercises of the programme are broadly geared towards the cultivation of skills in emotional regulation, in part via the enhancement of 'meta-cognition'. Below, I want to examine how some of the key strategies were enacted within the lessons I observed. Firstly, however, I will critically explore the ideas that tacitly underpinned conceptions of emotions within my .b teacher training.

Across the four days of my training, attendees raised a number of concerns in relation to some of the interactive elements of .b. These concerns related to how certain exercises might be experienced by students with particular needs and around the limitations of supporting such students within the classroom. In such instances, trainers were quick to reassure attendees that the exercises were safe as they were 'light touch'. Trainees frequently explained that it was important that teachers did not expose students' 'soft underbelly': that is, render them vulnerable or expose serious emotional difficulties. These explanations relied on a notion of depth that has resonances with psychoanalytic theory: that serious emotional troubles lie deep under the surface of the psyche and that the exercises do not penetrate deeply enough to unleash them (Illouz 2008). Moreover, despite the emphasis on the interconnectedness of mind and body within modern understandings of mindfulness, dualistic interpretations of thoughts and feelings tacitly infused these conversations. The extract below is taken from my notes of the second day of training, during a group discussion after the trainees had practiced delivering a FOFBOC.

> During a period for questions, an attendee raises a concern. The attendee says that the exercise reminded them of a female student with an extremely negative body image, and they wonder how she would feel about 'dropping into' different parts of the body. One of the course trainers responds by saying that '*what we are doing is sensing the body rather than thinking about it'*, and that '*body image is* an *idea rather than a feeling'*. The attendee appears satisfied with this and notes that in sensing the body 'we are all equal.' There are murmurs of agreement amongst the group.

In reassuring the attendee, the trainer explained that the 'sense' of the body is separate from the 'mental image' of the body. The implication, moreover, is that this distinction renders the former outside of the influence of the latter, and therefore a potentially safe space for a person with negative body image. Such interpretations were arguably reinforced by literal readings of the 'hot cross bun' of experience (see Chapter 6), which can be seen to suggest that phenomenological components of experience are ontologically discrete. Nonetheless, whilst there is an influential strand of contemporary neuroscience that views emotions in terms of somatic patterns in the body (LeDoux 1998, Damasio 1999), such research does not indicate that the *experience* of emotions is reducible to their somatic content. Nor does this research imply that physiological and somatic components of emotions are prior to or outside of the influence of cognitive processes. Even if it were possible to directly access the somatic content of an experience, it would be a particularly

impressive feat for a young girl, in the context of a classroom, to do so in spite of other influences which might hold compelling emotional valence (such as, for example the semantic associations with various body parts that might cause dissatisfaction). More concerning, however, is the innocent conclusion that 'in that way we are equal', which refers to the assumption that 'direct experience' (Sharf 1995) bypasses the various social and political forces which shape our identities in everyday life.

The subject that is presented in these discussions is a subject that has a radical capacity to separate aspects of her experience: to compartmentalise certain emotions from others, to isolate feelings in relation to a mindfulness exercise from feelings in relation to the social context of that exercise (such as, for example, her feelings about others' perceptions of her body; thoughts of her peers, her teachers, and her daily experience of schooling), and within later exercises, to evoke and 'switch off' these emotions at relative will.

Further concerns were raised, for example, in relation to the 'thought bus' exercise. This exercise follows a lesson in which the notion of 'thought busses' is introduced as a metaphor for rumination. The message of the lesson is that we can choose whether or not to 'get on a thought bus' i.e. whether to continue with a thought as it arises or allow it to pass. Within the exercise, students are asked to stand and close their eyes, before the teacher draws their attention to the feeling of the breath. Next, teachers say a number of words that are deemed either neutral or mildly provocative and students are told to notice the sensations that arise in the body. The following extract is taken from a discussion around this exercise, in which a trainee raises a concern about the notion of 'being with difficulty':

> During the discussion, an attendee expresses some concerns around safeguarding. They explain that they are worried about students with learning difficulties and mental health problems, and the idea of 'being with whatever is there' and 'turning towards emotions'. The attendee notes that very difficult emotions may come up for students and asks whether there are not times when it is inappropriate to ask students to 'turn towards' their feelings. One of the course trainers replies that they have not found it to be a difficult exercise. The trainer notes that focussing on the lower half of the body is grounding and that it's important to 'keep it light hearted'.
>
> Another trainer interjects and emphasises that .b 'isn't therapy', noting that it is important to 'keep the enquiry light'. The attendee that raised the question still seems concerned, they push back and ask whether turning towards things isn't 'contra-indicated' for certain students. One of the trainers replies that if it gets 'too much' students can always come back to grounding in the feet, and another explains that it's not about turning towards our darkest thoughts - if something does come up for a student the teacher should pass it on to the relevant people in the school, counselling or student support. The trainer says this is why it is important to 'know our pupils'.

In this interaction, emotional experience is projected in terms of metaphors of space, depth and weight, light and darkness (Kovecses 2003). Though the exercise involves 'turning towards' difficult emotions, we can always ground ourselves in the body. The tangibility of

the body draws the student back from deeper and darker realms of emotional space. This notion of 'turning towards' difficulty (but not towards our 'darkest thoughts') depicts an agentive self that skilfully traverses her emotional landscape ('not that way - too dark, let's turn the other way'). In contrast, the attendees concern that turning towards things may be 'contra-indicated' for certain students, implies that some students (perhaps with medical diagnoses) may not navigate this space with such ease - perhaps they may not be able to 'turn back'. The attendees use of medical language suggests their desire to emphasise the seriousness of the concern, and the trainers respond by re-asserting the 'lightness' of the exercise and deferring to the wider psychological support network within the school.

Following the thought bus exercise at the training course, I also raised a concern. Though I usually avoided contributing questions that might steer the group discussion, I found the exercise particularly unsettling. As with all of the exercises, this exercise was delivered as a role play: with the trainer as teacher and trainees as students. The words chosen by the trainer were *friends, Facebook, email* and *family*. The concern I expressed was that whilst such words may be neutral or mildly agitating for some people, they may evoke more painful associations for others. In response to my concern, the trainer explained that they would not typically use words such as 'family', that they would only use 'neutral' words. The question, though, is words that are neutral *for whom?*

In practice, I only observed the thought bus exercise with the Year 9 class at School One.[10] The words chosen were: *Facebook, exams, friends, family* and *argument*. The choice of these words reflects a combination of the perceived dangers that .b addresses (exam pressure, social media) and 'obvious' choices that seem universally relevant (family, arguments). In fact, all of these words except 'family' are suggested in the .b teaching guide for the practice. Watching over the class, students turned their heads down away from me. The lesson finished abruptly afterwards, with no discussion or debrief - the lesson itself was content heavy and it had been a struggle to find time for the exercise. The teacher explained that students should do a FOFBOC if the exercise had been difficult, and then the bell rang, and students grabbed their bags and piled out.

Normalising worries

A number of lessons over the course of the nine weeks involve group discussions around worries (L3), ruminations (L6) and stresses (L7). These discussions are framed in general terms e.g. *'common worries of people your age'* rather than specific, personal problems, with the exception of one worksheet in Lesson Six (see Chapter 6). Nonetheless, as was explained in my training, the purpose of these discussions is to topicalise issues that are relevant for members of the class and to reassure students that these worries are 'normal'. Teaching guidelines for .b include a number of anticipated answers and these reflect the problems that .b is perceived to address (school work, social media, friendship troubles and arguments with siblings). In practice, these discussions varied somewhat across the school. Some students provided these anticipated answers, and, at other times, students responded

[10] This practice was not conducted with all student groups. At School Two the teacher chose to reduce some of the content of the lessons due to time constraints. At School One, behavioural issues prevented the practice being conducted with the Year 7 group, the Year 8 group was initially re-arranged due to changes after half term and later cut short due to an event at the school. At Schools Three and Four, I did not observe L6.

to the question more personally, either with minor troubles or on a few occasions more serious concerns.

Within School Four a significant proportion of the lesson was spent on such discussions rather than covering material in the PowerPoint. This was because students here generally contributed to the discussion willingly and due to the time the teacher spent responding to individual students' concerns. A number of students in these classes mentioned worries around homework and exams, and a few students mentioned things that were personally specific (e.g. *'I worry about being followed home at night')*. These concerns were not always revelatory. However, the fact that some students responded to the question with personal answers is not surprising (they might surmise from the content of the lesson that the purpose is to reassure them about *their* worries). 'General worries' are only relevant to the extent that they reflect personal ones. As such, the high level of engagement of students at this school may have been partly because they felt comfortable to share personal concerns and that these concerns were met with openness and reassurance from the teacher.

At Schools One and Two, these discussions were less dynamic, and the teacher's questions were often met with long silences. At School Two, when students did speak, they generally provided similar answers to those within the .b teaching guides (school work, exams, friendship issues) and these responses were also generally met with by reassurance from the teacher. Students' hesitance to respond to questions about 'general' worries may have been because they interpreted the question as asking in covert terms about things personally relevant to them. Conversely, it is possible that students would perceive the contributions of other students as reflecting *their* personal concerns. As young people are often acutely sensitive to the impressions of peers (Adams 1983; Blakemore & Mills 2014), they may be reluctant to reveal any information in class that could be viewed as personal.

Whilst the majority of students did not raise personal issues, on certain occasions, students made disclosures that were somewhat outside of the range of those anticipated within .b teaching guidance. The following extract is taken from Lesson Three with a Year 7 group at School One:

> Mr Williams says: *There are strong emotions that everybody relates to can you think what that is?*
> Dan: *Anger*
> Mr Williams: *Yes that's one but I'm thinking of something else. If you're going to do an exam*
> TA: *Anxiety?*
> Mr Williams: *Yes it might be anxiety but I'm thinking of something beginning with 'S'.*
> There is a short pause before a few students at once say: stress!
> Mr Williams: *Yes! But how old are you guys? [they say 11-12] You don't have anything to stress about at your age do you? What sort of things to you stress about?*
> Jess: School work
> Nathalia: [loudly] *My brother going to prison.*
> Mr Williams looks taken aback and says *Oh, yeah that's a good one* [turning back to the class] *What other things stress you out, things in general?*
> Nathalia: *Life in general.*

The response of the teacher in these interactions is to quickly move on to prevent further disclosure, and this is in line with the guidance within .b training and teaching guides. Moreover, the content heavy format of the lesson and the need to remain responsive to a large group of students means that it may be difficult for teachers to spend time responding to students' individual concerns. Nevertheless, the disclosure is, in the first instance, elicited by the discussion around worries. In such cases, where students' concerns *cannot* be met with genuine openness and care, the implicit message of these interactions is arguably that some worries are *not* normal or, at least, not common enough to be relevant for classroom discussion. The students whose worries are apparent anomalies may be excluded or dismissed when they transgress the boundaries of acceptable discussion by sharing concerns that *are* relevant to them.

Moreover, across the schools, certain answers received greater levels of reassurance and were reiterated by the teachers to the class. These interactions largely mirrored cued elicitation strategies that are utilised in other subject lessons (Edwards and Mercer 2013): whereby anticipated answers within .b teaching guides become *instructive* about the sort of things students worry about, over and above spontaneous answers from students themselves. In other instances, where the 'correct answers' were not provided by students, teachers would offer these worries as suggestions ('*Social media, that must be a big worry for you guys'* [Mr Williams]; '*How many of you worry about homework?'* [Mr Thomas]). Such suggestions could be given to draw the conversation back to 'general' rather than specific worries. The following extract is taken from Lesson Six, during a discussion following an animation in which thought busses with various icons (food, a phone etc.) circulate around a cartoon girl:

> After we watch the animation, Mr Williams asks them what sort of things they saw in the girls' thoughts.
> Nathalia: *Text messages*
> Eryn: *Exams*
> Jess: *Food.*
> Mr Williams: *Yes, and what sort of worries might she be having?*
> Nathalia: *Not eaten enough?*
> Ryan: *Eaten too much.*
> Mr Williams: *Yes, it might be connected with body image.*
> Jess: *Someone could be texting you and bullying you.*
> Toby, who is sitting next to a TA and has not contributed to the discussion until now says, loudly: *I'm used to being bullied.*
> Mr Williams: [to the class] *Social media, there are lots of instances where that leads to you thinking too much and worrying'.*

Such interactions are arguably performing a very different function to 'normalisation' within therapeutic settings, which is geared towards destigmatization and depathologization of experience (Wright 2009). Discussions around worries within these lessons appeared to perform a pedagogic function: to relay to students pre-determined knowledge about *what* worries are considered to be normal for people of their age. Within the therapeutic interaction, normalisation is theoretically a client led process which requires openness on the part of the therapist to issues that the client raises (Ibid). In such

interactions, the client is 'reassured' that their experiences are understandable and within the typical range of human experiences. The notion of normalisation can be seen as strongly linked to ideas of non-judgemental acceptance of symptoms that is a central principle of third-wave cognitive behavioural therapies such as MBCT and earlier humanistic psychotherapies (Dyrden and Still 2006). Though, undoubtedly, the therapist-client relationship is normat*ive,* the (theoretical) unconditionality of what can be said and felt in the therapeutic space is arguably central to the perceived psychological benefits of 'normalising'.

The provision of prompts and suggestions, the tacitly communicated 'correct answers' and the strict delimitation of conversations to issues that are deemed (by adult course developers) to be 'normal', fundamentally alters this process. Here, confessing (common) worries becomes a means through which proper subjectivity is constituted and communicated: 'good' subjects worry about school work and Facebook. Nonetheless, throughout broader discussions in lessons, a great number of personal troubles arose: abusive comments from parents, siblings who had kicked down doors, bereavements and life-threatening illnesses. A few students appeared notably uncomfortable, even irritated, during these discussions. Similarly, for a small number of students, discussions and exercises around gratitude provoked apparent discomfort. Hence, a student at School Four became visibly agitated, rocking her desk back and forth after the teacher's claim: *'life is good',* to which she responded: *`Sometimes it's not sir, sometimes it's not.'* For some students, then, personal difficulties may render 'normal worries' irrelevant and 'gratitude' insensible.

1.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have moved from a focus on the notion of the subject within the .b syllabus and the discourses that surround it to examine the affective-discursive practices through which subjects of .b were constituted in the lessons I observed (Wetherell 2012). Within existing literature, there is a tendency to pedestal mindfulness as a 'special' kind of thing that bypasses the social and cultural, which is linked to its depiction as timeless (see Kabat-Zinn 1990; 1994; 2011; Gunaratana 2010). This tendency has resulted in a failure to attend to the ways in which the exercises of .b are entangled within the mundane practices of the classroom. Thus, my intention here has been to draw attention to the ways in which the meanings of such exercises within observations were fundamentally structured by these entanglements.

Through previous chapters, I have illustrated how the self at the centre of the programme is underpinned by concepts of universality, conveyed through ideas of biological humanism, and is conceived of as self-creating, self-enhancing and motivated towards positive experience. Part of what I have done within this chapter is draw particular attention to interactions in which the subjects that emerge sit uncomfortably next to the ideals projected in teaching guides and lesson plans. My intention in part is to draw attention to the face behind this image of universality: who it reflects and who it does not. Indeed, it seems apparent that the programme tacitly revolves around an image of a 'normal' (white, middle-class, complaisant, intellectually able and emotionally flexible) student. This 'normal' repeats notions of the 'ideal student', and the inherent exclusions within this, that suffuse education (Gillborn 1990; Youdell & Gillborn 2000). Indeed, ideals

of 'good' subjectivity within education so closely resemble those depicted as that which is realised through mindfulness that it seems impossible for teachers to navigate these as if they were two separate strands, whatever attempts are made to distinguish .b from the norm.

It should be noted that mindfulness pedagogy in historical contexts has always been bound up with authority and has been perceived precisely in terms of generating a certain kind of ethical, reflexive subject (Dreyfus 2011). The tendency to dislodge mindfulness from the context of moral authority is therefore a particularly modern one (McMahan 2008). But, it is a tendency which is reflected throughout the discourses of the programme, in the depicting of students as agents of their own self-creation and in the framing of mindfulness exercises as 'chosen' by students attending compulsory lessons, within which they are given few practical choices. As illustrated above, students who transgress the boundaries of acceptable conduct expose the fault lines within the notions of freedom and individual emotion regulation that are central to the course. It is these students that are most explicitly regulated, managed and (sometimes unsuccessfully) contained. Some may view this regulation as a form of benevolent coercion that is commonplace throughout pedagogic and child rearing practices. Yet, while the programme may perpetuate many pedagogical norms, it is different in the respect that it teaches exercises for engaging with our private affective landscape, for 'feeling things'. The ethical question, then, is should such things be chosen for us? A more practical question with regards to the programme's aims might be whether or not the potentially harmful effects of 'mis-choosing', and the resistance that arises from having one's choice usurped, might counteract the intended psychological benefits.

As I have shown, these concerns were navigated within my course training through the depiction of a subject who carefully navigates an internal emotional space. Yet, this begs the question *who is* this skilled navigator? Or rather, who is it not? For some students within observations, their experiences were outliers to those that are anticipated within teaching guidance and their emotional experiences may be less easily navigated. Those students whose responses to the programme do not fit the ideal (those who do not feel calm and optimistic, who do not sit still and silent and who are excluded) are those who are arguably most likely to experience the psychological suffering that the programme is intended to address.

8. Breaking the silence

8.1 Introduction

Over the course of the preceding chapters, I have attempted to trace the ideals of the self that underpin .b, the sorts of subjectivities that are problematised within the discourses of the programme and the 'ways of being', characteristics and emotional styles that are encouraged. In the first two analystic chapters, I claimed that the programme is structured by an understanding of human beings of inherently vulnerable to psychological distress: frequently swept along by thoughts, feelings and emotions which gather force and lead us to suffering. Yet, within the curriculum and within my discussions with interviewees, mindfulness was positioned as a strategy that could be utilised to surmount this natural flaw of our humanity. By assuaging our emotional compulsions, enabling us to 'make contact' with the reality of the present, and, over time, by restructuring our brains for greater attentiveness and focus, it is suggested that mindfulness gives rise to a truer form of human agency. My aim has not been to dismiss these claims, or to reveal them as false or misguided, but to articulate them more fully such that certain incongruencies may be brought to the fore, and so that these ideals may be examined in relation to the ways in which the programme is lived out in practice.

My intention for this chapter is to explore the affective-discursive practices through which students make sense of the programme (Wetherell 2012), drawing on my transcripts of focus groups and interviews with students at School One, Two and Four. In analysing students' accounts, I was interested in how students described the self-techniques within the programme, specifically the mindfulness exercises and classroom interactions, and how the purpose of these practices is conveyed. That is to say, what forms of subjectivity or 'effects' did they claim that the practices were intended to produce in the terms set by the curriculum? Moreover, I was interested in if, when and how students spoke of utilising these exercises or techniques and to what ends. Given the emphasis on the particular, meticulous form of reflexivity described within the curriculum, I attempt to draw out how students formulated these techniques in their own words: what kinds of reflexivity are articulated in students' accounts?

Moreover, in the previous chapter, I also began to specifically explore what I perceived as certain ethical tensions between the ideals prescribed within the curriculum and the practices within the classroom. I noted how these tensions coalesced around the intertwining of institutional disciplinary techniques and the use of particular activities involving the discussion of *(certain)* worries and turning towards *(certain)* feelings. As such, in analysing focus groups and student interviews, I was also interested in whether and how these tensions played out. In analysing students' accounts, I take seriously the embodied aspects of mindfulness practice (Pagis 2009; Stanley 2013a). Indeed, I argue that, for those students who spoke of employing mindfulness techniques, these techniques were described as operating largely *through* affect: as containing, subduing, releasing or, at times, agitating. However, I argue that these experiences were assembled through the wider discourses and processes of subjectivation in the classroom, such that 'mindfulness' itself was entangled with the social production of the classroom space and the bodies within it (see Stanley & Kortelainen 2019).

Within students' accounts, the discourse of the 'mindful' subject is itself infused with discourses that are gendered, classed and raced, each intersecting in particular ways to constitute the good and naughty student (Lucey & Walkerdine 1999; Youdell 2006a). That is, within these accounts, the discourses and practices of the programme, and indeed, at times, idiosyncratic interpretations of these discourses and practices, were bound up with institutional and sub-cultural norms and with the marking out of particular kinds of bodies as 'good', 'naughty', as 'the boys' and 'good girls' and so on. I claim that students' accounts illustrated how mindfulness techniques could indeed be drawn upon by *certain* kinds of students to provide support in times of difficulty. In such instances, mindfulness practices were described as facilitating a form of affective release or containment of feelings that were overpowering and disabling (Anzieu and Turner 1989).

Yet, this therapeutic benefit appeared to hinge on an initial submission to the school at a particularly visceral level. This is, I would argue, because students were only likely to utilise the practices outside of lessons if their experiences within the lessons (and perhaps with schooling generally) were positive. As discussed in Chapter 7, mindfulness exercises entail instructions that make requests upon the body of the student to move and feel as directed, and, as such, resistance is arguably played out both in posture and sensation. For students whose particular constellations of identity (that is, intersecting subject positions) situate them far from the ideals of virtuous subjectivity reiterated in notions of the 'mindful subject', such submission may be experienced as an act of extreme vulnerability (Youdell 2006a; Butler 2013). This is because, the act of submission itself may be unintelligible within the confines of a particular identity (such as, for example 'the naughty girl/boy') (Ibid). However, I also attempt to show how, in certain instances, vulnerability deriving from the threat to the students' identity, apparently intersects with another which derives from the emotionally laden nature of certain mindfulness exercises. That is, for students with salient difficulties in their lives, mindfulness may risk drawing attention to and potentially exposing feelings of emotional pain.

I attempt to draw out this analysis in the remainder of the chapter. The following section, *Who, where, how,* provides a brief reminder of the data used in the analysis, though a more comprehensive overview can be found in Chapter 4. Subsequently, in *Reacting and responding,* I examine how students' articulations of mindfulness exercises drew, in different ways, on behavioural discourses and how these discourses served to include and exclude certain students, particularly working-class students and especially working-class boys. Then, in *Difficult feelings,* I explore certain students' accounts of using mindfulness exercises during times of difficulty, particularly examining how students speak of the exercises producing feelings of affective release, and the forms of agency evident within these accounts. In the final section *Letting it out* I show how female students drew on therapeutic discourse around 'talk' and sharing feelings to frame their expectations of the programme. I show how such students interpret the discussion elements of the programme as opportunities to share feelings or as requests for personal information that they do not feel comfortable to share, resulting in some personal disclosures, teasing and feelings of discomfort, which then generate resentment towards the programme and, at times, the teacher.

Who, where, how?

The data I am drawing on for this chapter are the transcripts from the four focus groups with students across Schools One and Two, along with the four interviews conducted with students at School Three (see Table 8.1). Throughout the chapter, I refer collectively to focus groups and interviews as 'discussions', though I primarily refer to conversations specifically. Focus groups and interviews were transcribed soon after they were completed. These transcripts were also supplemented with general notes about my impressions from the conversations. Though I am not analysing these materials in a comparative manner, a central part of my argument is that the particularities of the classroom context are inseparable from what constitutes '.b' in students' accounts. As such, where relevant, I draw attention to issues in students' accounts that relate to the format of the delivery of the programme.

Table 8.1: Student participants

Focus groups				
School	**Focus Group**	**Female**	**Male**	**Total No. of Participants**
School One	**Group One**	0	4	4
	Group Two	5	0	5
	Group Three	5	0	5
	School One Total	**10**	**4**	**14**
School Two	**Group Four**	1	3	4
	School Two Total	**1**	**3**	**4**
All Focus Groups		**11**	**7**	**18**
Interviews				
School Three	Tash	1		
	Sam		1	
	Charlie		1	
	Freddie		1	
	School Three total	**1**	**4**	**4**
Overall total students		**12**	**10**	**22**

Table 8.2 provides an overview of the labels I have used for each of the focus groups throughout the analysis: 'School One, Group 1, Boys' is referred to as 'S1,1B' and so on. Interviews are referred to by student pseudonyms and school (e.g. Sam, S3). As students within focus groups frequently spoke over each other, when presenting excerpts of conversations I have used square brackets around utterances which overlap.

Table 8.2 Focus group label

FG No.	School	Gender	Acronym
1	School One	Boys	S1,1B
2	School One	Girls	S1,2G
3	School One	Girls	S1,3G
4	School Two	Mixed	S1,4M

All focus groups followed the same format, though the final group at School Two was shorter and hence I did not have time to ask all of the questions. Each session began with an introduction and ice breaker game. After this, students were asked first what they called the lessons; what came to mind when they thought of mindfulness; what they thought mindfulness was 'about'; and what they remembered from the lessons. These questions were deliberately vague to encourage discussion. After this discussion, we played the 'like and dislike' game, in which students wrote down anything that they liked or disliked about the programme and placed them in the respective pile. Pictures of students' original responses can be found in Appendix K. Students were not asked to write down any number of things for each pile or to do them in any order, and I asked whether they were okay with us discussing them from the pile (though they did not have to admit which they had written). The final research-related game that we played was the student co-researcher game, in which I asked students to pick a picture off the table and read aloud the question that was on the back for the group to discuss. Pictures of this game and a list of these questions can be found in Chapter 4.

The four interviews conducted at School Three as part of the pilot study were with Sam, Tash, Charlie and Freddie, all of whom were in the Year 7 nurture group. As explained in Chapter 4, the nurture group included students who had been held out of the mainstream part of the school for a variety of reasons, which the teacher explained could be due to perceived issues with confidence or behaviour; diagnosed or suspected ASD, ADHD[11], behavioural issues; or other developmental problems. The interviews were conducted a year prior to the focus groups and were shorter in length of between 8-15 minutes. These interviews were conducted just after students had finished a lesson of .b (though they had already taken part in the programme earlier in the year). Our conversation began with me asking them what they thought of the lesson. I then asked whether they enjoyed the lessons; whether they used the practices at all outside of class, and if so, what for and why; what

[11] Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

they thought the purpose of the lessons was and finally if they could describe mindfulness in three words.

8.2 Reacting and responding

A number of scholars have noted that mindfulness pedagogy partly entails facilitating students to adopt a particular language for describing experience (Crane et al 2016; Stanley & Crane 2016; Stanley & Longden 2016), and the metaphor of 'observing the mind' is a central feature of this discourse (Stanley & Kortelainen 2019). Indeed, throughout the .b curriculum, students are recurrently called upon to 'observe' their thoughts, feelings and mental states. The notion of 'the observer' represents a conception of the subject as both separable from her 'internal' state and turned back towards it (Otis 2019). Moreover, this optic metaphor builds upon an understanding of the self as defined by an 'interior', a distinct *space* separate from the 'outside world', such that the self may 'look inwards' (Taylor 1989). Within psychological interpretations of mindfulness, moreover, the 'observational stance' is seen to represent the state of 'open monitoring' (or non-directed awareness) of experience, which is thought to be a central psychological component of mindfulness, alongside periods of concentrated awareness (Lutz et al 2015). Gradual training in this stance of relative detachment and self-awareness, furthermore, is thought to facilitate the psychological benefits of mindfulness, by reducing reactive and self-judgemental tendencies (Segal et al 2002).

Across my discussions with students, both within focus groups and interviews, it was striking, then, just how absent this optic metaphor was. When discussing what they remembered about mindfulness from the lessons and in explaining what mindfulness 'is', students never spoke of 'observing', 'noticing', or 'watching'. Perhaps more surprisingly, neither did they talk of mindfulness in terms of 'being aware' of feelings or thoughts. Rather, within students' accounts of mindfulness, the language of internality and concepts of self-monitoring were significantly less prominent. There were only two occasions across these discussions in which students drew upon metaphors of observation or the notion of awareness. On both occasions, the student appeared to be referring not to private feelings but rather to awareness of surroundings or present circumstances. Both statements were made during our discussions of 'what the point of the lessons was': one student claimed the point was to *"see your surroundings around you"* (Aeron, S1), and another, more ambiguously, said that the lessons were about *"like, being aware"* (Isaac S2).

Within the curriculum, there are a number of points in which students are encouraged to draw mindful attention to their daily experience, and in part this entails 'noticing' the details of our environment. Being aware of present circumstances and surroundings *is,* therefore, an important component of how mindfulness is presented in .b. What is interesting, however, is that, generally within students' accounts, 'externally facing' elements of mindfulness were more prominent than those relating to 'private' feelings. That is to say that, whilst within the curriculum the mindful subject is positioned as monitoring her 'internal state' and as 'turning towards' feelings, for some of the students I spoke with, mindfulness was primarily understood in terms of presentness and attentiveness, but not

necessarily self-awareness.[12]

However, beyond this, the forms of self-regulation described by students also often subtly differed from those that are encouraged within the programme. In particular, within students' accounts, mindfulness was frequently construed as something that was intended to enable direct control over subjectivity, rather than as a gradual training or form of self-monitoring. As argued in Chapter 6, the ideal subject constructed within the programme is characterised by the capacity for meticulous self-reflexivity. It is explained that by becoming aware of our feelings, rather than attempting to alter them, difficult emotions and thoughts may gradually dissipate. In the terms of the course, mindfulness enhances our capacity for agency through a non-striving, non-interfering and non-judgemental self-awareness. This is what I have suggested can be understood as 'deferred self-control' (see Chapter 6), in that this non-intrusive awareness is nonetheless geared towards producing certain desirable shifts in our subjective state. As such, within psychological literature, it has been argued that mindful awareness is itself a form of emotional regulation, which is thought to be central to the benefits of the practice for enhancing wellbeing (Chambers et al 2009). However, across the discussions, students generally presented mindfulness as something that was intended to directly alter their emotional states. Within students' accounts, mindfulness was largely presented as facilitating, or as intended to facilitate direct control over subjective process *("it controls what's inside"* Sam L4; "*e was saying count your breath and it would clear your brain"* Rhian S1) or to realise particular effects (*"the whole point of mindfulness is to be relaxed"* Katheryn S1).

It was apparent, moreover, that students drew upon wider available discourses to make sense of the programme, discourses that were perhaps more familiar to students and yet which were at times contrary to ideas within the curriculum itself. In particular, at School Two and Three, students' constructions of mindfulness relied heavily on ideas of good behaviour and popular truisms of virtue. Indeed, in our initial discussions around what came to mind when they thought of mindfulness, many students spoke of being 'respectful of others'. Amongst some students, then, mindfulness was frequently presented in terms of monitoring *behavioural responses* rather than awareness of private states. That is, when describing mindfulness and its purpose, such students frequently spoke of 'being mindful of others' and 'doing the right thing', rather describing a particular *technique* of self-awareness:

Extract 1:	**S2,4M**
Interviewer:	Ok so if I was to write the word mindfulness down here, what would come to mind?
Issac:	Ermm, like thinking what you say before you say it.
Interviewer:	Thinking, what was that again sorry?
Issac:	Thinking and being mindful of other people.

[12] Given that there is evidence for significant neurodevelopmental changes in self-referential processes during adolescence (Choudhury & Blakemore 2006; Sebastian et al 2008), it is possible that students' apparent interpretation of mindfulness primarily in terms of outward facing behaviours may relate to their developmental stage in terms of self-awareness

Here, Issac draws upon the aphorisms 'think what you say before you say it', and 'be mindful of others' in explaining to me what he associates with the word 'mindfulness'. For Isaac, it appears that mindfulness is associated with ideas of 'good manners' or 'good citizenship', over and above awareness of private feelings or observation of the mind. Isaac had finished the .b curriculum a couple of weeks prior to our conversation. Yet, Isaac's responses are interesting in part because the .b curriculum does not contain any explicit guidance in relation to conduct with others. Isaac response (*"thinking what you say before you say it"*) may be seen as an interpretation of the idea of 'reacting versus responding' - a central learning objective of Lesson Four. In this lesson, it is explained that throughout our lives we continually react to things in our environment or in our own minds and that these reactions drive our behaviour outside of our awareness:

> [W]hen things happen to us that we don't like...we often...react out of habit. And...we're not even aware we are doing it!.. Developing ...mindfulness helps us to become aware of this reactivity, at the level of physical sensations ...allowing us to...respond rather than react (L6 p.16-17).

During observations, when attempting to illustrate this idea, teachers frequently drew upon the example of 'not hitting back' if someone were to hit you. This example is arguably an axiomatic behavioural norm within the educational space, and as such, it is unsurprising that it was frequently drawn on by teachers as an example. Yet, it appeared that, for some students I spoke to, these behavioural norms somewhat eclipsed the 'internal' reflexive aspects of mindfulness, such that the practice was conveyed as the demonstration of appropriate behaviour or being a good student. Indeed, the idea of 'not hitting back' as a demonstration of being mindful was mentioned by a number of students throughout our discussions. The extract below is taken from the discussion with a group of girls at School One, as Evie is reading out a question from the picture game:

Extract 2	**S1,2G**
Evie:	*In one lesson of .b, it is said that mindfulness gives us the freedom to choose. What d'you think this means? Is this true in your experiences?*
Enid:	It's like when you get into a fight, this is what he said when you get into a fight you 'av the choice to choose whether or not, how you retaliate and that.
Interviewer:	Uhuh, what d'you think about that?
Enid:	Err, I think what comes around goes around. If somebody hits them I'm gonna hit them back.
Interviewer:	Ok.
Katheryn:	I think it *could* help cause like sometimes if someone's really annoying you, it might just be automatically you just come out and you just turn around and hit the other girl and you just turn around and basically you might just be like 'ahh shut up' and do that. But it might help if you think about it, you're like 'if I do this I'll get in trouble, I shouldn't do this'.

What I find interesting about this interaction is that it, in explaining this central idea within the curriculum, students simply repeat familiar moral codes of behaviour. There is little sense that the 'freedom to choose' *not* to hit back would derive from the greater degree of bodily and emotional awareness or reduced emotional valence as a result of mindfulness practice. That is, whereby in the curriculum 'responsiveness' (rather than reactivity) is cultivated via awareness of subjective feelings, for such students the mindful student is arguably, simply the 'good student'. Thus, as noted in the previous chapter, it appears that the similarities between the tacit construction of the 'mindful subject' and those of the 'good student' mean that elisions between the two within an educational context are perhaps unavoidable.

Indeed, in such formulations, the 'mindful subject' is constituted through oppositions with that which it is not (Foucault 1991; Rose 1990; Henriques et al 1998), that is, here, the naughty, reactive, violent student. For Enid, her rejection of this axiomatic moral norm of the educational space represents a refusal to adopt the position of 'good student' and, accordingly, we might argue her rejection of mindfulness and the broader ideals of the curriculum. It is, therefore, unsurprising that despite the claim amongst many students, particularly at School One, that the programme was intended to 'help' them, resistance or compliance with the lessons was seen to distinguish the good from the naughty students. In such instances, furthermore, students' accounts of good, naughty, *mindful* or resistant subjectivities largely reiterated classed and gendered patterns of identity within the school, whereby working-class boys of lower academic ability in particular, were frequently positioned as naughty by female, middle-class and or more academically able students (Youdell 2006a). These discourses play out in the interaction below during my discussion with a group of female students at School One:

Extract 3 **S1,2G**.

Katheryn:	We had one or two misbehaving ones in ours, so there was still like a lot of him [telling them off and-
Evie:	[yeah there was a lot of]
Interviewer:	Oh ok ok...And why do you think, what do you think made people misbehave in the lessons?
Molly:	Maybe cause they're like bored or something.
Evie:	Cause there's people from other lessons who are like coming, from like B1 and everyone.
…	
Evie:	I think it should have been like, like people in the lower sets should have been in one group, because they just mess about and they just don't really care and the people in like the top, [top sets are like more] interested in it.
Katheryn:	[I think it should have been like]
Evie:	
Katheryn:	It should have been like the people who wanted to [do it.]
Evie:	[Yeah, they didn't want]
Katheryn:	Because a lot a lot of the kids in there-
Evie:	I think they just wanted to get out of lessons.

In extract 3, Katheryn's initial claim 'we had one or two misbehaving ones', functions to distance those in the group from this negatively valued subject position. As the programme in School One was targeted, the usual spatial separation of lessons on the basis of perceived ability was disrupted. Though students had all been attributed as requiring some additional support, this could be for any number of reasons ranging from anxiety to behavioural issues, meaning that more conscientious students could be placed with those with difficult home circumstances. Yet, though mindfulness has not been stratified by the school, 'ability' in Evie's account is re-enacted and re-inscribed through the performance and designation of good behaviour and interest in mindfulness. Within Evie's account, the students misbehave *because* they are in B1, and their misbehaviour demonstrates their intellectual rank. In contrast, Evie claims that *"people in higher sets are more interested in [mindfulness]"*. The misbehaving ones are therefore those who either fail or refuse to adopt a style of subjectivity that is both *derived through* and, in some students' accounts, *enacted through* 'mindfulness'. As this misbehaviour results in the teacher spending time 'telling them off', in Katheryn's account, mindfulness becomes *that which is struggled over* between teachers and 'misbehaving' students in the context of the lesson. Moreover, there is a subtle derision and distancing that occurs in Katheryn's positioning of those who do not comply as 'kids'. Katheryn and Evie were both confident, neatly dressed students who spoke with soft Welsh accents, all of which may arguably be understood as indicative of a more middle-class demeanour or habitus (Bourdieu 1979). Katheryn was particularly well spoken and discussed how she had practiced mindfulness with her mother, something that I had not come across with any of the other students at School One, though it appeared to be common with students at School Four. In Katheryn's account, the implied foolishness of 'the kids' for misbehaving, may arguably be seen to have classed undertones, reflecting middle-class constructions of working-class culture as irrational, unscrupulous and needing to be 'civilised' (Lawler 2005; Tyler 2015; Elias 1978).

Whilst these discourses reiterate classed (and, as I explain below, gendered) identities that are arguably inescapable within the cultural context of the school (Gillborn 1990; Youdell 2006a), in situating a therapeutic practice within the context of the classroom, .b complicates these typical patterns of subjectification in a number of ways. Firstly, because just as certain constellations of identities are further from the 'ideal student', so are certain identities more or less commensurate with reflexive and therapeutic styles of subjectivity (Illouz 1997; Swan 2010; Swan 2007). Within the unfolding social practices of the classroom, through which certain positionalities are performatively constituted and negotiated, 'the working-class boy' and the 'mindful student' may be, if not incommensurate, particularly difficult to align. Yet, secondly, unlike traditional classroom activities, the programme entails various exercises in which students' attention is directed by the teacher towards bodily feelings, thoughts and emotions. Compliance with such practices in the classroom entails both a physical submission to the teacher's instructions (to position the body and to 'feel' in the manner instructed) and an openness to engaging with personal, affective experience. Where a particular identity position (tough girl, popular boy, working class lad) is incompatible with a whole range of emotional demonstrations (sadness, alienation, fear), openness to such feelings is arguably an act of extreme vulnerability. Resistance, experienced and enacted through bodily movement, may be the

mark of a visceral discomfort, and yet, within the discursive framework of the classroom, may serve to reiterate and re-inscribe the position of 'naughty student'.

During the discussion with the boys' group at School One, these affective-discursive struggles over identity and status were most apparent. In the group was a boy named James, who had caught my attention during observations. James was shorter, slighter and younger looking than other boys. I noticed that he seemed eager to be accepted amongst the other boys, some of whom occasionally dismissed or slighted him. He also frequently contributed sarcastic remarks throughout the duration of the lesson, usually laughing and searching around for approval. Yet, I noticed that James fell silent during the discussions about worry and stress, glaring at the teacher or sinking down into his chair to look at the ceiling. When, in Lesson Eight, the teacher motioned at a picture of holocaust survivors on the PowerPoint, exclaiming *"So, we don't have it that bad in this country do we?",* James, with a look of irritation and incredulity, claimed *"Yeah"*. And when, soon after, the teacher led the students through a gratitude practice, James writhed around, eyes open, looking highly uncomfortable.

It was for this reason that I felt, in my discussion with James' group, that it was impossible to disentangle the vulnerabilities that underlie James' enactments of masculine identity from those vulnerabilities which may, or may not, arise from memories of an affective discomfort with the practices of the programme. The following extract is taken from my discussion with James' group. In the extract, we are playing the 'likes and dislikes' game and James has taken a piece of A3 paper (rather than the small scraps of paper I had handed out for the game) and has begun writing.

Extract 4	**S1,1B**
Max:	[Reading from James' writing] '*Get rid of it.'* Oh my god.
Int:	*'because it's boring'*
Aeron:	James you're meant to be in B2. Me and Thomas are the ones that are meant to write detailed.
Jake:	And we came here to not-
Aeron:	You should listen in silence.
Int:	Ok, so this says-
Jake:	You're gonna write a full page.
Int:	*'So just leave me I do not like mindfulness*'. Ok I think we understand that one
James:	I wrote get rid of it because it's boring as hell so just *Leave. Me. Be. I. Do. Not. Like* mindfulness.
Jake:	I'm gonna say a nice one I'm gonna say pay attention and it will help. Yeah!
James:	Teacher's pet!

In this extract, James is arguably 'testing boundaries' with myself precisely through a subversion of the rules of the game in a manner which emphasises his resistance to the programme. Though I insisted to students that I did not mind whether their answers were positive or negative, my being in the school and my attendance of mindfulness lessons nonetheless arguably created the impression of my collusion with the school and, perhaps,

my position as a 'mindfulness person' (Spratt 2011). The response of other students is to teasingly castigate James for breaking the rules and to reiterate James' position of lower academic ability. Jake, who had used some of the practices and who appeared concerned that I might be offended by this display, undermines James' position by emphasising that benefiting is conditional upon good behaviour ('paying attention').

Of course, I cannot claim to understand the nature of James' experience of the programme. It is clear that within the extract above the affective performance of resistance towards the programme is interwoven with the demonstration of a playful and boyish masculinity, that intersects with James' position as a student of lower intellectual ability (Youdell 2006a). James' resistance to the programme may arise from a potential fear of emasculation at *appearing* to engage with mindfulness, particularly as this boyish masculinity may be a vital source of status for a student who has been designated less intelligent and who is physically more effeminate that his peers. Yet, in my reading of James' response to the exercises in the lessons, his emphatic rejection of the programme may also reflect a visceral discomfort with engaging with emotional experience and the vulnerability that may arise from reflecting on emotions within the classroom.

8.3 Difficult feelings

As I have argued, it appeared that an initial submission to both the teacher and the school was necessary for engagement with mindfulness exercises. Indeed, all of those students who claimed to utilise mindfulness exercises or elements of them outside of the classroom demonstrated an interest in school work and an acceptance that school work was positive. In total, across the discussions, five of the twenty-two students said that they had used some of the exercises they had learned during the programme. All of these students explained either that they had *initially* done so due to anxiety around school work (Rhian S1,3G, Charlie, S3), or that they had been prompted by parents or guardians to start using the practices (Katheryn, S1,2G, Jake S1,1B, Sam, S3). Yet, interestingly, those students who utilised the practices also often spoke of drawing on them in times of difficulty beyond those associated with expectations of the school, for issues such as: *"freaking out"* (Charlie, S3), *"stressing"* (Jake S1,1B), *"anger"* (Sam, S3), *"getting more sleep"* (Katheryn, S1,2G); *"worrying"* and building confidence (Rhian, S1,3G).

As such, whilst I have argued that the programme was fundamentally entangled with the disciplinary discourses of the school, I see students' accounts as complicating any reading of mindfulness in schools as simply pacifying students to conditions of injustice (Forbes 2016; Reveley 2016). Firstly, because those students who engaged with the practices were primarily not those that were seen as disruptive. But, beyond this, for those students who actively drew upon the practices, they were frequently described as producing feelings of relief or affective containment that were supportive in aspects of their lives outside of the school (Anzieu and Turner 1989). Though students did not generally speak about 'awareness' or 'observation' of their subjective states, and though they never employed the language of 'skills', 'strategies' or 'management' that was so prominent within teachers' accounts, some students nonetheless spoke of actively utilising the practices in a manner that was conveyed as enabling.

The following extract is taken from S1,3G, in which a student named Rhian initially describes how she draws on the practices to enable her to continue with homework:

Extract 5	**S1,3G**
Interviewer:	And Rhian, you said that you did use some of the practices?
Rhian:	Yes.
Interviewer:	What did you use?
Rhian:	The 7/11.
Interviewer:	The 7/11.
Rhian:	Cause like if I get worried about homework or something it can like relax me and then I feel better and then I just start the homework again and make sure I understand it more and ask my parents or something.

Rhian explains that practicing the 7/11 (a mindfulness exercise which entails counting to 7 on the inbreath and 11 on the outbreath) enables her to continue with her homework. Yet, it should be noted that Rhian describes the practice as a *palliative* (*'I feel better'*) not an attentional *enhancement*. Though it may be argued that Rhian's stress is caused by an education system that construes academic attainment in terms of individual ability and worth (Forbes 2019), I would argue that Rhian's apparently unpleasant feeling of being unable to complete her homework does not constitute a blow to the system which provides it. It is notable, moreover, that Rhian is not nearing her exams and nor is she in a high-pressure school: her account is not one of optimisation, but one of reprieve. Later in the discussion, Rhian describes an experience of losing friends at school. She mentioned the falling out a number of times, and from her account it seems to have been a particularly isolating experience:

Extract 6	**S1,3G**
Rhian:	I thought it would be like, I thought that it was enjoyable but then there were one or two lessons when I didn't enjoy. But like, in that moment I was having an argument with my friend and it *really helped,* and it helped me with my confidence and finding new friends. So I quite like, in that moment it quite like, it helped me.
Interviewer:	Ok, ok, and how do you think it helped, like what do you think it helped with?
Rhian:	Like when we were arguing like if they were looking at me or something it would bother me, but if I'd done mindfulness, if I done like counting to ten or something it wouldn't bother me as much, I would just ignore them and try and get it out my 'ed.

Arguably, Rhian's account indicates that the practices she draws upon from the programme provided a means of shifting her affective state, for providing a form of relief. In Rhian's account, prior to practicing mindfulness, the glances of her peers would 'bother' her. There is a sense of an affective discomfort, an aggravation or even distress. Thus, Rhian's account illustrates how mindfulness exercises *could*, by certain students, be utilised as a 'technique' or 'strategy' for altering affective states. Beyond this, we might infer, from Rhian's account,

that it is the alleviation of this feeling which facilitates what she describes as her greater confidence. By this account, Rhian has gained a certain capacity for the reflexive management of her subjectivity, in a manner not dissimilar to that envisioned by adult interviewees and within .b lessons. She appears as an agent who recognises and intervenes upon feelings of 'bother' or 'worry' by utilising techniques from the programme. Her doing so, moreover, enables her to form new relationships and overcome feelings of alienation. Her practice of mindfulness provides an initial palliative, but it also enables her to alter her circumstances.

Existing critiques of mindfulness programmes have done little to tease out precisely the ways in which, when situated within disciplinary contexts such as the school or the workplace, the techniques such programmes prescribed may be utilised both for conforming to institutional expectations and for making life liveable or meaningful for those who use them in other aspects of their lives. It is precisely because the values of the institution and the desires of the subject are so intertwined (the latter in part constituted through, or in opposition to, the former) (Foucault 1991; 1990; 1991; Butler 1997; Henriques et al 1998) that the techniques of the programme were inaccessible to certain students and so facilitative for others. Yet, it is also because the discourses of the institution are subject to misfiring, and that they are never wholly constitutive of the subject, that students so rarely spoke of the forms of reflexivity they adopted in the vocabularies of the curriculum (Butler 1997; 2013).

My interview with Sam, a student at School Three further illustrated how mindfulness practices could simultaneously facilitate a submission to the cultural norms of the school and provide a sense of agency through which students were able to constitute new relations with peers. Sam, who was in the Year 7 'nurture group', was taller and broader than the other boys in his class. He was also articulate and was keen to let me know that he would soon be moving into the mainstream school. From our conversation, it did not seem that Sam struggled with school work, but perhaps that he had been held back due to issues with behaviour. What struck me from my conversations with Sam was what appeared to be the simultaneous desire for containment of his feelings, which he depicted as a sense of overflowing, surging and a desire for 'control', not *by* a self but rather an external control (Anzieu 989; Walkerdine 2009). Early in this conversation, Sam describes mindfulness as an external control through which his 'hyperness' is regulated within the classroom space. And yet, later in his account, it is through this external control that an agentive self emerges:

Extract 7	**Sam, S3**
Interviewer:	How long have you been doing mindfulness lessons for?
Sam:	Well, he's, we did them again recently but also at the very beginning of the year we did them as well…because it's a new school and we're hyper and we don't know what is right and wrong really...so he, I think he came in to calm us down so the teachers could get to help you a bit more because, so we could listen better.
	…..
Interviewer:	Ok, so will you use mindfulness when you move to the mainstream school or..?

Sam: Well, ever since he started it at the beginning of the year.. I've been doing mindfulness through that whole space and it's helped but I'm still, I still get really hyper and I'm trying to control that….

Here, Sam construes the behavioural norms of the classroom as advantages to himself: he is taught mindfulness so that he can 'listen better' and 'learn right from wrong'. There is a clear accession to the values of the school: in his account, 'listening better' appears both as a benefit to the teacher and to himself. Earlier in our conversation, Sam indicated that he was eager to move into the mainstream part of the school. As such, we could infer that Sam has come to perceive his hyperness and anger, as so labelled by teachers and perhaps family, as an impediment to progression into a new phase of life (entering mainstream secondary school). Within the system of the school, this progression is conditional on his submission to certain codes of behaviour. Yet, I would argue that the containment of Sam's anger is not a suppression of some more authentic state. Rather, the behavioural codes enforced by the school and facilitated through mindfulness are simultaneously constraining and productive of new forms of subjectivity (Butler 1997; Davies 2006).

Extract 8 **Sam, S3**

Interviewer: So you said it helps to control you when you're hyper, does it help with anything else?

Sam: My dad has anger problems and he couldn't control it and then when I was born he passed it down to me so I have anger problems as well, but I'm worse than my dad. I can't control it at all, if someone makes me angry I have to do something...

...

Interviewer: I just have one more question about the lessons. If you were going to describe mindfulness to me in 3 words, what would you say it was?

Sam: Well, it helps.

Interviewer: Helps what?

Sam: Like, it helps how you act. It helps you listen better to your friends, family, lessons, your teachers.

Int: How do you know that it helps?

Sam: Because ever since I've been doing it I've listened to my teachers better. And I've also listened to my friends better and if they had any problems they would try to talk to me, but I would just completely ignore them. But ever since I've been doing this I listen to them because it's controlled me, and it's calmed me down...I think it makes you more kind because it.. it helps you control what's inside. Like, you want to let it out but it controls what's inside... and you can let it out with a breath…Like a lot of my friends in my village that I live in were scared of me 'cause I always got angry...And [now] they start speaking to me. And ever since I've been doing this mindfulness it's helped me get a better relationship with my friends.

Arguably, Sam's account illustrates forms of self-regulation acquired through the curriculum *simultaneously* take up and perpetuate dominant values of the school and provide space for Sam to construct relationships within his community. In his claim that *"it controls what's inside ...you can let it out with a breath",* Sam indicates that the practice enables a form of emotional containment through which he regains a sense of agency (Anzieu and Turner 1989). Yet, it is also notable that, in his account, 'control' is not something he takes hold of or enacts, as within the discourses of the curriculum, but rather something that is enacted *through* him. Within this account, Sam does not emerge as the self-creating autonomous subject, but rather agency is realised through his submission to constraint (Butler 1997; Henriques et al 1998). That is, it is precisely Sam's submission to certain cultural norms of affective practice and behaviour that gives rise to the sense of agency in Sam's account.

8.4 Letting it out

Thus, for some students, exercises from the programme could be utilised in private, outside of the classroom for producing feelings of relief and for providing emotional support. For some students, however, the perception that the programme was geared towards emotional support appeared to structure their expectations of the lessons. Particularly female students at School One, where the programme was targeted, frequently drew upon ideas about the importance of sharing feelings and the dangers of 'keeping things in'. Such ideas are not discussed in .b but are arguably core axioms of the 'therapeutic ethos' within popular culture and reflect the absorption of psychoanalytic ideas into contemporary Western conceptions of the self (Illouz 2008). Such discourses, moreover, may be particularly available to girls, as sharing is frequently bound up with the performance of feminine subjectivity and constitution of female bonds (Swan 2007). Nonetheless, as noted in the previous two chapters, within .b students are discouraged from sharing personal or specific information, and the programme focuses instead on 'common' worries, stresses and 'thought busses' (ruminations). However, within my discussions with girls at School One, the discussion elements of the course were conveyed as opportunities to 'talk about' things that were concerning them or, on other occasions, as probing for personal information that they did not feel comfortable to share. Thus, with a group of female students at School One (S1,3G), issues around trust in other members of the group and discomfort around classroom discussions came to dominate much of our conversation:

Extract 9	**S1,3G**
Fran:	I felt *really* uncomfortable [at times].
Rhian:	[Yeah].
Interviewer:	You felt uncomfortable, how come?
Fran:	It's erm, I don't know how it just, felt uncomfortable
Rhian:	Cause it was like certain people in the class that you didn't [like trust].
Chanel:	[didn't trust].
….	
Interviewer:	Ok, and when you say you didn't trust them like what did you think, did you think they would *do something?*
Chanel:	[If you were].
Rhian:	[If you were].

Fran:	Like if you were saying something, you were scared that they might forward it to someone or like-
Rhian:	Or like *laugh* at you or something.
Chanel:	[Yeah].
Kelly:	[Yeah].
Interviewer:	Ok, ok.
Fran:	Yeah cause people didn't keep stuff confidential [and then some of them just told stuff to other people].
Rhian:	[Yeah they just saying stuff].

Initially, I was not sure whether Fran's discomfort related to group discussions or to mindfulness practices, particularly as, on other occasions, students mentioned feeling uncomfortable about closing their eyes in the classroom. Later however, she explained that her discomfort, at least in part, related to her concern that certain people might reveal private information that she shared in the class to others who were not present. The implication is that the information she might share, or feels that she is expected to share, is personal or in some way sensitive, such that she should want it to remain confidential. Interestingly, confidentiality is not something that is spoken about in .b - and this may be precisely because MiSP do not want to encourage students to share private information. Later in the conversation, Rhian described a worrying experience of other students 'forwarding' sensitive information that she had shared in the lesson:

Extract 10	**S1,3G**
Rhian:	…cause some people in the group they was forwarding it on to people that they didn't really like.
Interviewer:	Right, what d'you mean by forwarding it on sorry?
Rhian:	Like if I said something to the teacher, cause it was all confidential, they weren't keeping it confidential they were saying stuff everywhere people, and I don't really [like it because] one of the people took put, like what I said they put it on social media.
Chanel:	[so we kind of got]
Interviewer:	They did?
Rhian:	Yeah but they didn't put my name on it but I knew it was about me because I knew that the person that said it told that person
Interviewer:	Was that something that you said in the class?
Rhian:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	As in like, what was it a, was it a worry or a concern or like-?
Rhian:	It was a worry. I was very scared about it.
Interviewer:	Ok, ok, I see.
Fran:	And when it happened like this it just made you feel *worse* as you went through the sessions and you just say less and less and less.

Again, though Rhian explains that 'it was all confidential' this is not something that is discussed in the lessons or teaching notes, and it was not something I witnessed teachers saying to students in observations. Rather, it is possible that Rhian's use of the term

'confidential' relates to her experience with other therapeutic initiatives, and that such experiences partially framed her expectations of .b. Indeed, Rhian explained that she also participated in 'Thrive' another wellbeing intervention at the school. The girls claimed that they felt more comfortable in Thrive because they were with small groups of students they knew. Throughout this discussion the girls recurrently emphasised the importance of 'trust' in other members of the group. Arguably, then, though the curriculum was delivered in much the same format of a typical lesson, the personal content of the lesson (in the girls' accounts) was seen to necessitate closer and more dependable relationships with those in the class:

Extract 11	**S1,3G**
Rhian:	Yeah there were some people in the class that you couldn't really trust so they were like-
Chanel:	Ahh yeah Robyn, me and Robyn were on bad terms and I was in the mindfulness class with her.
…	
Chanel:	'Cause you weren't, you weren't, you weren't with people that – with me, Cheryl was in my group but I 'ad Cheryl, Toni, and Sara, not Sara,
Rhian:	[Carla]
Chanel:	[Carla], Robyn and it was like a bunch of boys and I didn't really trust any of the boys because one of them, 'cause like 3 of 'em was in my class and them boys they would like [wind you up about it]
Rhian:	[wind me up about it] all the time they would like if I was sitting next to one of them one lesson and they were winding me up about what I said n' that, in mindfulness and I didn't really like it.

Teasing is arguably a 'normal' classroom behaviour, one that certainly is not limited to mindfulness lessons, but is arguably part of the way in which young people mark out particular identities and inscribe status (Youdell 2006a). The students' repeated reference to *'the* boys' (both specific and ambiguous) indicates the extent to which teasing may be bound up with the performance of a playful masculinity and to the marking out of female bodies (Epstein et al 2001). Yet, I would argue that the girls' claims about discomfort around classroom discussions imply that their mindfulness lessons were particularly sensitive. More fundamentally, the girls' statements indicate that these normal classroom behaviours were thoroughly entangled with their experiences of .b (e.g. *"it [the lesson] just made you feel worse"* Fran).

As I have argued above, for those who drew upon exercises from the programme outside of the classroom, these exercises were described as functioning via the abatement of powerful and unpleasant feelings. Yet, these particular techniques of the programme were packaged within lessons that could themselves be experienced as uncomfortable and distressing by certain students. The girls' accounts above illustrate the affective force of these mundane practices of the classroom, which dominated their discussion of the mindfulness lessons over and above the effects of specific mindfulness exercises. What was particularly interesting, however, was the extent to which sharing was constituted by

the girls as a central dimension of the curriculum. The positioning of the programme as therapeutic, perhaps in part through the targeted format of delivery, and in part due to the general emphasis within the course on emotional management, appeared to structure students' expectations of the lessons and the practices within them. Later during our discussion, I asked the girls whether they would want to take part in .b if they had the option to do it with friends:

Extract 12	**S1,3G**
Fran:	It would be much better if they done it in a group with people that you actually like and know.
Chanel:	Yeah, and feel more comfortable with.
Interviewer:	Would you *want* to do it then?
Rhian:	If I was with my friends yeah.
Chanel:	Yeah.
Kelly:	If we were with a group we trusted, yeah.
Interviewer:	So if they gave you an option to say that you could do, you could, either not do it or you could do it and you would be with a group of friends that you knew-?
Kelly:	I would rather be with friends.
Fran:	Yeah.
Chanel:	[Yeah].
Rhian:	[Yeah].
Interviewer:	And what would you, *why* would you choose to do it? What do you think it would be good for?
Rhian:	I would think that it would help us all.
Chanel:	[Yeah like to talk to someone about it].
Rhian:	[Become like closer friends] yeah without keeping it like to yourself.
Kelly:	Yeah you're not keeping it to yourself, like you could tell someone and you know that they could keep it [confidential]

What is interesting about this extract is that Rhian, Kelly and Chanel imply that they feel the purpose of the programme is partly to share their feelings with others, to release unpleasant feelings (not keeping it to yourself) and to reinforce personal bonds (Swan 2007). In each case, the students draw on wider therapeutic discourses to frame their expectations of the programme (Ilouz 2008), discourses which are in fact somewhat contradictory to those within the curriculum itself. My question *"why would you choose to do it?"* requests that they imagine themselves prior to having attended the lessons and envision what they what they would hope to gain from participating. And yet, equipped as they are with the knowledge of having completed the programme, the students appear to both expect and hope that it would provide an opportunity to discuss their feelings.

Though the notion that 'it helps to talk about it', has become an almost dogmatic trope of therapeutic culture, talk generally plays a far more limited and less open-ended role in mindfulness pedagogy than with some other psychological therapies (Segal et al 2002; see also Crane et al 2016). Within MBCT, for example, and in turn within .b, students are discouraged from narrativizing personal information, and enquiries are steered so as to

focus on present experience and to illustrate pre-given learning objectives (Ibid). Here, MBCT, building on cognitive theory and modern Buddhist ideas, makes a strong departure from psychoanalysis in its devalorization of talk. Where earlier forms of CBT arguably instrumentalised talk for generating cognitive insight and behaviour change (Marks 2012), MBCT more significantly curtails its function, emphasising instead 'immediate experience' and awareness of the body (Crane 2017). Yet, for some students, it appeared that their interpretation of the programme was framed by the still dominant psychoanalytic notion that difficult emotions are released through 'sharing'.

Both .b and MBCT do, however, emphasise the role of group discussions in facilitating 'normalisation', that is, in reassuring students that their experiences are normal and understandable, that they are 'universal' human experiences. As in the extract above, a number of female students suggested that they valued finding out that other students shared similar concerns to them. Their responses suggested that there was some cathartic value, perhaps a sense of relief, in recognising that their worries were shared. Yet, a number of students also spoke at length of their feelings of discomfort with such discussions when other students did not share the same worries or teased them about things they had said. My point, then, is not that the girls' comments indicate that sharing concerns cannot be cathartic or to deny their potential to support self-esteem. Rather, my claim is simply that the classroom space may not be appropriate for such exercises: that it is not necessarily possible to delineate and safeguard the conversation so as to prevent inadvertently causing harm to some students.

Whilst students at School One were more likely to frame the programme in terms of opportunities to share, there were indications elsewhere that students interpreted discussion elements of the course as probing for personal information. The extract below is taken from the discussion with students at School Two, as students were responding to a question, I am reading from the picture game: *"if you could 'have it your way' what would you change about mindfulness lessons?"*:

Extract 13	**S2,4M**
Emma:	Ask questions that people are comfortable with and don't pressure them 'cause some of the teachers do that.
Interviewer:	Ask questions that people are comfortable with and don't pressure them?
Emma:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	You said some of the teachers do that?
Emma:	Yeah.
Interviewer:	Erm, do you mean in mindfulness or in general.
Emma:	General classes as well, sometimes in mindfulness.
Interviewer:	Ok, sometimes in mindfulness. Ok, can you think of the kinds of questions, the kinds of things people might be not as comfortable with talking about in the class?
Emma:	Personal questions, that they might find personal but that the teacher doesn't find personal.

Though I was aware of the silence that often fell upon the class in response to questions about worries/stresses/thought busses, I had never heard Emma's teacher frame these in a personal manner and never saw him select students to give answers. I found him to be softly spoken, kind in his manner and keen to avoid demonstrations of authority. Nonetheless, Emma suggests that she interpreted some of the questions as personal, whilst simultaneously recognising that the teacher himself may not have been aware that they were interpreted as such. Her ambiguous *'some of the teachers do that',* (though only one teacher taught her class .b) leads me to seek clarification *'in mindfulness classes or in general?'*. Though her response is softened, she suggests that she was initially talking about mindfulness lessons (general classes *as well*).

Something else is interesting about Emma's statements here. She frames her critique impersonally. She does not say directly that *she* found the questions personal and uncomfortable, or that *she* felt pressured. It is left to speculation as to whether she is referring to her own experience or whether she is speaking on behalf of others. However, whether or not she is speaking about herself, it appears that Emma's *general*, *im*personal statement is referring to something *specific* and *personal* (either to herself or another). My point here is that Emma's critique itself, perhaps ironically, reflects an awareness of the tacit conversational rules that frame her interpretation of certain questions in the course as '*personal questions'*. I could go further and speculate that Emma may be concerned that her responses in class (to questions such as "What sort of things do people your age worry about?") may be interpreted by other students as responses that are personal to experience.

In the teaching notes around classroom discussions, it is noted that it is important not to expose the 'soft underbelly' of the child: a phrase which conveys an image of a sensitive space enclosed within the protective skin of the 'belly'. This metaphor again arguably draws upon psychoanalytic ideas regarding inner depths and layers within the psyche (Porter 1997). MiSP's reference to the need to protect this vulnerable inner space of the child reflects a recognition that the classroom space is not 'safe' for such exposure. However, I would argue that this metaphor may be inadequate for understanding the forms of emotional threat to students in the classroom. In a space in which glances, giggles, and teasing all make themselves felt upon the body, it is not an 'underbelly' that requires protection but rather a 'skin'. That is to say that pain may be caused not only through a 'spilling outwards' but through a 'seeping in'.

8.5 Conclusion

As noted in earlier chapters, there has been a general neglect of students' accounts within existing research surrounding school mindfulness programmes. This neglect may reflect in part the view that experiences of mindfulness are unadulterated by social context, features of the mind or psychological processes that are universal (Drage 2017). Accordingly, specific and situated experiences of mindfulness are insignificant to the extent that scientific research can objectively determine its efficacy (Grossman 2011). As such, in the previous chapter, I attempted to counter this perspective by illustrating how the mindfulness techniques were entangled within the mundane practices of the classroom through which particular subjectivities were constituted, regulated and contested. The universalising narrative evident within much mindfulness discourse also necessarily draws

sharp dividing lines between apparently 'private' embodied aspects of mindfulness practice and 'external' social conditions within which they are enacted. In contrast, however, students' accounts arguably illustrated how the embodied affects of mindfulness practice were irretrievably enmeshed within the 'feeling' of being a particular being within the particular social dynamics of 'this' classroom.

Whether, in students' accounts, mindfulness was constructed as an embodiment of good citizenship, or whether it was articulated in terms of therapeutic discourses of 'talk', it became apparent that the practices of the programme were fundamentally bound up with the wider discourses and practices of the educational space. Within this space, metaphors of internality appeared to have less purchase. Rather it appeared that, for such students, the subject is either enacted through affective performances and dispositions of 'good behaviour' or through relational practices of sharing, confession and seeking assurance. In students' accounts, that is, mindfulness was not a practice enacted only 'upon' an interior space of the mind, brain or soma, a space discrete to the individual and yet, in its essence, shared by all. Rather it was enacted *through* relational space and embroiled within the matrix of subjectivation through which students were constituted (as 'the boys', 'good students', 'misbehaving ones' and so on).

The accounts of certain students indicated that mindfulness techniques may alleviate or contain affective experiences that overwhelm, cause distress or present impediments in students' lives. I have argued, moreover, that this cannot be understood as simple pacification or a totalising subjectivation through neoliberal or educational norms of personhood (Reveley 2016; Forbes 2019). Rather, I have suggested that such practices should be understood as both constraining and enabling, and as enabling *through* constraining. For students such as Sam, mindfulness practices were performed as a technique to alter affective states and thereby submit to certain norms of behaviour, and hence for shaping subjectivity in particular ways (to be *"a better listener", "more kind"* and so on). This submission is not oppression, rather it is through his simultaneous submission to and mastery of those cultural norms that Sam becomes recognisable as an agent both to himself and within the educational space (*"it's controlled me....it helps you control what's inside."*) (Butler 1997; 2013).

And yet, though my discussions with students revealed how the programme may provide techniques of self-cultivation for certain students, techniques that were valued by such students themselves, these discussions also revealed how the educational context may present various impediments to the objectives of supporting wellbeing of other students, often those who are already alienated from the school and who may be most likely to suffer the forms of psychological distress the programme intends to address. Where mindfulness is bound up with behaviour management, not only is it likely to be inaccessible for those whose identities are largely constituted in opposition to the school, it may also become an affective performance through which those identities are re-inscribed: 'The misbehaving ones are those who don't do mindfulness (properly)'. Furthermore, for some students, particularly girls, discussion elements of the programme were interpreted as requests or opportunities for confessions of personal experiences and concerns. Their accounts of discomfort and teasing illustrate the potentially significant affective and psychological repercussions of such exposure.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The claim that has framed this thesis is that .b can be understood as a pedagogy of the self: as prescribing techniques of self-cultivation, and 'techniques of existence' (Foucault 1997 p.84). The curriculum conveys guidance as to 'ways of being' that are desirable and worthy, the traits and dispositions to which students should aspire, and the techniques through which to nurture certain forms of subjectivity. In the opening chapter of this thesis, I set out an approach to an ethnography of .b that could begin to make sense both of the conceptions, ideals and techniques of selfhood formally described in the curriculum, and the ways in which those ideas and practices are taken up and given form by students and teachers in the classroom. I claimed, moreover, that 'what .b is' and 'what it does' is emergent from the broader assemblage of formalised teaching materials and social practice, and of the wider network of ideas, norms and metaphors through which different actors make sense of the programme. And I claimed that existing bodies of literature have failed to engage with this wider assembling and specifically with social practice, thus impeding our understanding of both cultural and psychological implications of mindfulness in schools.

I began, also, by posing a number of specific questions which were each taken up in the preceding four chapters: about how .b teachers and developers framed the need for the programme and the forms of subjectivity that are problematised in their accounts (Chapter 5); about the discourses and practices of selfhood that are articulated within the curriculum itself (Chapter 6); about the ways in which these discourses and practices took shape in the classroom (Chapter 7); and finally, about how students themselves employed, modified, or resisted ideals and techniques of the programme (Chapter 8). Across these chapters, I have taken up each of these questions in turn, exploring in each case different core aspects of the assemblage of .b. Throughout, I have attempted to draw attention to the ways in which ideas and practices in the programme are variously interpreted and reconfigured by actors and in different spaces. In doing so, I have been responding to the gap in understanding about what mindfulness programmes actually teach and how they are interpreted and enacted in situ. Moreover, in adopting this approach I was attempting to bridge between analyses that have focused primarily on therapeutic theories, manuals and texts that prescribe certain technologies of self (Rose 1989; 1998; Kendall & Crossley 1996) and studies that have focused on processes of subversion, resistance and power within therapeutic interactions (Silverman 1997; Brownlie 2004).

The thesis has made a number of contributions. Firstly, and most obviously, it is the first ethnographic investigation of secondary school mindfulness programmes in the UK. Accordingly, in shedding light on a preventative mental health programme in schools the research contributes to existing understanding around the landscape of mental health provision in the UK and the expansion of psychological therapies (Pickersgill 2019). As universal preventative measures appear to be increasingly attractive to policy makers (Ecclestone 2012; Wright 2014; Weare 2013), such programmes will become interesting spaces for exploring struggles around subjectivity and value within future research. Indeed, given the current political milieu in the UK and across other 'Western' states, and the

alignment of psychological interventions with economic agendas (Broer & Pickersgill 2015; Pickersgill 2019), compulsory and/or 'universal' (one-size-fits-all) wellbeing interventions may become increasingly common across a range of domains outside the school (such as early years contexts, prisons, the workplace, healthcare). As such, this research arguably has relevance to understanding the discourses, practices and negotiations around value that such interventions may entail, and hence has relevance to debates beyond educational contexts.

More broadly, however, the thesis responds to the call for greater exploration of the ways in which therapeutic practices are enacted in particular contexts (Brownlie 2004; Salmenniemi et al 2019; Swan 2019) whilst enabling recognition of how these practices are structured by certain 'programmes of conduct' (Kendall & Crossley 1996), in this instance an educational curriculum. In doing so, that is, in moving between the fixedness of lesson plans and teaching materials to the fluidity of social practice, I have attempted to move past the totalising assumptions of some existing critiques of therapeutic education as 'producing' neoliberal subjectivities. Instead, I have illustrated that these subjectivities in fact become the site of extensive struggle and, moreover, that the effects of mindfulness and other therapeutic practices are not uniform but are shaped by the wider practices through which particular subjects are situated (Salmenniemi et al 2019).

In addition, the particular analytical approach I have adopted, drawing on Taylor's pragmatic ethics, attenuated with a Foucauldian sensitivity to power, is arguably novel. In focusing on tensions, conflicts and incongruencies within the values articulated in the course and between these values and the practices of the programme, rather than simply discounting these values as necessarily or essentially neoliberal, or deriving wholly from some other form of discursive power, I have attempted to avoid the tendency of some Foucauldian scholarship to be too singular and totalising. This approach involves recognising that discursive power is productive of the values through which people make sense of their lives (Henriques et al 1984), and yet, accordingly, productive of circuits of value through which certain subjects are constituted as beings of greater or lesser worth (Skeggs 2004; 2011; Tyler 2008; 2013; 2015). We can therefore *neither* entirely dismiss the values or ideals of subjectivity within a given cultural context as products of social control, nor blithely accept them as benign truths, but must critique them on precisely the terms on which they are tacitly presented, that is as claims to speak coherently about what is good and valuable about human life.

As the four specific research questions have been addressed in the four discussion chapters, this concluding chapter focuses on synthesising the discussion in relation to the overarching research question. The overarching question that guided the research was: *What are the understandings, ideals and techniques of selfhood that are conveyed within the .b curriculum and how are these taken up, contested and/or resisted by teachers and students?* Most broadly, this question is asking about the abstract ideas through which selfhood is constructed within the programme and by those who teach it and the specific practices through which selves are constituted within the programme and through which they are taught to act upon themselves. Moreover, following the approach to ethical tensions that I outlined in Chapter 3, the concluding discussion further examines certain tensions, conflicts and incongruencies *within* the conceptions of selfhood that underpinned the curriculum and

interviewees discussions and *between* these conceptions and the ways in which participants of the programme are positioned in practice. In addition to further drawing out those tensions that I have been exploring throughout the thesis, I want to particularly examine ethical *implications* of these tensions in relation to the programme's central commitments to reducing psychological suffering and supporting flourishing.

Across each of the analytic chapters of the thesis, I have been illustrating different elements of what I consider to be the central tension that characterises the programme: between the ideal of the therapeutic subject as agentive and self-creating and the notion of the child as a site of intervention. The educational context, compulsory format and didactic methods of the programme carry with them the assumption of a more or less docile subject who is constituted through ideas of 'normality'. That is, as the programme is situated as a 'universal preventative measure, the child of intervention is conceived of as a child whose concerns and difficulties reflect or overlap with those described within the curriculum, and as a child who is able to navigate her emotional world within the terms anticipated within the teaching guidance. Yet, my claim is that this conception of normality is translated in practice to a form of therapeutic normativity: not as a collaborative exploration of how students *might* feel and how they *might* respond, but implicitly, and at times explicitly, what they *should* be worried about and how they *should* respond. I have attempted to illustrate, furthermore, how this conception of normality reflects classed and gendered norms of subjectivity and middle-class concerns, and how this resulted in the alienation and exclusion of certain students. It is this conception of the child as a site of intervention, as a subject whose agency is postponed, alongside the understanding of mindfulness as preceding the social, that I have argued has resulted in the failure to examine the social practices through which the programme is produced and the particularities of students' experiences. Finally, my claim is that this tension within the foundations of the programme impedes its capacity to realise its aims of supporting young people's wellbeing. Firstly, because the conception of wellbeing that it presents is somewhat incongruous with the ways in which students are positioned in the programme and within their lives. But also, because the directive mode of delivery hinders recognition of instances in which aspects of the curriculum itself may inflict harm.

Contrary to many sociological accounts of therapeutic practice (Donzelot, 1979; Chriss, 1999; Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Furedi 2013), my argument is not that mindfulness in schools or other therapeutic practices are inherently oppressive. Rather, like much recent ethnographic work into the lived experiences of such practices, I claim that mindfulness in schools may have multiple, often contradictory effects and may be both enabling and injurious for different kinds of subjects across different spaces (Wright 2008; Salmenniemi et al 2019; Swan 2019). As I discussed in Chapter 8, the accounts of certain students illustrated how, under particular conditions, for certain kinds of subjects, such practices may be enabling. The ethical issues I discuss relate to particular aspects of the programme (the compulsory nature of lessons and practices, the use of techniques for engaging with difficult emotions and the discussion of 'typical' worries, the lack of possibilities for students' active engagement and the failure to recognise social determinants of distress). These are issues that I feel, as yet, have not been properly considered, or recognised, or that have been too easily dismissed, and that need to be taken into account in the future programming of .b and other therapeutic approaches in schools. Nonetheless, these

tensions do not just 'belong' to .b as such, rather they emerge from a wider network of tacit assumptions and foundational metaphors that structure modern conceptions of mindfulness, the self and the child.

In the following section, *Didactic therapeutic,* I explore the specific tensions between psychological and therapeutic ideals of the subject and notions of the child and the student that are fundamentally constituted through vulnerability and irrationality. As such, I consider some of the ethical tensions particular to compulsory therapeutic initiatives in schools (and elsewhere). Subsequently in *Directed introspection,* I explore the tension surrounding the construction of mindfulness as a practice of engaging with subjective experience, that which is private, potentially sensitive and unknowable to others, and the positioning of teachers as authorities capable of determining when this introspection is appropriate. Finally, *Body without form* explores a tension that I believe tacitly structures not only many teachers' interpretations of .b, but also much psychological research surrounding mindfulness in schools. That is, the assumption that the body that is experienced and felt through mindfulness is somehow prior to or outside of the social and political inscriptions that mark and label that body (cf. Grosz 1994). This perspective links, I believe, to the assumption that mindfulness is a 'special kind of thing' that is beyond culture, and hence the failure to examine specific social practices of mindfulness programmes in schools.

In the latter half of the chapter, I outline some limitations of the thesis before considering its implications for future research, policy and practice surrounding mindfulness and other wellbeing initiatives in schools.

9.2 Didactic therapeutic

Perhaps the most striking tension that I encountered over the course of the research related to the portrayal in the curriculum and by interviewees of students as active and willing subjects of their own self-creation, in spite of the disciplinary and authoritative context of the school, students' lack of choice about participation, and the largely didactic methods of the curriculum. As I argued in Chapter 5, this conflict reflects an abiding tension in the notion of the autonomous subject of modernity: that is, that the free subject must be 'civilised' such that she may be enabled to act freely (Taylor 1989; Rose 1990; 1999). Rose (1998) argues that in advanced liberal societies psychological ideas have provided a central role in enabling subjects to govern themselves in line with prevailing norms and values, obviating the need for the explicit intervention of authorities. Fundamental to understandings of therapeutic practices, therefore, is the notion of the subject as free from excessive constraint, as capable of reflexively shaping their behaviours and their lives (Rose 1998; Swan 2010). Yet, in drawing heavily on psychological-therapeutic discourse (specifically via MBCT) to formulate an instructive programme for a conscripted audience, .b renders this tension more explicit and, arguably, more problematic.

Underpinning the curriculum, I have argued, is a notion of the psyche of the child as a site of risk and potential: representing the possibility for both individual and societal prosperity or demise (Jackson & Scott 1999). Hence, .b was positioned by interviewees as a 'universal preventative measure' for reducing propensities towards mental illness and as a positive

intervention geared towards facilitating children's flourishing. These ideas drew on an understanding of human beings as inherently vulnerable to psychological distress, owing to our neurobiology and evolutionary design and the inevitability of life's misfortunes. Yet, the subject was also depicted as being capable of actively creating a fulfilling life, of reaching personal goals and achieving success (Rose 1998). The depiction of the child in terms of becoming and possibility appeared to cement the rationale for intervention into children's development (Rose 2010; Broer & Pickersgill 2015; Gagen 2015; Pykett & Disney 2015), to impart to young people 'skills and strategies' with which they could forfend against suffering and bolster psychological health.

The tendency to view children's development in terms of societal risks to be managed is not new to .b, nor to the recent 'therapeutic turn' within education (Rose 1990; Wright 2014). Rather, as I have noted throughout, the school has always had a central role in producing 'healthy' children and has historically been a key locus for interventions into minor abnormalities (Foucault 1991; Rose 1990; 1996b; Gagen 2015). As Wright (2015) has noted, there has been a general shift in recent decades towards universal approaches, which some have described as attempts to 'immunize' against mental illness (see also Craig 2007). In Chapter 5, however, I illustrated how the logic that underpins .b reflects a vastly more optimistic and ambitious approach. Through mindfulness, interviewees envisioned children as not only bolstering against psychological ills but as gaining the capacity to fashion a more prosperous and meaningful life.

It is important to reiterate that, despite some interest from policy makers (such as the MAPPG), .b is not a government-led intervention. Rather, it is a particular kind of 'grassroots' movement: one that has emerged from a more or less exclusively white, middle-class, liberal, educated, professional audience. In the UK and the United States, it is predominantly this section of society that has historically engaged with, and shaped, modern Buddhism (Almond 1988; McMahan 2008), and that has most readily taken up secular mindfulness (Wilson 2014; Drage 2018a, b; Kucinskas 2018). It is also this section of society that has most widely consumed, and hence, been constituted through, psychological expertise and therapeutic practices (Pfister 1991; Skeggs 2011). As such, these intellectual strands have come into dialogue and reformulated each other in particular ways (McMahan 2008), and each has been shaped in turn by the pre-eminence of the belief in autonomy (Rose 1990; 1998). The ideas that we are agents who are free to create our lives in the manner of our choosing, that our world is a realm of possibility open to our taking, that mundane pleasures and relationships are themselves potentially joyous and sacred, have become axiomatic to contemporary culture (Taylor 1989). And, as such, these axioms have fundamentally reformulated psychology from a discipline of diagnosing and treating pathology to one of facilitating contentment (Thomson 2006; Illouz 2008), and mindfulness from a practice of renunciation to one of the accentuation of life's joys (Wilson 2014). Echoes of these interwoven histories can be heard in the utterances of interviewees who speak of mindfulness as providing children with the 'skills' they need to flourish.

Within interviews, it appeared that the moral imperative to intervene in children's development was fortified by the promise of an approach that could facilitate apical states of mental health. In the discourse surrounding the programme, the plastic brain is seen as the material site of intervention through which children's subjectivity is moulded

(Pickersgill 2013; Gagen 2015; Pykett & Disney 2015; Sánchez-Allred & Choudhury 2016) and through which they are taught to mould themselves. Moreover, within the curriculum, mindfulness is depicted as facilitating a truer form of human agency, through which the subject is extricated from emotional drives and distorted patterns of thinking, gradually restructuring the brain in the service of greater attentiveness and wellbeing. And yet, the agency of the child within .b is always deferred, relegated to the imaginary. In practice, the programme rests upon an assumption that children can be chosen *for*.

As I have noted, the cultural construction of childhood fundamentally rests on notions of vulnerability and irrationality, such that children's best interests are catered to by adult guardians and their own desires are often overridden (James 2017). As such, the depiction of the subject as freely choosing and self-creating is somewhat antipodal to the ways that children's identities are socially constituted and to their experiences in their daily lives. Practically, within .b lessons, the didactic format means children are positioned as recipients whose contributions are minimal, contained and steered towards pre-determined answers. More strikingly, the notions of deliberate and mindless actions in the course may themselves be used to deny agency to children's actions. The ideas of 'reacting and responding' that are discussed in Lesson Four (see Chapter 6) carry particular connotations in relation to children in schools, whose actions are continually monitored and frequently reprimanded. These wider connotations (of good and bad behaviour) cannot be side-stepped, as they form the prior understanding through which students and teachers make sense of the programme. It is conceivable, for example, that expressions of frustration, anger or resistance towards the authority of the school may be deemed 'reactivity', while 'good behaviour' is deemed responsiveness. In practice, of course, both are likely to reflect patterned and habituated ways in which students act and in which they are positioned by others. The difficulty of thinking about responsiveness and agency outside of notions of behaviour within a school context is well illustrated by the fact that teachers in observations almost always explained these ideas in terms of 'choosing not to hit someone back'.

Whilst these may seem like unproblematic elisions, they may cause some students to view mindfulness as an extension of the disciplinary apparatus of the school. Hence, as discussed in Chapter 8, within some students' accounts, mindfulness was conflated with the demonstration of good behaviour, rather than as a reflexive technique. Moreover, where .b becomes entangled with institutional disciplinary norms, where students are positioned as passive recipients of knowledge about the management of their wellbeing and the concerns that are relevant to their lives, and where the programme is understood by students as an imposition of the school, engagement comes to be situated on lines of compliance/resistance. As I have illustrated in the previous two chapters, this may result in the alienation of certain students from the programme. One probable implication, I would argue, is that this may simply deter many young people's interest in learning mindfulness both within and beyond the course. However, a more problematic implication, as I discuss in the following section, is that mindfulness may become entangled with the discourses that entrench the exclusion of some young people. Both issues are specifically related to the compulsory nature of the programmes and the exercises within them and hence, the requirement and expectation of the teacher to 'manage behaviour' in line with school disciplinary regulations. Of course, the vast majority of lessons and activities in schools are non-optional. Yet, mindfulness exercises, techniques of centring attention on

the bodily manifestations of emotional states, are fundamentally different to exercises where the object of learning is socially constituted 'knowledge', and it is this issue which I turn to below.

9.3 Directed introspection

The second issue I would like to discuss, relates to the understanding of mindfulness as an engagement with our 'internal world', with emotions and feelings, with all that is accessible to our own conscious awareness and, presumably, inaccessible to that of others. Specifically, this issue concerns the extent to which others can, effectively or ethically, direct and delimit this engagement.

In Chapter 2, I argued that mindfulness is frequently depicted as a direct engagement with our 'inner world'. In this discourse, 'interiority' represents an intimate space, comprised of emotions, feelings, sentiments, thoughts, urges, desires and fantasies, shaped by our unique histories, culture, genetics and biochemistry. These subjective dimensions of our experience, moreover, are generally understood as phenomena that only we can access, and which often remain inchoate even to ourselves (see Chapter 3, Taylor 1989; Illouz 2008). Mindfulness, though it is not limited exclusively to this 'internal world', is nonetheless widely depicted as entailing a heightened awareness of such private dimensions of experience (see for example Kabat-Zinn 1994; Gunaratana 2010). Within the curriculum, I have argued, the mindfulness exercises involve encouraging students to adopt a meticulous form of embodied reflexivity and acute awareness of unfolding 'inner' subjective experience.

In Chapter 7, I discuss the concerns that some trainee .b teachers raised about students who may encounter particularly difficult feelings during mindfulness. In responding to these concerns, trainers explained that the practices were only 'light touch' and they were not asking students to 'turn towards' dark or heavy feelings. I noted how these depictions were articulated in terms of an inner landscape of depth and shade, whereby more serious or painful experiences were understood as lying 'deeper within' (Kövekses 2000). The student, in turn, was depicted as navigating through this emotional world, turning towards only that which is appropriate for the classroom, and never reaching the darkest depths. I would argue, however, that these metaphors can be misleading. Traumas or difficult recent experiences may be immediate and visceral (Edleson 1999). The argument over breakfast this morning, the fight between parents last night, cruel words spoken yesterday, may not be easily navigated past or sifted through to reach something less consequential. In response to these concerns, the trainer further explained to the group that it was important to 'know our students': that is, to know whether or not they are experiencing any difficulties that might make the practice inappropriate. The safeguarding apparatus of the school, the various practices of monitoring children for signs of maltreatment or abnormal behaviour, were therefore deemed sufficient to make judgements as to whether certain mindfulness exercises would be appropriate or harmful for any given student. That is, the subjective space that is usually understood precisely in terms of its unknowability to others was, for children, assumed to be somewhat transparent and predictable.

Though the trainers (and .b teaching guidance) explain that it is important to 'know your students', we were not given formal guidance about what a teacher should do if, when delivering the curriculum to a conscripted audience in a group, they felt that the practices were *not* appropriate for an individual student. For example, in Lesson Six, in which the thought bus exercise is conducted, the guidance states:

> The intention in this lesson is to explore thinking with a very 'light touch' i.e. not engaging in discussions about the specific thoughts (difficult or otherwise) individuals in the group may experience. Having said that, do check with the appropriate member of staff about anyone in the group who might be experiencing a particularly difficult time (e.g. a bereavement, illness or family separation) and decide together the best course of action.
> (L6 p.2)

It is not clear, though, what this course of action *is* nor *how* it is to be decided. Teachers make decisions relating to the care of their students daily, and there may be aspects of other lessons that are sensitive for some children and which teachers need to handle with care. However, making decisions about whether or not a child should engage with an introspective practice (where, in this case, they bring attention to thoughts and feelings in response to words such as *"argument"*), is quite different. I would argue that, however extensive the safeguarding apparatus of the school, it is not possible to know children's lives nor their degree of emotional stability with enough certainty for such potentially sensitive exercises to be appropriate for compulsory lessons. My concern is that MiSP may have underestimated the number of children whose daily experiences are far beyond the remit of difficulties they have anticipated, and beyond those that the programme is designed to address. Though the programme is intended to be delivered to non-clinical populations, there are many children who are deemed psychologically healthy yet who are living in adverse circumstances, not all of which will be known to the school. Statistics relating to the prevalence of domestic violence, abuse and neglect suggest that my concern is well founded. NSPCC figures show that 1 in 5 children in the UK have lived in a house with a violent adult and as many experience serious maltreatment or neglect (Radford et al 2011). 1 in 20 children are thought to have experienced sexual abuse, and the vast majority do not tell anyone at the time (NSPCC 2019). Many forms of adversity are tightly intertwined with issues of poverty (Herrenkohl et al 2008), and further bound up with issues of symbolic (de)valuation that often entrench working class and minority ethnic students' marginalisation within the school and wider society (Gillborn & Youdell 1999; Youdell 2003; Gillies 2005; 2006; Tyler 2008; Gillies & Robinson 2012). As such, teachers in schools with a higher proportion of children from socially and economically marginalised backgrounds may work on a daily basis with children with serious, painful experiences in their lives.

Children who do not have to 'dig deep' to find painful memories may not always demonstrate vulnerability in the classroom, as to do so would most likely incur castigation and a loss of status amongst peers (Youdell 2006a). They may, however, express anger and resentment towards teachers who, with the best of intentions, attempt to direct their attention to their feelings, thoughts and emotions and hence risk exposing that vulnerability. For students who are often already positioned as naughty, aggressive and

deficient, this may only exacerbate their marginalisation within the school. The students who 'could not sit still', the three students who were eventually excluded from lessons at School One, and the one child who was repeatedly excluded from lessons at School Two, were, as such, re-subjectivated as 'unteachable' (Ibid). Of course, I am not suggesting that these students necessarily had grave and painful things that they were avoiding 'being with'. What I am suggesting is that we don't know.

I was disappointed and distressed by how easily these concerns were dismissed in the .b training. I am not arguing that mindfulness exercises can never be used in the classroom, and I am certainly not denying that certain practices may provide an immediate sense of relief or strategies that some students may use to support them in times of difficulty. On the contrary, as discussed in the previous chapter, I found that some students did use and value the practices. However, I must also acknowledge and bring to the forefront the accounts of other students who suggested that the practices could be uncomfortable or expressed frustration about their lack of choice in participating. As such, going forward, I feel that there needs to be a much more considered debate regarding the ethics of compulsory participation in mindfulness and around the sorts of practices that are suitable to be taught within classrooms. I discuss my specific recommendations in the final section of the chapter. However, first, I examine another dimension of the understanding of selfhood which tacitly structures the curriculum and specifically how this may hinder recognition of the differential effects of mindfulness for different subjects across different spaces.

9.4 Body without form

This final tension relates to certain, largely unexamined assumptions that I believe course through mindfulness discourse more broadly, and that I feel underpin the rationale to turn mindfulness into a universal educational intervention.

In Chapter 5, I explored how interviewees spoke of vulnerability to distress as a universal human trait: a mark, even, of our common humanity. In the curriculum, this vulnerability was described in terms of neurological processes and evolutionary design. Feelings of anxiety, for example, derive from a reaction in the amygdala, which is designed to facilitate a speedy response in the face of danger and promote our survival. There was, then, an understanding of human beings in terms of these fundamentally shared features, an emphasis on their biological ontology. The curriculum eschewed discussions relating to personal history or social circumstance, most probably as a deliberate (and arguably, sensible) attempt to avoid sensitive discussions. Nonetheless, what I want to draw out here, is how this understanding of the human being in terms of universally shared biological features, endowed through evolution, appeared to link into a broader web of assumptions that impede recognition of specific and situated determinants of distress, and justify the lack of investigation into children's particular experiences of the curriculum.

This network of assumptions, and precisely the ways in which they link up, is illustrated by an extract of my field notes from the .b teacher training, which I discussed in Chapter 7:

> During a period for questions, an attendee raises a concern. The attendee says that the exercise reminded them of a female student with an extremely negative body image, and they wonder how she would feel about 'dropping into different parts of the body'. One of the course trainers responds by saying that '*what we are doing is sensing the body rather than thinking about it'*, and that '*body image is* an *idea rather than a feeling'*. The attendee appears satisfied with this and notes that in sensing the body 'we are all equal.*'* There are murmurs of agreement amongst the group.

The trainers initial severance of the 'felt' body from the 'idea of' the body - that is the ways in which the body is perceived by the subject and how it is articulated in language, appears to indicate also, to the attendee, a distinction between the subjects *experience* of her body and the prejudices and privileges that mark it in its daily social existence. The 'felt' (internal) body is not the same as the (external) body that is classed, raced, or sexed (cf. Butler 1990; Grosz 1994). The apparently innocent closing statement *'in that way we are all equal'* may be just an off-the-cuff remark, but it captures a sentiment that I encountered countless times in casual conversations with .b teachers, in wider mindfulness literature, and even in academic conferences on mindfulness. That is, despite the emphasis within .b and wider mindfulness discourse on the materiality of subjectivity (in terms of neurobiology), dualistic notions of mind-body subtly persisted through distinctions between what is 'real' (materiality, sensation, *"the raw sensations"* (L1 p.22), *"the actuality of the present moment"* (L0 p.19) and what is apparently symbolic ('thoughts', but also labels, semantic associations, social positions). Accordingly, as with the interaction above, 'experience' comes to be understood as distinct from, and uncontaminated by, the specific social positioning of the body. This tendency within .b and the wider culture of mindfulness arguably reflects dualistic tendencies within much cognitive psychology and neuroscience, whereby the brain is frequently positioned as a largely discrete entity, or the relationship to the body as a whole is only partially and inconsistently recognised (Bennett & Hacker 2005). Hence, within the curriculum, the plasticity of the brain is seen as evidence of the capacity to shape ourselves at the most fundamental level of our being, but not explicitly recognised as indicative of the ways in which this being is formed by our differential circumstances, or as therefore problematizing notions of 'responsibility' for our happiness and universalised understandings of stress and worry.

The interaction between the trainer and trainee reflects a cultural narrative that extends far beyond mindfulness: that is, the conception of humanity connected in a way that precedes cultural and political differences (Sharf 1995; Drage 2018b). It is a perspective that has been particularly persuasive, for example, in the Global Health and Global Mental Health movements (Das & Rao 2012; Bemme & D'souza 2014). In each case, the notion of universal humanity is drawn on to support the rationale for *expanding and extending provision* for a particular good to a new and potentially limitless population. It is a narrative that emphasises affinity and minimises difference. Hence, mindfulness in schools is promoted as a universal intervention that addresses universal issues of minor difficulties and stress, that are themselves primarily rooted not in particular circumstances but in the shortcomings of human evolutionary design. Moreover, in each case, the universality of human beings, grounded in shared biology, is reinforced by a claim to the universality of 'objective evidence' (Bemme & D'souza 2014). Thus, randomised control trials produce 'robust evidence' about the effects of psychosocial interventions such as mindfulness

which is percieved as generalisable to various other domains (Pickersgill 2019). My point here is not to critique any of these movements as such, that is, to dismiss the goods they promote, but simply to point to a particular shared logic.

In relation to mindfulness, the epistemic authority of science arguably collides with lingering ideas of universal Dharma, albeit constructed in medicalised terms, to produce a particularly potent notion of 'truth' (Drage 2018a). There are two ways in which I believe that these ideas of truth are tacitly woven throughout the Mindfulness in Schools Project. The first, is a failure to recognise the ways in which social and political forms of marginalisation and privilege *are* inscribed upon, written into, felt and experienced *through* the body (Grosz 1994). That is, to understand that the ways in which we are positioned and valued in society (and in school) are not abstract or 'in our heads' alone, nor do they exist only at the margins of our lives, embedded in structures that are far beyond our vision. They are experienced viscerally through daily experiences and interactions that (re)inscribe our worth (Skeggs & Loveday 2012). Negative 'body image' issues, for example, arguably do not originate in an abstract realm of one person's imaginary, they originate in a material and cultural world of that body's experience: which includes the normalised sexual objectification and micro-aggression towards women and girls, and the expectation that young women navigate a tightrope between heteronormative sexuality and 'morality' (Bordo 1993; Ringrose & Renold 2012). These experiences, materialised in 'ranking girls out of ten', violent explicit content and 'slut shaming', do not just passively shape our self-understanding, they are *felt*. It is perhaps for this reason that female students were more likely to say that they felt uncomfortable closing their eyes in the classroom.

The second, as I explored in Chapter 8, relates to the failure to establish means for students to feed back their experiences of the programme to those delivering them, and the wider neglect of students' perspectives within published research. I would speculate that this failure is related to the assumption that the efficacy of mindfulness is already well-established and that individual experiences of students are therefore largely inconsequential. That is not to say, by any means, that I believe that those who developed, test or deliver the programmes do not care deeply about the young people's experiences. On the contrary, as I argued in Chapter 5, I think that developers and teachers' beliefs that mindfulness will benefit students is grounded in their understanding of existing evidence of those benefits and their own experiences. Hence, the efficacy of mindfulness, itself underpinned by what are claimed to be universal psychological states of awareness, does not need to be affirmed by specific children in specific places, as it has already been proven. There is a danger, of course, that this truth in its apparent singularity impedes recognition of the ways in which mindfulness is in fact differentially experienced by specific people in particular contexts.

What is perhaps even more concerning, is that, with regards to current, psychological approaches to mindfulness, the truths of what mindfulness is, that it works and how it works have each been established within spaces that are largely dominated by white, middle-class, adult, men (that is, despite the predominance of female practitioners and the numerous prominent female mindfulness teachers and Asian Buddhist teachers, whose contributions are frequently unacknowledged) (Hsu 2016; Drage 2018a). These social positionalities and exclusions do matter, because, as I have hopefully convinced the reader,

psychological states or skills of mindfulness are not just transmitted via or taught through school programmes. Rather, as I have shown, these programmes convey a much broader network of values and ideals *beyond* and *through* mindfulness: within the specific content of lessons that are designed by particular people, whose experiences are inevitably themselves particular and limited. Moreover, this research has illustrated how mindfulness lessons are structured by the norms of the social context in which they are delivered: that is, the disciplinary, authoritative and normative context of the school. And, as I have hopefully now made clear, the ideas and practices such programmes teach are interpreted by teachers and students via wider cultural webs of meaning, through prevailing metaphors of subjectivity and through tacit assumptions about the nature of selves, students and children. This thesis has, furthermore, attempted to illustrate that the embodied experience of mindfulness practice is thoroughly entangled with the ways in which particular subjects are situated and valued. I would contend, accordingly, that the wider 'effects' of mindfulness in schools for students' wellbeing is emergent from these entanglements. And, as such, it is these entanglements, the knotty, fuzzy and uncomfortable bits, that must be recognised and explored by any future research that wishes to make sense of how such programmes might facilitate or hinder wellbeing.

9.5 Limitations

There are, of course, a number of limitations to the approach that I have taken, both in relation to the scope of the claims that can be made with regards to the research and to certain drawbacks or weaknesses of my methods. I explored the most significant of these limitations in Chapter 4. However, below I take some time to reflect on these issues and their impact on the thesis more substantively.

Multiple multiplicities

I discussed, in Chapter 4, some of the debates surrounding multi-sited ethnographic methods. There are two prominent criticisms that I feel are most pertinent to re-address in relation to the thesis: the risk of essentialising the remit of study and the compromising of depth. The first is the implication that analyses derived from multi-sited ethnographies give the impression of depicting a 'thing' in its entirety, even if they do not explicitly claim to do so (Candea 2007). This links into Britzman's (2002) critique of naturalist approaches to ethnography, whereby their value is precisely their apparent granularity in depicting an objective reality 'out there'. My hope was that in drawing on post-structuralist ideas regarding discursive practices and 'assembling', I could disrupt this perception of wholeness, the 'thing out there'-ness, and draw attention precisely to the 'doings' through which mindfulness in schools is shaped in different contexts. Whilst the tensions that I have spoken about derive from discourses that structure mindfulness in schools, they do not capture 'what mindfulness in schools *is*' in any comprehensive way.

Nonetheless, my decision to explore .b not only in multiple sites, but also through different perspectives (developers, teachers, students) and from different angles (teacher training, course materials, classrooms), might arguably encourage the perspective that the study somehow captures the 'essence' of .b. Moreover, particularly given the ordering of the discussion chapters, which move from interviews and analysis of curriculum materials, to practice in the classroom, through to students' accounts, the thesis could be read as an

account of how '.b' evolves from its conception through to its enactment and interpretation. This is, in fact, how I thought of the approach for some time. However, I came to feel that this implied a temporality and linearity was reductive and incoherent: it was not the case that those I interviewed or with whom I participated in training then went on to conduct the lessons I observed, for example, nor was it the case that the format of delivery was equal in each instance across the schools. As such, my move to conceptualising .b as an assemblage, and my approach as an exploration of the 'programmes of conduct' (Kendall & Crossley 1996) of .b and affective-discursive practices (Wetherell 2012) through which they are enacted, indicates a more horizontal and emergent process.

For all these multiplicities (of sites, methods, perspectives), I necessarily made certain compromises in terms of depth of analysis in any particular domain. The use of numerous methods necessitated different approaches to my analysis, even as I was working within the same overarching theoretical framework. Had I, for example, focused only on ethnographic observations, I might have developed more sophisticated skills for exploring the ways in which students and teachers utilised the classroom space in negotiating power and identity, and I would have had significantly more analytical space for drawing out these themes. In fact, for each of the discussion chapters, particularly Chapters 6, 7, and 8, for which I had masses of data, I felt that there were issues that warranted further explanation or additional themes that could have been explored if I had more space. Given the relative lack of sociological literature surrounding mindfulness in schools, I felt that these compromises were preferable to producing an analysis of interaction that could not make sense of what that action was modelled upon, that is, how teachers themselves had been instructed. Most significantly, I felt that in expanding my lens beyond the classroom, I could move past rigid binaries of power/resistance *and* of social control/empowerment, to also recognise subtler processes of agency (modification, subversion, evolution).

Finally, though I had centred my analysis around discourses and practices of selfhood, focusing on how certain 'ways of being' were constituted as desirable and certain practices were instructed for developing manners of relating to experience and cultivating particular characteristics, these foci still permitted multiple avenues of analysis. I could, for example, have focused my analysis in Chapter 8 on the extent to which students took up certain forms of subjectivity or performatively constituted themselves as certain kinds of beings (Butler 2002). My focus instead on the forms of reflexivity described in students' accounts was pragmatic. Given that the discourses through which mindful subjectivity was constituted in the course were largely absent or somewhat distorted in students' accounts, I felt more could be gained from exploring the particular self-practices and techniques (manners of adjusting behaviour, moderating affect, sharing feelings etc.) that were described in students' accounts. Nevertheless there were many such decisions across the analysis, whereby the scope of my question permitted multiple interpretations. The 'story' that I have told is that which I felt to be most poignant and compelling, and its narration reflects countless partial decisions.

Mindfulness of body

Mindfulness has been described as a form of embodied reflexivity, that is, a form of coming to know and monitor the self through bodily sensations (Pagis 2009; Stanley 2013b). Over the course of the thesis, I have tried to situate embodied practices of mindfulness in .b

within the social and spatial contexts in which they are enacted and in relation to the wider social practices (of teacher student interactions, disciplinary regulations and so on) through which they take shape. In Chapter 8, I drew on affective-discursive practices to explore the ways in which affective experiences (of resistance, of 'affective-discharge' or release and so on) were rendered intelligible via discourse (Wetherell 2012). In the introductory chapter of the thesis, I noted my hesitance around theoretical approaches developed within cultural studies of affect (Massumi 1995; Thrift 2004), which arguably sometimes fall prey to the same assumptions that I have argued suffuse understandings of mindfulness: that is, to see the affective as somehow preceding the discursive (see Wetherell 2013). Nonetheless, despite my emphasis on the intertwining of the two, there is undeniably a weighting in my account towards the latter.

In Chapter 7, for example, I explore how the instructions of mindfulness exercises make certain requests upon the bodies of students and, though I try to draw attention to dispositions and movements that signify compliance, subversion or resistance, my analysis predominantly coalesces around the discursive. Besides my discomfort with prominent theoretical approaches for analysing affect, this neglect also reflects practical limitations: though my field notes were written and typed up assiduously, terrified as I was that I would miss *the* 'important thing', I could not capture with sufficient granularity the postures, dispositions and movements of one teacher and 30 students. In the moments of writing, I attended to that which I felt to be most important, and my ability to do so was aided by the fact that, for the most part, interactions were either didactic or dyadic (that is, teachers either spoke to the group or they interacted with particular students who responded to questions: there were no student-led discussions in the lessons I observed, and where students 'misbehaved', this was usually via subversive comments directed to the teacher). My recordings of utterances and interactions were also inevitably fragmented. However, I felt that my data here was richer: to have foregrounded bodies would have required too great a reliance on memory. Nonetheless, the relative obscurity of the body within my account is certainly a limitation of the thesis. Future research could attempt to explore video recordings of group mindfulness practices or compulsory therapeutic practice to specifically draw out an analysis of how bodies are orchestrated and how they subtly subvert or resist. This may provide an ideal space for examining the relationship between processes of subjectivation and affect (which I briefly discuss in Chapter 8) (Dawney 2013).

These limitations considered, I feel the research has a number of practical implications for policy and practice. Below I discuss some pertinent avenues for future research implied by the thesis before outlining my recommendations for the future programming and delivery of mindfulness and other wellbeing programmes in schools, and for wider policy around such programmes.

9.6 Implications for future research

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that in order to understand the 'effects' of .b for young people's wellbeing, we must explore how this programme takes shape through mundane practices in the classroom and recognise specific accounts of students. As school-

based wellbeing programmes and therapeutic initiatives in workplaces, hospitals, prisons and elsewhere appear to be proliferating in Western contexts (Salmenniemi et al 2019), there is a need for far greater attention to the everyday contexts of these programs and the accounts of their participants (see also Swan 2019). Such research could explore how these programmes are shaped by the unwritten rules and unspoken assumptions that govern these spaces and enable recognition of that which is often 'tidied up' or discounted in controlled trials (Bemme & D'souza 2014).

There is a need, also, for attention to the ways in which the *bodily experience* of mindfulness practice is in part shaped by participants' social positionalities and by the nature of their relationship with those delivering instructions. In Chapters 7 and 8, I discuss how these dynamics (social identities and peer expectations, relationships with the teacher, preceding interactions between those in the room) all appeared to influence students' responses to mindfulness on a bodily level – facial expressions, bodily tension and position, apparent receptiveness to instructions and so on. To the extent that mindfulness is itself an 'embodied practice', fundamentally grounded in and experienced through the body (Pagis 2009; Feldman & Kuyken 2019), then these variances and dynamics are enfolded into this experience. Within much popular and psychological literature on mindfulness, somatic experiences are described as part of that which is to be 'observed' or 'noticed', as *objects of,* or even, *contents for* mindfulness (see discussion on representations in section 6.3). Yet, I would argue that bodily experiences that are structured by relational dynamics, both those that are consciously 'noticed' and those that form the backdrop and texture for what is noticed, cannot be disentangled from the 'experience' of mindfulness itself. I labour this point because there has been extensive research devoted to operationalising the psychological (state) mindfulness (Bishop et al 2004; Shapiro et al 2006; Seigel et al 2009), and/or attempting to identify the specific aspects of mindfulness training that mediate positive outcomes (Kuyken et al 2010; van der Velden 2015). It is therefore surprising that more has not been done to examine the phenomenology of mindfulness practice for different people across different social spaces. Arguably, the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness, like other forms of mind-body medicine, function in part *through* phenomenological experience (in contrast to medication, for example, and to a far greater extent than talking therapies) (Pagis 2009). If, as I am suggesting, this experience may be markedly shaped by the social and spatial dynamics in which a person learns the practice then far greater consideration must be given to exploring the variable forms and experiences of mindfulness, and to the implications of these variances for therapeutic outcomes.

This thesis has, moreover, argued that elements of the programme tacitly endorse forms of subjectivity that are more consistent with middle-class male and female norms and are to some extent less accessible for working class students, particularly boys (see Chapters 7 and 8, see also Youdell 2006; Lucey & Walkerdine 1999). In addition, I have argued that, when situated within the authoritative context of the classroom and in relation to broader discourses of good and bad behaviour, the programme is interpreted by teachers and students as itself encouraging 'good behaviour' (i.e. complaisance rather than active self-reflection). These subtle cues, reinforced by the didactic and compulsory nature of the programme, arguably contributed to the resistance of some working class and marginalised students, particularly those have difficult relationships with the school and who may be

used to behavioural interventions. By observing how the programme played out across schools in different socioeconomic contexts, this research provided an opportunity to explore dynamics relating to social class, gender and value practices (Skeggs 2011). However, as the research was conducted in schools which catered to a predominantly white-British demographic, it was not possible to explore how these disparities intersected with issues of race and ethnicity or religious background. In recent years, a number of scholars across the social sciences have produced compelling theoretical explorations of the white supremacist[13] ideologies that structure modern-Western mindfulness (Hsu 2016; Mae-Keralse 2019). As yet there is little empirical research which explores how white-Western cultural values are conveyed, circulated and contested within mindfulness programmes, in schools or elsewhere, or which explores the subjective accounts of participants from minority ethnic groups. These are pressing issues for future research, particularly if mindfulness (and other wellbeing programmes) are increasingly implemented in diverse settings and where participants are either explicitly or subtly obliged to attend.

The methodological approach of this research (comprising both textual analysis and analysis of social practice), moreover, could be of use to researchers interested in processes of subjectivation and therapeutic culture more broadly. Whilst textual analysis is often employed in traditional ethnographic research, there has been a tendency within the social sciences for studies exploring subjectivation and/or psychological therapies to focus on documentary and policy analysis (e.g. Purser 2019; Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Rose 1998), or on specific instances of social interaction (Silverman 1997; Brownlie 2004). As other scholars have noted, lived-practice is informed by and in part structured by authoritative texts, yet takes shape in ways that are unforeseable through these texts (Brownlie 2004). For those conducting research on therapeutic programmes, examining relevant manuals will help to make sense of the particular 'games of truth' that frame these programmes (Foucault 1997), whilst observing lessons in action will enable recognition of how different actors 'play the game' or even 'bend the rules'.

Finally, the research arguably illustrates the need for future evaluations of mindfulness in schools or other wellbeing programmes to substantively engage with young people's perspectives. Such qualitative research could not only complement and inform evaluations of efficacy but could be utilised to identify issues and facilitate improvements to programmes prior to such trials, improving the likelihood of their 'success'. As I emphasise throughout, young perspectives are largely neglected within from existing literature. Without this research, and without critical analysis of the every-day contexts of programmes' delivery, it will be difficult to identify issues that may impede such programmes' stated aims of supporting students' wellbeing. Beyond this however, as I argue below, involving young people in ongoing evaluations of the programme, and more actively involving them in decisions surrounding its delivery, may itself function to support positive relationships between teachers and students and, ultimately, to support their wellbeing.

[13] Here, the term 'white-supremicist' refers to the assumption of white culture, history and white bodies as the norm from which others diverge (as opposed to its usage in relation to groups which explicitly espouce the supremacy of the white race) (Gillborn 2005; Hage 2012).

9.7 Implications for policy and practice

Nothing about us without us

The first recommendation that I would make in relation to the development of future iterations of .b, and school wellbeing programmes more broadly, is that such programmes are designed in consultation with their anticipated participants. Programmes which are intended to be delivered with young people, across varying socioeconomic and cultural contexts should be developed with the input of a diverse range of young people to ensure that their values and experiences are recognised and respected (Percy-Smith & Thomas 2010). This approach would need to actively seek out the participation of marginalised groups and of individuals who have more difficult schooling relationships, whose needs are otherwise less likely to be understood and addressed (Liasidou 2015). This consultation could take place through youth steering groups or focus groups and could be conducted at various points during the development of the programme. Involving young people in the process of developing programmes, as well as delivering the programme in a more consensual manner and actively seeking students' feedback, would hopefully help to address concerns raised by students in this research and enable teachers to put in measures which prevent harm.

One objection to involving a range of young people in the programmes future development may be that the curriculum is adapted from the 'tried and tested' model of MBCT. However, both MBCT and MBSR also took shape through the decisions of a small number of figures from particular backgrounds (Drage 2018) and these programmes were designed for adult, voluntary, therapeutic contexts. If, moreover, mindfulness itself is understood relational and socially contingent rather than as a universal psychological capacity (Stanley 2012), then it may be possible to move beyond medical and psychological approaches to mindfulness, or at least to envision a broader range of possibilities for teaching it.

Involving students in programme development, however, is not sufficient alone to address the subtler issues raised by the thesis around the relatively didactic approach by which certain values of selfhood were presented. Throughout the thesis I have insisted that whilst education is always normative, .b differs from traditional subject-lessons in that it specifically draws students' attention to their personal experience and teaches methods of relating to this experience. To conduct such a programme without recognising students' varying backgrounds and perspectives or engaging in some form of dialogue about their existing resources is, therefore, arguably both ethically problematic and, as this research suggests, likely to meet resistance from students. If programmes themselves begin from a position of establishing a dialogue between teachers/facilitators and participants, this may help to disrupt normative assumptions based on particular social positionalities (adult, teacher, white, middle-class, male/female) and, ultimately, aid engagement in the programme and better support young people's wellbeing. This last point is, of course, conjecture, but I am basing it on the wealth of research that has established the importance of strong and reciprocal relationships for supporting outcomes both in therapeutic and educational contexts (Lambert & Barley 2001, Kosir & Terment 2014).

Finally, during my .b teacher training it was explained that the curriculum is designed to be minimally disruptive to the classroom context. This approach was adopted so that the programme could easily fit within the school timetable and minimise the time spent moving locations or re-arranging chairs and tables. Nonetheless, classroom spaces are defined by particularly rigid dynamics of power (Eggermont 2001) and relatively stagnant normative discourses (right/wrong, good/bad behaviour) (Buzzelli & Johnson 2001), each of which are highly familiar to teachers and students. For this reason, I would encourage those designing future strategies or programmes for supporting students' wellbeing, and perhaps future iterations of .b, to think outside of the classroom box. Other spaces, such as gyms or drama halls, could permit greater flexibility within established dynamics in part by enabling greater bodily movement (Waite 2011).

The freedom to choose

As I have argued throughout, the didactic and compulsory approach of .b's delivery is largely in conflict with the ideals the programme conveys and, more specifically, appeared to be a source of frustration for students. As such, I would encourage those attempting to implement such programmes in future to establish more consensual modes of delivery. By this I mean, practically, that students are not expected or forced to participate in any activities in which they do not feel comfortable and which could therefore cause them harm.

The approach to implementation that I feel would be most in line with the ethical commitments of the programme and most likely to realise its intended ends would be to run the programme as an optional module. As I learned through my interviews and wider discussions with teachers at conferences and events, some schools are already adopting this approach. Some of those I spoke with were concerned that making the programme optional would mean many students would miss out on learning mindfulness because they would decide prematurely that they were not interested. To partially mitigate this issue, some schools were offering the introductory lesson of the programme to all students within a given year group, after which students could elect to participate. This seems to me a reasonable approach and was one which a number of students themselves suggested during our discussions. I would, however, go further and suggest that even within a taster session, students should be given the option not to participate in mindfulness exercises. In my observations, students frequently sat with eyes open or heads on desks rather than actively engaging in practices. However, actively articulating practices as a choice may help to enhance trust between teachers and students by demonstrating respect for students' desires and thereby potentially generate more interest in the programme. If the programme itself is developed collaboratively with young people and if they are actively engaged with, listened to and consulted throughout, then it is possible that many more young people may choose to participate.

If, however, the .b programme is delivered to a conscripted audience, I would argue that certain aspects of the curriculum should be amended or removed. These are those aspects that were problematic for some students in this research, including: the discussion of worries, the thought bus exercise and the gratitude practice (see Chapter 7, and section 9.3

above). In relation to worries, as I have attempted to show, currently the curriculum implicitly portrays certain worries (those referenced in the guidance) as 'right answers'. This was evident in the manner by which teachers suggested these answers if they were not offered by students, subtly steered students towards them, or praised these answers more than those that were particular and personal. Delimiting the conversation to some worries is inherently exclusive and may be particularly unhelpful for students dealing with significant adversity. Within Chapter 7, I showed how this focus on 'typical worries' led some teachers to quickly shut down students contributions that did not fit with the anticipated answers in the curriculum guidance, meaning that such students appeared to be left unsupported. As such, where it is not felt to be possible to listen and respond openly to young people's worries I would argue that it is not appropriate to discuss worries at all.

As I explored in Chapter 7, my concern with the thought bus exercise is that it provokes an emotional response by drawing students' attention towards things which may, for some students in some circumstances, be distressing. Alternative exercises could draw on the analogy of the thought bus without using trigger words that may amplify difficult experiences. Similarly, I feel that the gratitude practice in Lessson 8 and broader aspects of this lesson could be adjusted to ensure that they are more inclusive. I empathise with the view I encountered amongst many mindfulness teachers that these practices can be powerful and enjoyable for students, and indeed this was true for many students I observed. However, as explored in Chapter 7, I also noticed that a few students appeared highly uncomfortable with this practice, and generally appeared frustrated by discussions about gratitude. As is often discussed within adult MBSR courses and mindfulness retreats, gratitude practices are sometimes experienced as highly rewarding but can also be difficult and uncomfortable for people in the midst of adversity. For reasons discussed earlier in this chapter (see section 9.3), I would argue that no child or adult should be obliged to participate in a practice that has the potential to be distressing. Nonetheless, there are alternative approaches to cultivating positive emotion which do not rely on bringing attention to our circumstances, relationships or memories (for example meditations which focus on the 'feeling' of a smile). Such practices may be more appropriate for use in the classroom.

Democratising wellbeing

My final recommendation is that any school that is delivering a wellbeing programme (such as .b) or implementing a broader wellbeing strategy should establish avenues for students to feed back their experiences. This, I feel, is especially important in relation to school programmes that involve engaging with feelings or personal experiences – however 'light' this engagement is perceived to be by those who are creating or delivering them.

Currently, most schools involved in the research (including interviewee's places of work and the four schools in which I conducted observations) were only conducting a short survey about students' experiences after the final lesson of .b. This survey is provided by MiSP and, as was explained in my .b training, its primary purpose is so that data can be compiled to show that the programme is acceptable to students and is generally used by teachers to 'sell' the programme to senior leaders. Given the number of issues raised within my focus groups with students about their experiences of the programme, the lack of

formal avenues for feedback could mean that such issues remain unresolved. If schools have no means of knowing about these difficulties, they cannot address them, and this could leave students at risk of harm. Teachers and senior leaders might counter that they already have in place avenues for students to express general difficulties, and therefore do not need to establish specific measures for wellbeing programmes. Evidently, however, existing measures were not sufficient for those students involved in the focus groups in this research, as they had not informed teachers about the negative experiences that they raised in these groups. As such, schools may need to more actively seek feedback from students. Based on this research on my wider reading, I would suggest that this feedback-seeking would meet to four criteria to ensure students are adequately supported:

1. Comprise multiple approaches and formats

Some students may feel more comfortable to express their thoughts privately, in writing whilst others may only discuss their experiences if they are directly involved in discussion (Liasidou 2015). As such, I recommend that schools adopt a number of complementary measures for seeking feedback. These could include: opportunities to feed back experiences anonymously; group discussions; and reminding students of a designated member of staff with whom they can privately discuss concerns. Where feedback relates to a specific curriculum, teachers may choose to weave a classroom discussion about students' experiences into a specific lesson part way through the course, or this could be formally included in the curriculum.

2. Actively seek to include marginalised students and students who have difficult relationships with the school

There is a well-established link between high levels of adversity and disruptive behaviour in schools (Hunt et al 2017; Blodgett & Lanigan 2018). As such, those students who frequently get into trouble or who have difficult relationships with their teachers may also be those who are most vulnerable and may be most likely to find exercises or discussions relating to personal experience distressing. It is therefore vital that those students who are considered most disruptive are consulted for their experiences of wellbeing programmes and wider wellbeing strategies. Members of staff who have strong relationships with these students may be best placed to seek feedback from them directly and explain how their feedback is being responded to by the school as a whole.

The feedback system should also strive to ensure inclusion of those from marginalised social-class, racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as students from LGBTQ+ communities. Research suggests, for example, that LGBTQ+ students and those from low income backgrounds are more likely to be bullied and to have troubled experiences of schooling (Toomey & Russell 2016; Carlson 2006; Tippett & Wolke 2014).Though there is mixed evidence regarding ethnicity and peer victimization (see Seals & Young 2003; Vervoot et al 2010), certain ethnic minority students are more likely to have difficult relationships with their teachers and to experience negative stereotyping (Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Gillborn 1997; 2008). It is therefore paramount that schools seek feedback from students who are more vulnerable to victimization and or marginalisation and that they are responsive to their concerns.

3. Be responsive

Attempts to seek feedback from students will likely lose credibility and, in any case, be somewhat futile if they do not influence future decisions made by teachers and senior leaders. Existing literature suggests that schools that actively involve students (and parents) in school decisions and demonstrate that concerns are being 'listened to' and acted upon, may be most effective at supporting students overall wellbeing (Hoy et al 1991; Weare 2000; Roffey 2010). Given, as I have already argued, that trust is foundational to both amicable relationships and to therapeutic and educational outcomes (Lambert & Barley 2001, Kosir & Terment 2014), demonstrating responsiveness to students' concerns is likely to improve the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives such as .b. As .b and other wellbeing initiatives are sometimes delivered by external facilitators, feedback would also need to be shared with these facilitators and where possible, with programme developers.

4. Encourage criticism, without judgement

Finally, as noted earlier, typical formulations of teacher-student interactions involve gently guiding students towards (implicitly or explicitly) designated 'correct answers' (Edwards and Mercer 2013). In observations, these patterns spilt over into discussions that were ostensibly 'non-judgemental'. These typical formulations are therefore also likely to tacitly frame both teachers' and students' interpretations of feedback-seeking activities. For this reason, I would argue that additional effort needs to be invested in framing such discussions as geared towards identifying issues so that the school's approach to supporting wellbeing can be improved – both by enhancing that which is helpful and altering that which is not.

As noted above, I am keenly aware of the budgetary pressures and time limitations that restrict schools' capacity to develop responsive approaches to supporting young people. However, for those schools that have found time to deliver a designated syllabus for teaching students 'skills' to support their wellbeing, I would argue that this responsiveness may in fact be *more* important than the content of lessons themselves. Of those students I spoke with, five had found certain mindfulness exercises valuable in some aspect of their lives. The remaining seventeen, however, were not using the practices and often expressed frustration and resentment about the programme itself: their lack of choice about participating, their perception that it was not useful to them or that they did not need it, their lack of trust in members of the group and discomfort in practices, and the lack of interactive activities in lessons. As such, whilst clearly elements of the programme have the potential to be of significant value (such as, for example, mindfulness practices that alleviate anxiety) its format and delivery are arguably limiting the extent to which students are accessing these practices.

Ethics, engagement and effectiveness

Whilst the recommendations made here are primarily directed towards those developing and delivering school-based wellbeing programmes they have relevance for policymakers who are interested in mental health and wellbeing promotion within education and across other domains (e.g. MAPPG 2015; Weare & Bethune 2020). This thesis has argued that obligatory participation in wellbeing programmes is both ethically problematic and potentially counterproductive. If conscription to such programmes impinges on the relationships between those delivering them and their participants and if this conscription generates a tone of resistance these programmes are less likely to be effective even if the 'evidence base' suggests that their content may be of value (see Elliman & Bedford 2013 for this argument in relation to other domains of public health). The success of such programmes fundamentally relies upon the active and willing engagement of their participants. Whilst young people do not have the same legal rights as adults they are no less capable, as this research has shown, of subverting and/or resisting interventions into their lives which they perceive as intrusive or illegitimate. I would argue, moreover, that such interventions (and others in education, healthcare, criminal justice or the workplace) must proceed on a basis of respect for the dignity of their participants and willingness to recognise their diverse values and experiences. This respect can be demonstrated by ensuring that programmes adopt measures such as those outlined above for establishing dialogue, working collaboratively with participants and responding to their concerns.

Finally, policymakers should both encourage and recognise research which explores the subjective experiences of those involved in such programmes, rather than focusing primarily or solely on controlled trials. This approach could learn from movements to involve mental health service users in mental health research and service development (Thornicroft et al 2002; Rose et al 2011; Patterson et al 2014), which emphasise that people who utilise such services have a unique perspective on their successes and failings and a clearer understanding of their own needs. Advocates of user-led mental health have vehemently argued that mental health practice must recognise service users as actors rather than as simply those to be acted upon (Rose 2017). Similarly, future research, policy and practice surrounding wellbeing programmes in schools and elsewhere must recognise children not as risk or potential, but as social actors who are already weaving meaningful lives, and whose accounts are integral to understanding the effects of interventions into those lives.

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Appendix A Overview of the .b curriculum & materials used in textual analysis

Booklet	Acronym/label
'How to Teach .b' booklet	HTT
An introduction to mindfulness	L0
Lesson 1: Playing Attention: Training the Muscle of the Mind	L1
Taming the animal mind: Cultivating curiosity and kindness	L2
Recognising Worry: Noticing how your mind plays tricks on you	L3
Being here now: From reacting to responding	L4
Moving Mindfully: Keeping your head on your shoulders	L5
Lesson 6: Taking in the good: being present with your heart	L6
Lesson 7: Befriending the difficult: Managing strong emotions	L7
Lesson 8: Stepping back: watching the thought-traffic of your mind	L8
Lesson 9: Pulling it all together	L9

Appendix B Mindfulness in Schools Timeline of Key Events

2007 – Initial .b curriculum developed, Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) formed later that year

2010 – Preliminary trial of .b conducted by Felicity Huppert & Daniel Johnson

2015 – Wellcome Trust funds £7 million, 7 year My Resillience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) project to explore the efficacy of .b for improving wellbeing amongst secondary school students, comprising a large-scale randomised control trial (RCT) and implementation study

2016 – MiSP become registered charity

The ethnographic research for this thesis was conducted between June 2017 and July 2018.

Appendix D Interview structure (i) version 1 and (ii) version two

i. Interview structure version one

Discussion Guide: Mindfulness in English Secondary Schools
.b teachers & teacher trainers
40min-1hr

Prior to interview:
- Provide information sheet and consent form and give opportunity for informed consent
- Ask if any questions regarding the interview

N.b. stakeholders who are not delivering mindfulness in schools may be able to provide less detail in sections 7 and 8.

1. Current role/position

- Can you tell me a bit about your current role and how it relates to .b?
    - Probe to ensure full understanding of:
        - Professional background
        - Role/involvement with .b
            - Are they delivering mindfulness to students/teachers?
            - In one school or many?
            - Specialised to particular students or all students

2. Interest in mindfulness

- How would you describe mindfulness to someone who knew nothing about it? What is it about? What is its purpose?
- Could you tell me about how you personally became interested in mindfulness?
    - [If they feel comfortable to share] Why did you begin practicing mindfulness?
- How did you initially become interested/involved in .b?
- Has your involvement/role changed at all? If so, how and why?

3. Beliefs on purpose and value of mindfulness in schools

- What made you want to teach .b in schools?
- What do you think it offers to:
    - Students
    - Teachers/Schools
- What do you feel is the most important benefit of .b?
- What do others see as the most important benefit to .b? E.g.
    - Students
    - Teachers/Schools
    - Parents
- How would you describe the core values of .b?
- How are those values the same or different to those of schools/society broadly?
- What are the negatives of .b in your opinion?

4. Understandings of the content and structure of .b

'Learning objectives of .b'

- What do you think .b teaches students? How does the course do this?

How mindfulness is presented to students

- Could you describe some of the practices and how these are taught? What is the benefit of these practices?
- What are the most helpful metaphors used in teaching mindfulness to students? Why are they effective?
- What is the purpose of animations used in .b?
- *Neuroscientific concepts:*
    - How are neuroscientific concepts used in .b?
    - What is the benefit of explaining mindfulness in that way?
- Do you feel that .b has a spiritual component? If so, how would describe this?
- Are there any disadvantages to how mindfulness is currently presented?
- **How, if at all, does the way mindfulness presented to students differ from your personal practice or your understandings prior to teaching .b?** What do you see as the reason for this?

Changes in curriculum

- How has .b changed over recent years? Why was this done? What was the effect?

6. Impact of .b

- How, if at all, does .b influence students:
    - Wellbeing?
    - Mental health?
    - Spiritual development?
- What impact will .b have on schools?
- If mindfulness was provided in all schools in England, what impact do you think this would have? Why do you think this?

7. Format of mindfulness delivery in schools: contextual information

Thank you. I'd like to understand a bit about how mindfulness is delivered within the schools you work in.

- Can you tell me about how mindfulness delivery works in the school/s you work in?
    - *Probe to understand:*
        - Who is delivering mindfulness? One teacher/many?
        - Which students are receiving mindfulness: all year groups? Targeted (SEN/EBD etc.) or all?
        - How established is the programme? How long has it been running?
        - Format:
            - Is the course delivered in timetabled lessons? If so, which lessons? If not, when? Why has the school chosen this approach?
            - Is the course delivered as the full 9 week curriculum? If not, how is it adapted? Why has the school chosen this approach?
            - Do the lessons follow the MiSP guidance? If not, how are they adapted? Why are they adapted?
- Has the school's approach to delivering mindfulness changed at all? If so, how?

8. Implementation of the programme

- In your experience, how has mindfulness been received by teachers/schools?
- What have been the barriers to mindfulness being delivered? How are these overcome?
- In your experience, how has .b been received by students?
    - What do the like?
    - What do they not like?

9. Summary

Is there anything else you think I should understand/anything you would like to add?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank for their participation.

ii. Interview structure version two

Discussion Guide: Mindfulness in English Secondary Schools
.b Stakeholders
20 min

Prior to interview:
- Provide information sheet and consent form and give opportunity for informed consent
- Ask if any questions regarding the interview

Check:
- Are you ok for me to record our conversation?
- Can you hear me ok?

2. Interest in mindfulness

I would like to understand what mindfulness means to you personally, how you understand it, what it's about and also what the practice means to you
Understand
- How they define/understand it
- Why they started to practice
- What the practice offers to their life
- Do they feel there is a spiritual component?

If need to probe:
- How would you describe mindfulness to someone who knew nothing about it?
    - **Does it have a purpose? If so, what is it?**
- Could you tell me about how you personally became interested in mindfulness?
    - [If they feel comfortable to share] Why did you begin practicing mindfulness?

3. Initial involvement in Mindfulness in Schools, History of the programme

Following from that, I'd like to understand how you initially became involved in Mindfulness in Schools?

Understand:
- How they first heard about it
- Did they train independently or through some sort of sponsorship
- **What was their prior mindfulness training/experience**

What were your motivations for wanting to be involved with teaching mindfulness in schools?

And could you tell me anything about the organisation itself? Do you know anything about the programmes development and how the organisation came into being?

Understand:
- What they know about the history
- Any personal connections

4. The value and purpose of .b

We've talked a bit about your personal experiences with mindfulness. I'd like to understand why you think it is important to bring mindfulness into schools?

Understand:

- What does mindfulness offer? Why is mindfulness needed?
- What difference do they hope it will make?
- **Who would it most benefit?**

What do you think .b is trying to teach students? What is the message it is trying to get across?

Understand:

- The teaching objectives - what .b is about

Is there anything else involved in .b other than mindfulness? (e.g. therapeutic concepts, neuroscience?) How does this sit with mindfulness? What is the effect of those things? What is the message?

To what extent do you feel that .b incorporates other elements of Buddhist teachings around mindfulness, if at all?

Understand

- More about what they see the ultimate purpose of the programme to be, how do these other concepts help?

Ultimately, what would you say that .b aims to do?

If all schools in the country taught mindfulness effectively, what impact would that have?

School Interest

There are various reasons why schools might be interested in .b, which may or may not differ from what you or MiSP see as the value of the programme. What do you think are the primary motivations of schools? What makes you say that?

6. Impact of .b

So I've understood what you hope mindfulness will bring to schools and what schools are looking for in the programme. Now I'd like to understand your experience with regards to the impact the programme makes. Could you tell me about the sort of feedback you get from schools and/or what differences you see the programme making?

7. Format and reception

I'd like to understand more specifically how mindfulness is delivered within the schools you work in. It seems schools are approaching it differently, could you tell me for each of the different schools

- Which students receive the programme and for how long?
- In what lessons the programme is delivered?
- How long has the programme been running?
- How did the school initially get involved?
- Does the course run in full?

And what has been the reception of teachers and students in the school?
And what about parents?

8. Concepts

I'm going to ask you to loosely describe how you think of some concepts which relate to mindfulness and its role in schools. These are not questions where I'm looking for a particular answer, and there isn't a right answer. I'm just hoping to understand the perspectives of people involved with .b.

How would you describe 'good mental health'? What does this mean to you? What sort of things hinder MH? What sort of things help?

Do you think good mental health can be taught? If not, what can be taught?

What do you think is meant by well being? What does 'well being' look like?

How specifically, does mindfulness contribute to these things?

Has mindfulness changed your understanding of what 'good mental health' and 'wellbeing' mean?

Is there a spiritual component to well being?

9. Summary

Is there anything else you think I should understand/anything you would like to add? Do you have any questions for me? ***Thank for their participation.***

Appendix E Pre-research information (i) and consent forms (ii) for interviewees

ii. Pre-research information sheet for interviewees

Pre-Research Information Sheet

A Multi-Sited Ethnography of Secondary School Mindfulness Programmes

Background:

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have funded research at Cardiff University to understand more about mindfulness delivery in schools. The research will focus on the .b programme, developed by the Mindfulness in Schools Project. The study aims to understand how .b is interpreted by students and teachers, and how it evolves on the ground.

The researcher is hoping to speak to a range of people involved with .b: including programme developers and MiSP staff; those delivering the programme in schools; and students who have received the programme. The researcher will also be spending two terms observing .b lessons before conducting focus groups with students.

About the interviews:

- **Approx. 30-40 mins** (length can be agreed in advance if time is a concern)
- Can be conducted either **in person or via Skype/telephone** at **a time of your convenience**.
- **Anonymous and confidential:** conversations will be entirely confidential and all data will be anonymised in final reporting. Recordings of the conversation will be kept on encrypted software belonging to the University of Cardiff, in keeping with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- **Flexible, informal and semi-structured:** I will approach the conversation flexibly and hope that it will be enjoyable for us both. However, I will need to steer the conversation to ensure I fully understand your perspectives on certain issues. This may mean that I occasionally need to move the conversation along so as not to overrun on time.

Broadly, the conversations will cover:

- Your professional background and your initial interest mindfulness
- Your role in the developing .b
- Your view on the purpose and value of the programme
- What you see as the core messages of .b

Timeline: The entire research will be ongoing from July 2017-October 2018.

As a PhD student, my budget is limited and I will not be able to offer a financial incentive for participation. However, it is hoped that participation will be a valuable opportunity to share your experience of the programme and of mindfulness broadly.

ii. Consent form for interviewees

A Multi-Sited Ethnography of Secondary School Mindfulness Programmes in England

CONSENT FORM

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

	YES	NO
HAVE YOU:		
• read the information sheet explaining about the study?		
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT:		
• the study is **confidential** and is bound by the Data Protection Act 1998		
• the final report will be **anonymised:** it will contain no names of those who participate		
• You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to		
• You can withdraw from the study at any time, without providing a reason. You can also request that your data be removed from the study after the interview has taken place.		

I have read and understood the information provided and hereby consent to participate in this study

Signature: _____Date: _____

Name in BLOCK Letters: _____

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to Steven Stanley at Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences (stanleys1@cardiff.ac.uk)

Appendix F Research information for Schools

Pre-Research Information Sheet

A Multi-Sited Ethnography of Secondary School Mindfulness Programmes

Background

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have funded research at Cardiff University to understand more about mindfulness delivery in schools. The research will focus on the .b programme, developed by the Mindfulness in Schools Project. The study aims to understand how .b is interpreted by students and teachers, and how the programme evolves in practice.

The researcher will be spending be observing a course of .b lessons at 3 schools before conducting focus groups with students. In addition, the researcher will conduct interviews with a range of people involved with .b: including programme developers and MiSP staff; those delivering the programme in schools; and students who have received the programme.

Method of in-school research:

The research is not evaluative: The purpose of this research is not to evaluate the school, the programme or the teaching of the programme. Rather, the research is more about sketching the horizon, finding out what is actually happening around mindfulness in schools in the UK.

Observations
The researcher will observe mindfulness lessons as they are usually taught. The specific arrangement with the school will vary depending on the timetabling of lessons. However, the researcher is able to provide learning support assistance during mindfulness lessons. The researcher may be also able to assist in lessons outside of mindfulness on days of observations, if this is desired by the school.

Focus groups
On agreement with the school, the researcher will run a number of focus groups with students who have taken .b. These groups will ideally take place after students have completed a full term of .b, however, if necessary due to time constraints, they may take place within the last two weeks.

Ethics:

Anonymity and confidentiality: All data will be anonymised in final reporting. Schools will be given pseudonyms as will teachers and students. All data will be kept on encrypted software belonging to the University of Cardiff, in keeping with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Appendix G Opt-out form for students and parents at participating schools

Dear Parent/Guardian,

[SCHOOL NAME] is participating in a research project with Cardiff University which is looking at mindfulness programmes in schools. There has been a great deal of interest in mindfulness across the education sector, with schools around the country looking to follow the lead from those who have already implemented programmes. [NAME OF SCHOOL] has been selected for the research as it is already delivering mindfulness to some students.

As part of the study, a researcher will be observing mindfulness lessons (as they are usually taught) over the course of one term. The researcher will also provide some learning assistance during lessons which will help to understand students' perspectives. Towards the end of term, the researcher will hold a number of focus groups to understand students' views and interpretations of the lessons. Parental consent will be sought before focus groups take place.

Please return this slip if you would NOT like your child to take part in this research. Please note, this will NOT mean that your child is taken out of mindfulness lessons. Your child can also opt out of the study at a later date by informing their mindfulness teacher.

____I would not like my child to participate in the mindfulness research.

This means that:

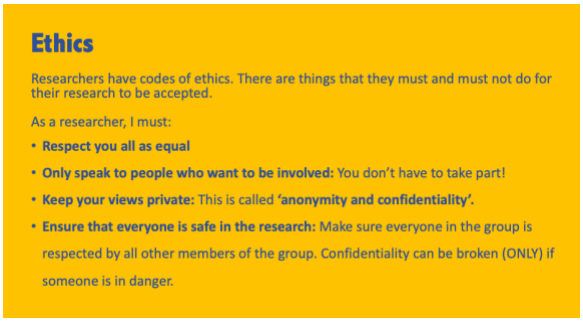
- No data will be collected that will refer to my child
- My child will not be considered for participation in focus groups

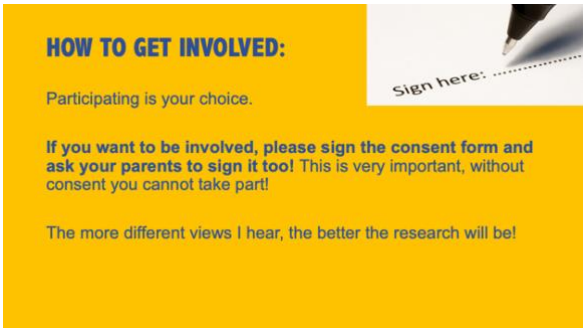
Child's Name_____

Parent's signature_____

Date _____

Appendix H PowerPoint information for student focus groups





Appendix I Information form for students and consent forms for students and parents

Information and consent form: Research on Mindfulness in Schools

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR PSHE/RE TEACHER

What is this about?

[Name of school] is taking part in some research around mindfulness in schools that is based at Cardiff University. As part of the research, there will be some focus groups with students who have taken a mindfulness course.

What is a focus group?

A focus group is a small group in which people talk about their views and do different games and activities. Focus groups are **confidential.** This means the researcher can share the general research findings with people outside the group, but not what any one person has said.

In a focus group, nothing is a 'test' and everybody's opinions are equally right. The purpose is to find out what people really think. So, this is a chance to honestly share your views and be heard.

What would it involve?

Taking part would involve coming to **one focus group** during school hours. The group will last **one hour** and will not run into lunch or break time. There will be 4-6 students in each group, and you can ask to be in the same group as a friend.

What do you get out of it?

The group should be relaxed and fun, so hopefully you will enjoy it. There will be some treats and we will play a game. You will also be given a certificate to thank you for participating in the research project.

Would you like to take part?

You will need to sign the back of this sheet and ask permission from your parent or guardian. **If you would like to be in a group with a friend please write their name on the bottom of this form and make sure they return their form too!** Groups will be arranged on a first come first served basis.

Only people who get parental consent can be involved, so please make sure to do this ASAP!

It's very important that lots of different people's perspectives are heard! Your views will be valued!

Important information:

- The study is **confidential:** the researcher will not tell teachers or anyone else what any person in the group says. The research is bound by the Data Protection Act 1998. The only exception to confidentiality is if any student says that someone is at risk of harm.
- Nobodies names will be mentioned in reporting the research: The report will be **anonymised.**
- **Taking part is optional,** and you can change your mind at any time. If you change your mind after the research has taken place, you can request that your/your child's data is removed.
- **Focus groups will be audio recorded. These recordings will be kept on encrypted software with Cardiff University.** The only person with access to the files will be the researcher.
- **The researcher has a full DBS certificate** and has received ethical approval from Cardiff University.

Parents do not need to fill in this form if students do not wish to take part.

Student consent:

Would you like to take part in this research? Yes___ No ___

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian consent:

I give my permission for my child, _____

to take part in this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return to your PSHE/RE Teacher

Appendix J School report

Research Summary Report

Year 8 students' experiences of the school mindfulness programme 'Dot b'.

Elena Hailwood, Cardiff University

Overview:

This report presents findings from research which explored students interpretations of a school mindfulness programme ('.b'). Four focus groups were conducted across two schools with a total of nineteen students, all of whom had completed a full syllabus of .b. The researcher also observed fifty hours of .b lessons. The particular focus of this report is students' engagement with, understanding of, and wider perceptions of the programme in terms of its usefulness and applications. Following an overview of the key findings, the report outlines some considerations for future implementation of .b.

This report is written for the use of schools who participated in the research, to inform their provision of .b and other relevant programmes. The report provides an overview of findings and is not a comprehensive analytic report.

Introduction

Educational mindfulness programmes are becoming increasingly popular in the UK (Weare 2013). Within the established literature, mindfulness programmes are widely promoted as an appropriate response to growing concerns around mental ill health amongst young people (Meiklejohn et al 2012; Kuyken et al 2013; Weare 2013). '.b' is a secondary school mindfulness programme developed by The Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP), which aims to teach skills to facilitate positive mental health and promote well being. The programme comprises of a syllabus taught over nine weeks.

.b is currently the subject of a large randomised control trial which will attempt to measure the impacts of the programme on students' wellbeing and resilience. The Mindfulness and Resilience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) project will do much to improve understanding of the effects of .b under circumstances of what is currently deemed 'best practice'. However, the project will do less to illuminate how .b is currently being used in schools and how students themselves interpret the programme. A core assumption of this research is that students' interpretations of .b, and of 'what' mindfulness is and what it is for, will be shaped not only by the syllabus but by various factors including: how the lessons are structured and delivered, the approach of the teacher, the attitudes of other students, their own and family members' preconceptions and so on. Students are therefore not passive recipients of .b but actively construct understandings through their engagements with the syllabus and with their teacher and peers.

This report presents findings from focus groups which explored students' interpretations of the programme after having completed a full syllabus of .b. The focus groups were undertaken as part of a larger doctoral project exploring representations and interpretations of mental health and selfhood through the programme. This report is intended to be of practical use to the schools that participated in the study to provide insight into students' engagements with .b and practical issues which influence their engagement.

The findings outlined below are drawn from focus groups conducted with a small number of students at only two schools. While such findings are valuable, they should not be seen to

reflect the experiences of all students or to provide a comprehensive representation of engagement with, or issues surrounding, dot b. In addition, findings from the researcher's observations which are relevant to students engagement with the programme will be noted. The researcher does not claim to be an authority in discerning the 'the best way' to deliver mindfulness in schools. Educators will have the local expertise necessary to consider how these findings should be considered in relation to future implementation of .b.

Method

This report provides an outline of findings from four focus groups conducted with year 8 students (aged 12-13) at two secondary schools. Students' responses are contextualised in relation to observations of .b lessons conducted over one term at each of the schools. The researcher also has a high level of familiarity with the programme through her wider doctoral research which involved completing .b teacher training and interviewing .b teachers and course developers. All of the students who participated in the focus groups had completed at least one syllabus of .b. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide insight into participants' understandings of, engagement with, and perceptions of the .b programme.

The research did not set out to make comparisons between the approaches of the schools or to evaluate participants' understandings (that is, to make judgements about the 'accuracy' of their responses). Nonetheless, where participants' interpretations differ from or contradict elements of the .b syllabus this will be highlighted. In addition, insights are drawn from the researcher's observations of .b lessons where relevant.

Finally, the findings reported here are weighted towards students at School One. This is because there was a wider pool of students who had completed .b at the first school and, as such, greater numbers were recruited for focus groups. In addition, at School One there was more time available for the focus groups, resulting in richer data.

Participating schools

School One was located in Central South Wales and School Two was located in South West England. Both schools were in rural areas and the majority of students were white British. However, there were some differences in the socioeconomic demographics of the schools. In table 1, the percentage of students eligible for free school meals at the schools is shown as a proxy for socioeconomic differences.

Table 1. Percentage of students eligible for free school meals at the schools

School	Location	% Free School Meals
School One	South Wales	27.6%
School Two	South West England	7.2%

Source: School One data taken from local council information site. School Two data taken from compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk.

Implementation approach

Whilst both schools were delivering .b to some students, there were a number of differences in the approach to implementation. These are outlined below.

School One

In School One, students from years 7, 8 and 9 were selected by the Assistant Head to participate in the programme. As it was not feasible to deliver the programme to all students

due to timetabling constraints, students were selected in terms of those who were felt would benefit most from the programme. Selection was based on a number of factors (including reports from pastoral staff; information about home circumstances; and behavioural, social or learning difficulties within school) .

.b was delivered to groups of between 12 and 16 students, separated by year groups. As there was no specific slot available for .b within the timetable, students were excused from other lessons to attend the programme. The timing of the lessons was rotated to minimise disruption to students' other subject lessons. All .b lessons were delivered by an external mindfulness teacher who worked at a number of schools across Wales.

School Two

In School Two, .b was delivered to all students in Year 8 as part of their PSHE lessons across one term. Two teachers at the school were trained to deliver .b and these teachers each taught half of the year group.

Observations

Prior to the focus groups being conducted, the researcher observed one full term of .b lessons at both schools. In School One, lessons were observed with one class in Year 7, 8 and 9. In School Two, lessons were observed with two Year 8 class groups.

Table 2. Overview of ethnographic observations in schools

School	Targeted/ untargeted	lindfulness delivery	No. of classes* observed	Year Groups Observed	No. of hours observations
School One	Targeted	External mindfulness teacher	3	Year 7 Year 8 Year 9	24
School Two	Untargeted	Behaviour support Manager	2	Year 8	16

*classes here refers to the number of *separate groups* of students observed

In addition, a number of supplementary observations were conducted at two other schools in the South West of England, both of which were rural comprehensives. In total, the researcher observed 50 hours of .b lessons.

Focus groups

Focus groups took place in the summer term. All students who participated had completed a full syllabus of .b and elected to participate in the focus groups. During the final lesson of .b, the researcher explained to the class that focus groups would be taking place and that students had the option to take part. Students were given consent forms (for both parental and student consent) and asked to return the forms if they would like to participate. In School One, consent forms were also provided to students who had previously completed .b in order to widen the pool of potential participants.

Focus group approach

Focus groups took place over one hour at School One and thirty minutes at School Two. The focus group was split into four sections. Each section involved an activity that was designed to address a particular research question whilst maintaining participants engagement in the discussion. In addition, the activities were designed so as to maximise participants' influence over the discussion whilst sticking to the research agenda. The four sections included:

- Mindfulness 'mind dump': participants were asked to say things that came to mind when they hear the word mindfulness. Words were written on a large piece of paper by a self-nominated member of the group

- What I remember: Similarly to the first activity, participants were asked to 'shout out' things they remember from the programme while a member of the group wrote them down. This included lessons, activities and practices. As participants recalled elements of the programme, the researcher prompted them to explain what they thought that element 'was about', or what it's message or purpose was.

- Like/dislike: Two cards were placed in the centre of the table, one with a 'like' symbol and the other with a 'dislike' symbol. Participants were given scrap pieces of paper on which they were asked to write as many things as they wanted and place them in either pile. The researcher discussed these responses with participants as they placed their paper in the piles.

- Student co-researcher game: six pictures were placed on pieces of paper in the centre of the table. Underneath each picture was a question about a certain element of .b. Participants took turns in picking a picture and reading the question to the group.

Unfortunately, as the focus group was shorter at School Two, it was not possible to play the student co-researcher game.

Table 3. Overview of Focus Group Participants

School	Focus Group	No. of Participants
School One	**Group One**	4
	Group Two	5
	Group Three	5
	Total Participants	**14**
School Two	**Group Four**	4
	School Two Total	**4**
Total Participants		**18**
Total Female Participants		**11**
Total Male Participants		**7**

Analysis and reporting

The following section provides an overview of the key findings that are of relevance to the delivery of .b. It is not within the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the focus groups or observations.

Reporting quotes

Quotes from the focus groups are used to illustrate points where appropriate. Participants have been given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Where quotes are used, participants' school affiliation is not listed, as an extra layer of protection for confidentiality.

Where relevant, short extracts of focus group discussions have been used to contextualise participants' responses. Utterances by the researcher are marked 'Int'. Where two or more participants have spoken simultaneously, this is indicated by a left hand bracket '['. Where the utterances of two or more students overlap, closed brackets '[ ]' indicate which parts of the speech occurred at the same time.

Where more than one extract has been used to illustrate a point, a single line space has been left between each extract to indicate that they are not part of the same interaction.

Findings

The findings will be organised into 4 key areas: engagement; understanding of the purpose of the programme and of key messages; perceived usefulness and applications'; and further issues identified through the research.

Overview of key findings

Engagement

- As can be expected from a non-voluntary programme, some students were more engaged than others. Some participants claimed to have enjoyed the programme and found it useful. Some others were less positive.
- Across the board, participants remembered the lessons and the key practices well, suggesting that many elements of the lessons had held participants' attention.
- Within observations, students' willingness to engage in the practices appeared to be influenced by the perceived impressions of others in the group. Where some members of the group were resistant, this significantly reduced the likelihood that others would engage.

Understanding

- Participants broadly understood mindfulness as something that was intended to help them, particularly in terms of reducing feelings of stress, anxiety and anger, and in aiding concentration.
- A few participants understood mindfulness as being something to help people who 'needed it' and, therefore, 'not for me'. As such, there were indications of a slight stigma around mindfulness amongst some participants.
- There were a few elements of the programme which participants claimed were confusing or that the purpose was unclear (details in full report).
- At times, participants' understanding of the messages from .b differed from or contradicted ideas presented in the lessons. Such 'misinterpretations' often reflected popular understandings of mindfulness.

Perceived usefulness and applications

- Some participants claimed to be using the practices, or elements of the practices, outside of their mindfulness lessons.
- Situations in which participants had used mindfulness included:
    - Arguments with friends
    - Difficulties sleeping
    - Stress around schoolwork
    - General stress
- Some other participants did not feel that thex programme had relevance to them or did not feel mindfulness to be helpful to them personally.

Further issues

- Within focus groups, participants identified some issues that sometimes hindered their willingness to engage with .b. These included:
    - A lack of trust in other members of the class
    - Feeling that some of the issues touched upon were 'personal' and not feeling comfortable to share their feelings
    - Discomfort around participating in some of the practices
    - The lack of interactive activities
    - Not being given a choice about whether to participate in mindfulness lessons and/or practices

Detailed findings

Engagement

Engagement was mixed across the board with some participants saying that they enjoyed the lessons whilst others were less positive. Engagement with the programme appeared to be influenced by a range of factors including: perceptions of family members and peers; students' own preconceptions about mindfulness; social dynamics of the class, including level of trust in other members of the group; and relationship with the teacher.

Elements of the programme that were most enjoyed

There were some elements of the programme that many participants reported enjoying. On the whole, those elements that participants said were enjoyable fell into two broad categories: those that were seen as 'helpful', and those that were seen as 'fun'.

Elements of the programme that were seen as most helpful included the 7/11 practice and, for some participants, the FOFBOC.

Rachael: I liked the 7/11 where you would breathe in 7 and breathe out 11 seconds...It really helped

Int: And Rhian you said that you did use some of the practices?
Rhian: Yes
Int: What did you use?
Rhian: The 7/11
Int: The 7/11
Rhian: Cause like if I get worried about homework or something, it can like relax me.
And then I feel better and then I just start the homework again and make sure I understand it more and ask my parents or something.
Int: Ok, and so do you do it yourself or?
Rhian: Yeah, I just do it in my room or something

Elements of the programme that were most seen as most enjoyable included the activity in the final lesson of the programme whereby participants write a letter to their future selves, and the mindful eating practices (particularly the chocolate eating practice in Lesson Four).

Fran: So like erm, at the start we could, we had to like write a letter and then a couple of weeks letter, later we'd get the letter back
Rhian: Yeah I [enjoyed that
Kelly: [I got mine back
Rhian: And I got mine a couple of weeks ago

Cheryl: I liked the thoughtfully thinking of when your slowly eating something
Int: Slowly eating something
Caz: Yeah
Rachael: Yeah
Cheryl: Yeah like we used maltesers, grapes and then the lesson after we need to choose a chilli

Factors influencing engagement

Some of those participants who claimed to like the lessons claimed that their parents practiced mindfulness or were interested in mindfulness. This suggests that students' engagement with the programme is influenced by their initial openness and by the perspectives of those around them.

Katheryn: My mum done the mindfulness course so she'll go through them

with me

Jake: My erm I think my mother phoned and asked em could I do it
Int: Oh really, why do you think you're mum wanted you to do it?
James: Have you seen his rage?
Jake: [smiles] just to like, get less stressed a lot. I get stressed.

Some participants expressed interest in mindfulness, but also highlighted issues which appeared to limit their engagement with the programme. Many participants said that they would prefer more activities and interaction.

Molly: It helps when you're like stressed but then it's boring sometimes when you don't have activities to do, you have nothing to do your just sitting there.

In the following extract, participants were responding to the researcher asking what could be done to increase their interest in the programme.

Evie: More fun
Int: More fun?
Danielle: yeah
Enid: Not just sitting there and looking at a screen
Molly: And sitting there like what for us to do?

In addition, some participants found certain practices confusing or did not understand their intended purpose. In such circumstances, students were less willing to engage with the practices. A number of participants claimed that it was difficult to concentrate due to distractions within and outside the classroom. These included the actions of other students who were less interested and the responses of the teacher to other students' behaviour.

Katheryn: Well that was again it was slightly distracting because the boys were messing around and
Enid: The boys are messing around, yeah

Chanel: I did enjoy some parts there were just some parts were I just didn't really see the point in it and it didn't really help me then

Within observations, there were a small number of students who were particularly hostile towards practicing mindfulness. When these students were not present in the classroom (either due to absence or because they had been asked to leave) there was a marked difference in the atmosphere of the class and students' willingness to participate.

Finally, a proportion of participants expressed some resentment about not having a choice about whether to participate in .b. Some participants who were interested in mindfulness said that they would prefer if .b was optional as this would reduce disruption from others.

Katheryn: it should have been like the people who wanted to do it because a lot…a lot of the kids in there...they just wanted to get out of lessons and then the teachers said ah no you *have* to go you can't miss out on this so they were made to go there and they didn't want to. And then I think they weren't paying attention they were just messing around...they was distracting people

Understanding

The following section relates to participants' reported understanding of mindfulness and of the specific messages from the programme. The research did not involve a detailed investigation of participants' conceptual interpretations of 'mindfulness', as this was beyond the scope and aims of the project. Moreover, there may be numerous interpretations of the messages within

.b and ideas which surround them. As such, it is not attempted here to evaluate participants' interpretations as 'correct' or 'incorrect'. It is, however, noted where participants' interpretations clearly contradict messages within the .b syllabus.

In general, when asked what mindfulness was about, participants' claimed that it was 'something to help you'. Participants were more likely to refer to mindfulness in this way (as a therapeutic tool) than to refer to specific features (such as focusing, awareness etc). When asked why they thought they were doing mindfulness in school, participants generally said it was to help with a range of things including: stress around schoolwork, anger, worry, sleep.

Int:	Ok, what d'you think the purpose of the lesson was? What d'you think the purpose is of mindfulness in schools?
Evie:	To control your [breathing
Danielle:	[Control breathing an like help with stress
Molly:	Like help with stress

Int:	Why might, why might teachers, and the school and people all over the place why do you think they might think it's good for students to do mindfulness?
Chanel:	They could think you could improve their attitude, like not make them be so stressed

Some participants felt that mindfulness was only for 'people who need it'. These participants saw the purpose of .b as for helping people who 'need extra support' or who have 'anxiety problems', and not for themselves. Such participants were quite resistant to participating in mindfulness.

Rhian:	[Reading question from co-researcher game] *What's it all about, one of your friends at school who has not done mindfulness asks you what it's about, what do you say?*
Kelly:	Someone asked me this, this and I just told em it was boring and it didn't really help me. Cause I didn't need it and it didn't help me probably because there was nothing wrong with me, I didn't feel like I need it cause some people in my class have like anxiety and I done it and they needed it more than me.

Int:	OK. Erm, if they asked what the point was, what would you say? As in, what's it for, what are you supposed to do it for, what would you say?
Kelly:	I'd say it was for people who felt
Rhian:	Like they needed it
Kelly:	*Bad* about themselves
Int:	Ok
Kelly:	Cause that's what I thought it was but then when I got there I felt like it was for people who felt bad about themselves and like something like mental depression or stuff like that maybe

Many participants spoke of mindfulness as being about being in the present, not 'overthinking' and used analogies of being grounded or 'down to earth'. Such ideas reflect those presented in the syllabus (particularly in Lesson Three and Four). Across the board, these ideas appeared to be those messages from the syllabus which had best 'stuck' in participants' memories.

Aeron:	Think about what's around you and not think about the future and the past and that

Int:	Yeah, what does it mean to be mindful?
Aeron:	Like, be down to earth and not thinking about everything that's going

on and just experience the present.

Jake: Just to like not think, like think before you do something but don't over-think.

A number of participants felt that mindfulness was about 'clearing the mind' or that the purpose of mindfulness was to 'be relaxed'. Such ideas contradict the explanations of mindfulness within .b teaching materials and lessons and may be seen to reflect popular interpretations of mindfulness.

Int: What do you think the point of the lessons was?
Aeron: I dunno miss I can't remember
James: Miss, are we allowed to write something [on the sheet of paper]?
Max: Help you clear your mind?
Int: Help you what? Clear your mind?
Aeron: Yeah and see your surroundings around you

In discussing what mindfulness was about, often participants' responses indicated that they saw mindfulness as related to good behaviour. That is, mindfulness lessons were linked to broader normative understandings of 'paying attention', 'thinking before you act' or 'being considerate of others'.

Int: Ok so if I was to write the word mindfulness down here, what would come to mind?
Isaac: Ermm, like thinking what you say before you say it
Int: Thinking - what was that again sorry?
Isaac: Thinking and being mindful of other people

Understanding of specific messages

In each group in School One, all of the lessons were remembered by at least some of the group. In School Two, participants did not spontaneously mention Lesson Five (Moving Mindfully). However, this may have been due to limited time for discussion and should not be taken as indication that the participants did not remember the lessons. All of the groups remembered the mindful eating practices (the chocolate and chilli, and the grapes). Generally participants did not distinguish between the purpose of the chocolate and grape eating practices and said that both were about 'savouring the good'. None of the participants explicitly referred to 'gratitude' (either in discussing the practice or in discussing the messages from the lessons broadly). Whilst discussing the grape eating practice from Lesson Eight, participants often said that the purpose of the lesson was to 'think about where it came from'.

Katheryn: You had to eat it mindfully.
Int: You had to eat it mindfully, ok, and what was the point of that then do you think?
Katheryn: It was like you had to focus on it and realise what you're doing
Evie: What like, where it's come from and how many people have like, [pulls face] touched the grape before you had it

Int: And what was [eating] the grapes about?
Max: About how far they come

A number of participants remembered the 'puppy mind' concept from Lesson One and claimed that mindfulness was about 'training the mind'. In discussing this lesson, participants generally said that was about training attention and focus.

Evie: Focusing, like the attention span, like if you really focus on something the attentions like on one thing, then if your like mind wanders off it's like a torch like you can just think about when it goes about a bit

Kelly: Your brain is a puppy
Rhian: Yeah
Kelly: You can't tell it to sit and relax
Chanel: You av to train it
Kelly: You av to train your brain
Rhian: And stuff like that

Throughout the groups, there were no participants who spontaneously recalled the term 'autopilot'. However, a number of said that mindfulness involved being present and not thinking about the past or future.

Int: What d'you, like if you erm, if you were gonna tell someone what mindfulness was about, like other students, if they said what's this lesson about what would you say
Max: meditating
Jake: [errr I would say] something like
Aeron: [feelings and like
Jake: [yeah basically
Aeron: [how you should be down to earth and like not think about the future and the past

Whilst, broadly, all lessons within the course were well remembered, some participants found elements of the programme confusing. For example, participants were likely to say that they did not understand the purpose of the shock ball activity in Lesson Seven. Such participants felt that it was unclear why they were being given an activity that was stressful if, in their words 'the point of mindfulness' was to help you relax. No participants spontaneously recalled the idea of identifying the 'stress signature', which is discussed in this lesson.

Danielle: The whole point of mindfulness is to like, like stop you from stressing and stuff, but then he's pulling out a shock ball and telling us to that you gotta pass it round the and like stressing people out
Molly: I think that the point is like he *made you* hold it for like 3 seconds so you'll, that was really stressful
Int: Aha, ok. Did it, was it, did it have any point about anything else in life, or was it?
Molly: I don't know, I didn't understand that lesson

In the observations of these lessons, the activities appeared to be well enjoyed and caused a great deal of excitement amongst students. However, it is possible that this excitement distracted from understanding the core messages of the lesson.

Another element of the lessons which was confusing for some participants was the 'thought busses' (which is discussed as part of an animation and a mindfulness practice). For a few participants, the message behind the animation was unclear and there were various interpretations about what it might mean.

Int: [reading something a participant has written in the 'like pile'] 'the thought busses were a good idea'. Ok, and what do you think was the point of those exercises? The thought bus
Isaac: Ermm to tell us that we can, that we have loads of choices and we have to pick the right one.
Int: You have loads of choices and to pick the right one. Hmm interesting, do you remember that one? [to Jack - nods head]. You do, what did you think about it?
Jack: Erm I don't really know. Focusing on things, it was representing your mind and how busy it was.
...

Emma: I thought it was like there was loads of choices but like, it's like the right one for you even if other people think it's bad as long as it feels right to you I guess then you still do it.

Kelly: There was no reasoning against it, so I didn't understand
Rhian: One of them was like you were sitting on a bench and this bus was going around in like a circle
Chanel: [Thought bus]
Kelly: [and I didn't really get it]
Rhian: Like it, it stopped for like, to like, it was meant to be like something the video was meant to show you how you relax like when the bus stopped you were like sleeping and when you woke up it goes back round again

However, some other participants found this component of the programme very helpful and felt that it was key to understanding 'what mindfulness was about'.

Molly: I remember the busses going round and round [laughter]
Danielle: ohh yeah, yeah.
Int: Ok, you remember the busses, what did you think about that?
Danielle: That was the one where you get dragged off on a thought or something.
Int: Ok, you get dragged off on a thought. Ok, was that helpful at all?
Danielle: Like if you get dragged off [on like a bad thought] then you like
Molly: [it kind of like, like]
Danielle: You like go round and then you keep going, keep thinking
Katheryn: And like he explained, basically that one was an ok lesson because it basically explained what the whole point of mindfulness was to stop, to stop you getting dragged off on random trains of thought.

Other messages present in .b were less likely to be mentioned by participants. This could indicate that these ideas were less prominent in participants' memories of .b and their subsequent understanding of mindfulness. Such ideas included; the attitude of 'acceptance and kindness' that is spoken about in Lesson Two; the idea of 'being with difficulty' that is discussed in relation to the chilli practice in Lesson Four; and the identification of the stress signature in Lesson Seven. With regards to the latter two, it is possible that the excitement surrounding the exercises in these lessons (eating chilli and handling the shock-ball) distracted from the messages behind the practices.

There were also some specific elements of the course in which some students' interpretations conflicted with the messages that are described within teaching resources for .b. This includes the idea within Lesson Four that mindfulness 'gives you the freedom to choose'. Within this lesson, it is explained that mindfulness increases our capacity to make considered choices, to 'respond' appropriately as opposed to 'automatically reacting'. Some participants did recall the idea that mindfulness may help them 'respond' to difficult situations.

Evie: I go next. [reading question from co-researcher game] *In one lesson of .b, it is said that mindfulness gives us the freedom to choose. What d'you think this means?...*It says choices.
Enid: It's like when you get into a fight, this is what he said when you get into a fight you av the choice to choose whether or not, how you retaliate and that.

Katheryn: I think it *could* help cause like sometimes if someone's really annoying you, it might just be automatically you just come out and you just turn around and hit the other girl and you just turn around and basically you might just be like 'ahh shut up' and do that. But it might help if you think about it, you're like if I do this I'll get in trouble, I shouldn't do this.

However, many participants resisted the association with mindfulness and 'freedom of choice' as it conflicted with their experience of practicing mindfulness at school. In discussing the relationship between mindfulness and choice, participants said that they were not able to choose whether to participate in mindfulness exercises. This view was expressed even by participants who were generally more positive about mindfulness.

Rhian: I feel like when like say if like say if you were in a different school and you get to choose if you wanted to go or not, I feel like that's right but whereas we were gettin' forced to do it

Aeron: And [they're] trying to teach us to choose what we want but then by not letting us choosing anything at all.

Another element of the syllabus around which there was some confusion was the idea of 'strong silence', which is discussed in the introductory lesson and as a ground rule in Lesson One. In the syllabus, strong silence is explained as choosing to be silent because it is nourishing. Within observations, teachers differed in the extent to which they used this concept. However, it was used on a number of occasions when asking students to quieten down for the practices. Within focus groups, no participants spontaneously remembered this idea. When probed about whether they remembered hearing 'strong silence' in the classroom, participants generally either said they did not remember or their memory of it differed from the explanation in the course. In such instances, participants tended to understand 'strong silence' as meaning that they had to be *completely* silent.

Katheryn: It meant like, you *actually* had to be quiet. Not like quiet as in little whispers, like everybody has to be silent.

Helen: He did say just silent, be silent but never strong silence
Int You didn't hear that one
Kelly: No
Int: No, ok. So how did you feel when he talked about silence?
Chanel: Be quiet
Rhian: Quiet
Chanel: No sound
Helen: Not allowed to make any sound

This interpretation is understandable, as participants choices within classrooms are relatively limited. In general, if students were silent when they hadn't been told to be (e.g. if no students responded to a question), this could be frustrating for the teacher who was trying to encourage engagement. Where 'strong silence' was mentioned by teachers, it was generally as an instruction rather than a choice (even though it was generally delivered in a kind tone). As such, the idea of 'strong silence' in a classroom setting may be inherently contradictory and, therefore, confusing for students.

Perceived 'usefulness' and applications

A few participants had used practices or elements of practices they had learned in .b outside of the lessons. Things participants said they had used the practices for included: helping with sleep, stress around schoolwork and worries about arguments with friends.

Int: Was there anything, if you could say topline there was something that I took from the course…something that I took from the course that was helpful?
Katheryn: The sleeping one.
Int: The sleeping one, ok
Danielle: Counting the breath
Int: Counting the breath? Counting the breath? [Evie nods, Enid shakes head]
No

ok. Yep, so counting breaths and sleeping. What was the counting the breath useful for?

Danielle: When you just get stressed and stuff you just sit down and count your breath.

Some participants claimed that they found elements of the practices useful even if they did not enjoy all of the lessons.

Rhian: I thought that it was, I...thought it would be different to what it was. I thought it would be like, I thought that it was enjoyable but then there was one or two lessons when I didn't enjoy. But like, in that moment I was having an argument with my friend and it *really helped,* and it helped me with my confidence and finding new friends. So I quite like, in that moment it quite like, it helped me

Int: Ok, ok, and how do you think it helped, like what do you think it helped with?

Rhian: Like when we were arguing like if they were looking at me or something it would bother me, but if I'd done mindfulness, if I done like counting to ten or something it wouldn't bother me as much I would just ignore them and try and get it out my ed

A couple of participants claimed that whilst they did not use full practices they were able to apply elements of what they had learned when they were feeling stressed. In addition, some responses indicated that participants who were not currently using the practices may revisit them in future. Finally, some participants who were not using the practices did still remember some of the core messages from the programme. This suggests that these participants were listening to these messages even though they had not applied the practices as such.

Danielle: I don't really do like a full practice but like if I am stressing sometimes I'll like try to focus on something. I use like parts of it.

Molly: Cause it's probably good to know these exercises in case you ever need them

Further issues

Within the focus groups, participants highlighted some issues which reduced their interest and willingness to engage with the lessons. Primarily, these issues related to participants sense of comfort during .b lessons. Issues included: a lack of trust in other members of the group, feeling uncomfortable participating in practices, and discomfort with discussing 'personal' things. Broadly, these issues reflected the social dynamics of the classroom, including participants' relationships with each other and with the teacher, and behaviour of other students in the class.

Some participants explained that they did not trust other members of the group and that this made them feel uncomfortable engaging with discussions and participating in practices.

Fran: I felt *really* uncomfortable [at times

Rhian: [Yeah

Int: You felt uncomfortable, how come?

Fran: It's erm, I don't know how it just, felt uncomfortable

Rhian: Cause it was like certain people in the class that you didn't [like trust

Channel: [didn't trust

Such participants often claimed that they felt more comfortable engaging in the mindfulness practices when they were in groups with friends.

Danielle: Yeah I wasn't like with any of my friends or anything so I asked them and they did move me to the other group cause I got there on my own and I didn't like feel like comfortable in front of all these people like doing all these like *exercises* and all this stuff I guess

Molly: No I didn't like it when it was in a room with people with none of my friends
Evie: Like I didn't know and closing my eyes and it's like
Katheryn: Yeah and your like [inc]
Int: How come you don't like it when there's people there you don't know?
Evie: Cause like, I don't know, I don't really feel comfortable like closing my eyes and doing all these like different things he's asking me like shock ball and stuff like that

A number of times within the focus groups, female participants claimed that they were less comfortable doing practices around boys.

Chanel: ...and it was like a bunch of boys and I didn't really trust any of the boys because one of them, cause like three of em was in my class and them boys they would like [wind you up about it
Rhian: [wind me up about it] all the time they would like if I was sitting next to one of them one lesson and they were winding me up about what I said in that, in mindfulness and I didn't really like it

Within .b teaching guidelines, it is made clear that students should not be asked to reveal personal information. Within observations, teachers followed this guidance and did not ask students personal questions. However, there are a number of elements of the .b syllabus in which students are asked about worries or stresses in a broad sense. This includes asking students 'what sort of things people their age worry about' in Lesson Three; what sort of thoughts have 'taken them for a ride recently' in Lesson Six; and what sort of things cause them stress in Lesson Seven. Although these questions are formulated indirectly, thinking of worries in a general sense is likely to involve considering (or drawing comparisons with) one's personal worries. This may explain why some students felt less comfortable engaging in some aspects of the course.

Int: ...So if you could have it your way what would you change about mindfulness lessons? And this could be anything at all, imagine in the perfect world what would you do
...
Emma: Ask questions that people are comfortable with and don't pressure them cause some of the teachers do that
Int: Ask questions that people are comfortable with and don't pressure them?
Emma: Yeah
Int: You said some of the teachers do that?
Emma: Yeah
Int: Erm, do you mean in mindfulness or in general?
Emma: General classes as well. Sometimes in mindfulness
Int: Ok, sometimes in mindfulness. Ok, can you think of the kinds of questions, the kinds of things people might be not as comfortable with talking about in the class?
Emma: Personal questions, that they might find personal but that the teacher doesn't find personal

There is understandably an emphasis on the course on particular kinds of worries that are considered to be significant issues for this age group (such as school work, social media and friendships), and these are the issues which students are encouraged to recognise in .b. However, within observations,

there were occasions in which where students revealed worries that were more serious or less appropriate for class discussion. In such situations, teachers' moved the conversation along so as not to encourage further disclosure. That such disclosures were made, along with participants responses such as those above, indicates that the boundaries of what is expected in terms of these discussions may not be clear.

The issue of discomfort around discussing personal issues was only raised by female participants, and was discussed at length in both of the female groups at School One. However, this could reflect the greater willingness of female students to raise this issue and the slight skew within the sample towards girls. However, it is notable that the issue was spontaneously raised by participants. A couple of participants claimed that other students in their class had shared personal information that was discussed in the lesson, and this reduced their willingness to engage in future discussions.

Rhian:	...cause some people in the group they was forwarding it on to people that said they didn't really like
Int:	Right, what d'you mean by forwarding it on sorry?
Rhian:	Like if I said something to the teacher, cause it was all confidential, they weren't keeping it confidential they were saying stuff everywhere and I don't really [like it because] one of the people took, like what I said they put it on social media
Chanel:	[so we kind of got]
Int:	They did?
Rhian:	Yeah but they didn't put my name on it but I knew it was about me because I knew that the person that said it told that person
Int:	Was that something that you said in the class?
Rhian:	Yeah
Int:	As in like, what was it a-was it a worry or a concern or, like?
Rhian:	It was a worry, I was very scared about it
Int:	Ok, ok, I see.
Fran:	And when it happened like this it just made you feel *worse* as you went through the sessions and you just say less and less and less

Within .Dot b teaching resources, it is explained that such activities may help to normalise students worries. Some participants claimed that it was helpful to hear when other students shared similar concerns. However, it was also claimed that this, at times, had the opposite effect when their worries were different to those of others.

Fran:	And other people were doing it as well and we went through the stages and it showed other people who av the same thing as you, started speaking more and then it made you speak more but then the people who didn't feel the same as you, you felt a bit nervous saying it about them – saying it *to* them sort of thing. In case they tell other people

Conclusions & considerations

This report has provided an overview of discussions with year eight students at two schools following the completion of one syllabus of .b. Students responses were further contextualised in relation to the researchers' observations of .b lessons. As can be expected from a non-voluntary school programme, students' feelings about .b were mixed and some were more engaged than others. Some students were using the programme, or elements of the programme, to help them deal with stress around schoolwork or disputes with friends. Some other students were more resistant to .b. Whilst it is beyond the scope and capacity of this report to make specific recommendations for schools, some considerations relevant to the implementation of .b are outlined below.

Firstly, participants felt that engagement could be improved if lessons were more interactive and 'fun'. A number of students mentioned that a lot of time during lessons was spent listening. Notably, the concern that .b is 'highly didactic' was also raised by some teachers during the research. Whilst diluting the course content with activities may mean that less content can be covered, it may result in better engagement across the board. This is a judgement for educators to make. Where fun activities are used, however, it is important that they strongly emphasise the key learning point of the lesson. This is because occasionally more exciting lessons resulted in some confusion amongst participants.

Secondly, particularly when students had been selected to participate, some students felt resentful about not having a choice about attending the lessons. Some students who were positive about .b felt that the lessons would be more enjoyable if they were not disrupted by students who did not want to take part. Moreover, considerations around trust were raised by some students who had experienced other students sharing their 'worries' or teasing them about things they had said during .b, and as a result felt less comfortable in the lessons.

These latter issues are somewhat interrelated in that solving one may go part way to solving another. Given that some students felt that aspects of the programme were 'personal', it may be that these students would have been more comfortable if the syllabus did not involve group enquiry (regardless of whether questions are posed indirectly). On the other hand, if participation was voluntary, students may feel more comfortable with some degree of sharing in the group, although this is obviously not certain and this would need to be judged on a group-by-group basis. As mentioned above, ultimately, educators will be best placed to make these considerations going forward, with reference to their particular school contexts.

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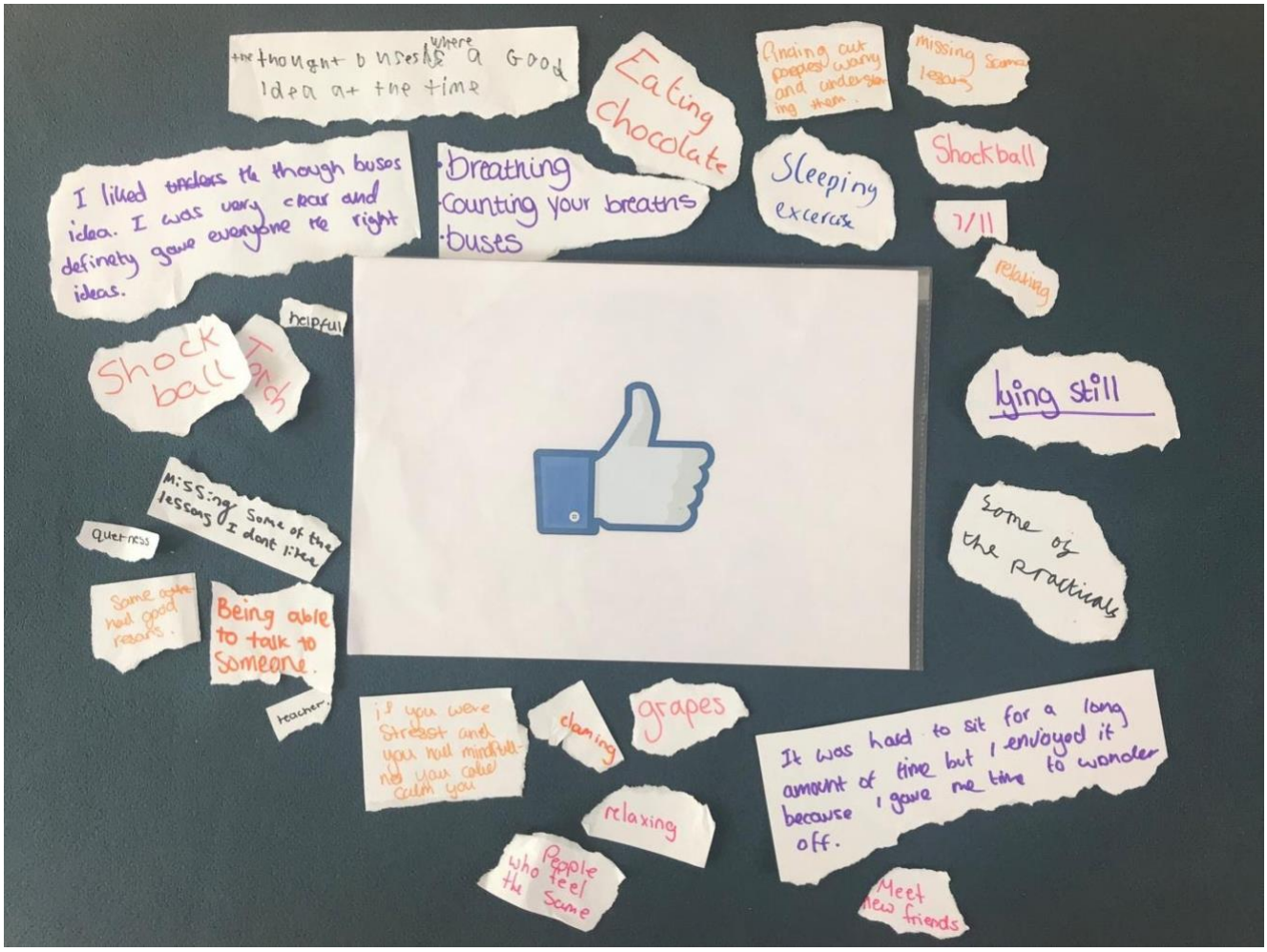
Appendix K Focus group 'likes' (i) and 'dislikes' (ii)

n.b. I have placed students responses around the 'like' and 'dislike' signs used in the focus groups in order to photograph them, and have in some instances cut around students writing in order to fit all answers in the frame.

(i) 'like' responses



(ii) 'dislike' responses