Title
Economizing the Self: Mindfulness Therapeutics and Neoliberalism

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/95w716ww

Author
Montalvo, Kel

Publication Date
2019

Economizing the Self:

Mindfulness Therapeutics and Neoliberalism

By

Kel Montalvo-Quiñones

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Wendy Brown, Chair

Professor Ramona Naddaff

Professor Leslie Salzinger

Summer 2019

Abstract

Economizing the Self:

Mindfulness Therapeutics and Neoliberalism

By

Kel Montalvo-Quiñones

Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender and Sexuality

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Wendy Brown, Chair

My dissertation, *Economizing the Self: Mindfulness Therapeutics and Neoliberalism*, considers how mindfulness discourse and practice functions as a therapeutic technique of neoliberal governance in the contemporary U.S. The project investigates the role of mindfulness psychology in the displacement of normative health programs with the institutionalized schema of well-being, and the political effects of mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapeutics and psychological accounts of subject-citizens. It looks to the contemporary widespread use of mindfulness practices in arenas as diverse as education, corporate culture, prisons, the military, policing, public health and personal wellness technology to argue that mindfulness is a potent technique for the self-valorization and realization of human capital. As a psychological discourse and prescriptive procedure, mindfulness both "objectivizes" the subject—transforming subjective phenomena into quantifiable data subject to manipulation—and constitutes an internal regime by which subjects work to self-actualize and govern themselves. The analysis of the various objects in my chapters furthers my conclusion that mindfulness therapeutics engender a depoliticization that expands the world-making project of neoliberalism by constricting political action to self-investment and rendering politics into a therapeutics of the self.

Chapter 1, "Actualizing the Self: Mindfulness and Regimes of Corporate Governance," looks at how mindfulness is implemented in administrative strategies of corporate wellness to orient subjects to invest in their well-being and the well-being of the corporation, in order to show how these modes of managing and directing well-being intersect with neoliberal governance. Chapter 2, "Regulating the Self: Technologies of Mindfulness and Self-Care," analyzes how mindfulness

functions as form of consumer self-care that reduces life to a series of lifestyle choices, and how the technological mediation of mindfulness apps serves as form of quantifying the subjec in their daily life habits and reifying freedom as individual choice. Chapter 3, "Instructing the Self: Evidence-Based Practices and Pedagogical Therapeutics," considers the role of knowledge in neoliberal therapeutics—both in its cultivation and calculation through best practices and in the dissemination and pedagogical administration of this knowledge through institutions of public health—to show how mindfulness operates as a technique for behavioral intervention and modification in the backdrop of increasingly privatized education and mental health services. Finally, Chapter 4, "Freeing the Self: The Politics of Mindfulness," looks at representations of mindfulness in popular culture as a lifestyle that embodies freedom and the incorporation of mindfulness in government as a means of realizing the freedom of the individual and a cure for the nation. The dissertation ends by reflecting on both the limitations and possibilities presented by mindfulness for political organizing through investigating its relationship to political activism.

As a therapeutic technique for self-realization, mindfulness traffics as a means of self-enhancement, self-regulation, self-knowledge, and self-expression. The objects of analysis in this dissertation center on these self-realization techniques in order to shed light on the diverse ways in which mindfulness therapeutics are practiced and utilized in the socio-political landscape of the contemporary U.S. in a way that perpetuates the neoliberal values of entrepreneurial investment, flexibility, and individual responsibility. By examining the implementation of mindfulness in the arenas of work, the market, schools, government and political organizing, my project sheds light on how mindfulness is incorporated into neoliberal governance to engender a government of the self that extends the neoliberal project of economization and depoliticization into the arena of psychic life.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the sustained attention, generosity, and encouragement of my dissertation committee. I consider myself lucky to have worked alongside the brilliance of each of my members. I am indebted to Leslie Salzinger, who has been an advocate for this project from its inception and an invaluable resource along its progression with her incredible insights, and to Ramona Naddaff, for her careful consideration of these pages, and compelling contributions to my writing and thinking. I am forever grateful to Wendy Brown, who has been a source of inspiration to me personally and a great influence in my development as a thinker and writer since before we even met. I owe much of the formulation and framing of this work to her.

I am thankful to my friends and family for seeing me through the sometimes-painful process of writing. To Mami, Papi, Titi Dorianne, and Junior: you've been special sources of comfort and encouragement throughout. To Chris Moore, for being a willing companion through the labyrinth of my thoughts since our undergraduate days discussing Foucault in the lab until the early hours of the morning. Kera Armendariz, for being my oldest friend and my biggest fan. Antoinette Chen See, for grounding me with affection and gentle affirmation during the thick of it. Nidhi Solanki and KoKo, for being the best study buddies. To queer fam—Dara Garcia, Kate VanderTuig, Bridge Ho, Michelle Velasquez-Potts, Mona Eshaiker, Dip Pakier, the ones who came and went—you've provided much-needed laughter and relief throughout. To my cohort and my peers —Michelle Velasquez-Potts, Janice Yu, Adam Hutz, Emily O'Rourke, Zachary Manfredi, Will Callison, and the many more throughout the years—for your generosity and your camaraderie in wading through the difficulty of this institution. To my undergraduate partners in crime—Ricky Burton, Matthew Taylor, Caroline Debruhl, and Chris Moore—for going head down and heels up into the abyss of thought with me over too much whiskey and cigarettes. My teachers, past and present, for guiding me in the ways of critique and thoughtful engagement with the world—especially Ryan Byrne, for assigning *The History of Sexuality* my freshman year and setting me on this path; Priya Jha, for leading by example and teaching me how to navigate the academy as a woman of color with such intelligence and grace; Greg Salyer for family dinners and nights spent discussing the hermeneutics of love; and Bill McDonald for reading from *The Magic Mountain* to a roomful of teary-eyed young buffalo and telling 21-year-old me that I would never be as smart as I was then: you were right. And a third thank you to my dearest Michelle, for the countless hours spent with me on this work and the work of our friendship: I could not have done any of this without you.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to Mona Eshaiker: for providing the initial inspiration for this project, for your faith in me, your generosity, your care, and your humor, for hearing me talk through every idea on these pages, and for teaching me that the work of self-transformation begins and ends in our relation to others.

Introduction: Mindfulness as Self-Governance

This project was born from the rather mundane realization that the discourse and practice of mindfulness is ubiquitous in contemporary American cultural life. While the prevalence of meditation and yoga in health routines is probably the most obvious example of this phenomena, I've catalogued a number of others: Mindfulness-based therapy is a dominant psychotherapeutic treatment for depression and anxiety. It is not uncommon for companies to provide mindfulness trainings and meditation rooms to management and employees. Meditation applications are downloaded by tens of thousands onto mobile devices. A growing number of schools, public and private, teach mindfulness curriculum to students, educators, and counselors. Congressmen espouse the benefits of mindfulness for governmental policy. Activists begin meetings with meditation and use mindfulness training in de-escalation scenarios. Mindfulness classes are offered to prisoners, guards, and police across the country. The U.S. military utilizes mindfulness-based therapy to treat and prevent PTSD. There is an exorbitant amount of popular literature and programming that applies mindfulness to basic daily functions, including mindful eating, mindful sleeping, and mindful sex and dating. The latest episode of the popular Netflix television series *Black Mirror* depicts a tech CEO on a ten-day silent retreat.[1] And I've lost count of how often I've heard my friends cite their "intentions" or desire to be "intentional" in reference to how they understand their own behavior. "The Mindful Revolution," as a 2014 article in *Time* magazine puts it, appears to be here to stay.[2]

In seeking to account for why mindfulness has penetrated such an array of institutions, practices, cultural objects, and discourses in the U.S., a number of normative claims regarding the transformative potential of mindfulness came to the fore across the variegated landscape of its uses in the objects of my analysis. In its rhetorical and practical application, mindfulness is situated as a technique of self-actualization or self-enhancement, a method of self-care and self-management, a way of accessing self-knowledge and a scheme of self-calculation, and a mode of self-expression or self-liberation. Mindfulness, in all the arrangements taken up by this project, entails a particular relationship to the self as a procedure of investment, sometimes toward competing or heterogenous ends. The relationship of the self to itself offers a surface of contact for techniques of government—what Michel Foucault defines as "the exercise of power," a way of conducting the conduct of others[3]—by way of conducting oneself. How mindfulness serves as a technology of self-government along this axis of conduct—between the government of the self and the government of others—is the central concern of my investigations in the following chapters.

These investigations proceed from the recognition that neoliberalism has come to define the mode of governance par excellence in contemporary statecraft and society in the United

---

[1] *Black Mirror*. "Smithereens." Written by Charlie Brooker. Netflix. June 5, 2019.

[2] Kate Pickert, "The Mindful Revolution." *Time*, January 23, 2014.

[3] "Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term conduct is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to "conduct" is at the same time to "lead" others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government." Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982), 789.

States. As a rationality that engenders both a world and a way of being in the world, neoliberalism infiltrates not just States and institutions, but the production and constitution of knowledge, culture, and individual subjects, rendering everyday life according to the "veridiction" of the market.[4] As Wendy Brown argues, "neoliberal rationality disseminates the *model of the market* to all domains and activities—even where money is not an issue—and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as *homo oeconomicus*."[5] Accordingly, this project analyzes how this model of the market and the subject as *homo oeconomicus* imbues mindfulness as a discourse and a practice taken up by both organizations and individuals that in turn furthers the neoliberal project of economizing social, cultural, political, and subjective life. Because mindfulness, like many sites and activities, has been increasingly inflected by neoliberal logics, and because it instantiates a relationship to the self as an object of transformation, mindfulness aids in producing distinctly neoliberal subjects who are governable through and for the perpetuation of a neoliberal market order.

My analysis of how mindfulness works in a number of different institutional and cultural settings aims to shed light on the relationship between mindfulness and neoliberalism by elaborating how neoliberal norms of subjectivity and social organization may be reflected in and actualized through mindfulness practices. My argument is threefold: 1) the application of mindfulness in and through the objects I analyze reveals a robust neoliberalization of mindfulness practices and discourse in its American instantiation; 2) this neoliberalization occurs in how mindfulness is taken up as a mode of self-governance that aligns the project of governing oneself with the larger project of neoliberalism; 3) the constitution of the internal self-governance of subjects according to neoliberal rationality more broadly functions as a form of individuation that engenders an economization of the self and a depoliticization of the means of collective political action. This argument is not a claim that mindfulness as such is neoliberal or is generated by neoliberalism, but rather that mindfulness as it is practiced today is both saturated by neoliberal reason and has become a powerful tool of neoliberal governance.

Neoliberal Rationality

There are at least four definitions of neoliberalism, or perhaps more accurately neoliberalization, at work in this project: 1) a historical thought collective that constitutes a particular intellectual project, 2) a type of governmentality that transforms the state and institutions in the image of the market, 3) the characterization of a particular subjective formation or psychic disposition, and 4) a type of rationality or epistemological framework that circumscribes and orders reality. While these definitions might overlap, sometimes be at odds in practice, or produce contradictory effects,[6] the coherence of something called neoliberalism derives from their messy amalgamation. I understand this amalgamation to constitute what Michel Foucault calls a regime of truth[7]—a reciprocally conditioning network of relations between power and knowledge that found the practices of meaning and intelligibility which lend

---

[4] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (London: Palgrave, 2008), 32-36.

[5] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone, 2015), 31.

[6] Speaking on this problem, David Harvey characterizes neoliberalism as a utopian project, where the necessary gap between neoliberal policy and implementation arises from the impossibility of the existence of an entirely neoliberal world. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[7] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 35.

neoliberalism its material force. My particular approach to neoliberalism, while not uncommon, avoids equating it with a set of economic policies or a present-day intensified form of capitalism—though it is unequivocally linked to these—because the amorphous suppleness and dynamism of neoliberalism as a regime of truth often produces contradictory or unintended effects that cannot be relegated to policy or attributed to the hidden agent of capital. I emphasize the discursive nature of the neoliberal project because none of the actually existing material practices that are considered neoliberal—privatization, austerity, global free trade, etc.—would be possible without a "grid of intelligibility" in reference to which these practices garner value or meaning and are actively congealed in their materiality. This grid is not (just) an ideology that distorts or mystifies reality; it actively constitutes and carves out in reality the terms and objects of neoliberal governance.[8] Following Foucault, I understand neoliberalism to be a world-making project, "a whole way of being and thinking," a rationality that is materially generative rather than a passive representation of the world or a set of economic policies.[9]

The historical origins of this project date to the 1930s when a small, heterodox group of Anglo-European intellectuals began to reevaluate the tenets of classical liberalism in response to what Karl Polanyi diagnosed as the century's crisis of liberalism—the rise of totalitarian regimes, unforeseen global economic instability, and the social and political challenges presented by turn-of-the-century labor movements, women's enfranchisement, and decolonization revealed the incapability of liberal capitalism to secure wealth or equality for the great majority of the world's population.[10] Though representing heterogeneous and at times contentious contingents like the German Ordoliberal school, the London School of Economics, the Austrian school, and later in the U.S., the Virginia and Chicago schools, the early neoliberals united under the cause of articulating a form of liberal governmentality that would stand up to the threats posed to the market system by centralized economic planning and demands for social justice. This was the task set out during their first meeting in Paris in 1938, organized by French philosopher Louis Rougier under the title *Colloque Walter Lippmam*: to "launch an international crusade in favor of constructive liberalism" that was "essentially progressive."[11] The emphasis on the constructive and progressive aims of neoliberal governance is precisely what distinguishes it from classical liberalism and its governing policy of laissez-faire. Neoliberalism instead demands both the establishment of a "highway code" to ensure the priority of the price mechanism and free competition, and the enforcement of these governing rules by a strong State.[12]

---

[8] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 19-20.
[9] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 218.
[10] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Beacon Press, 2001).
[11] Louis Rougier quoted in Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2012), 70.
[12] "To be liberal, said Louis Rougier, doesn't mean to be a Manchesterian who leaves the cars circulating in all directions, if such is their will, which can only result in traffic jams and incessant accidents; it doesn't mean to be a 'Planist' who gives every car its exit time and its route; it means to impose a highway code while admitting that it is not necessary to be the same at the time of the accelerated transports as at the time diligences" Centre international d'études pour la renovation du libéralisme, *Compre rendu des séances du Colloque Lippman* quoted in Francois Denord, "French Neoliberalism and Its Divisions" in *The Road From Mount Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, Eds Philop Mirowski, Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 49.

Though there was individual disagreement on what should comprise the exact content of this set of rules or the means through which they should be enforced, the establishment of rules for the exercise of state power distinguished neoliberalism as a form of governance, one that was justified through the litmus test of free and fair competition. In the words of Friedrich Hayek,

> The liberal argument does not advocate leaving things just as they are; it favours [sic] making the best possible use of the forces of competition as a means of coordinating human efforts. It is based on the conviction that, where effective competition can be created, it is a better way of guiding individual efforts than any other. It emphasizes that in order to make competition work beneficially a carefully thought-out legal framework is required.[13]

The rationale and very purpose of neoliberal governance in its early theorizations is embedded in a thoroughly economic mode of organizing and understanding human action according to competition. Importantly, this theory of governance proceeds from the recognition that competition is not a natural state but one that has to be vigilantly and repeatedly "created." The radical constructivism of neoliberalism sets it apart from laissez-faire doctrine, but by deferring to the market as the ultimate arbitrator of individual coordination and social integration, neoliberalism transcends the limits of human reason, morals, and political demands because they are rooted in individual perspectives that cannot capture the totality of the market's "spontaneous order." Nonetheless, it does not necessarily follow that the market order and the rule of competition should replace all others. "Part of our present difficulty," Hayek wrote, "is that we must constantly adjust our lives, our thoughts and our emotions, in order to live simultaneously within different kinds of orders according to different kinds of rules."[14] Hayek maintained a division between the orders of biological instinct, traditional norms of conduct transmitted through culture, and the operating rules of competition in the market, but he argued that only the latter is accessible as an object of governance capable of coordinating individual efforts in a self-generated spontaneous order. The target of government intervention "will then be those rules which, because we can deliberately alter them, become the chief instrument whereby we can affect the resulting order, namely the rules of law."[15] Thus, the goal of governance for Hayek is to compel the efficiency of competition *where it can* through a legal framework.

Accordingly, in the Austrian inflection of neoliberalism, individuals "must learn to live in two worlds at once"—the market order of competition and the order of instinct and "acquired cultural traditions."[16] While Hayek rejected the term "society" for either or both of these orders, the Ordoliberal school of neoliberalism centered society and the necessary integration of both cultural frames of reference and market values. The Ordoliberals argued that pure competition "means complete incoherence, complete shortage of social viscosity where it alone rules social relationships. A fortiori it depends in complementary ways and as a precondition on the counterweight of strong framing forces of a different kind, on ethical and sociological ties that

---

[13] Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 37.
[14] Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism: Collected Works of F.A. Hayek* Vol. 1 (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), 18.
[15] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty Vol 1: Rules and Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 45.
[16] Hayek, 18.

are otherwise secured."[17] The Ordoliberal tradition of neoliberalism situates governance as an intervention in all the conditions of human social life, not just economic ones, to produce the spontaneous order of the market—an order that arises from rules governing competition—within and through non-market society. Propagating and framing the right conditions for the spontaneous economic order necessitates intervention in the extra-economic domains of politics, the law, society, and culture. In short, it necessitates the need for what Walter Eucken called an *Ordnungspolitik*, a political order outlined by legal rules, and what Alexander Rüstow called a *Vitalpolitik*, a regulatory policy of organic social integration framed by norms of human nature.[18] In reference to the latter, Wilhelm Röpke explicates how the *Ordnungspolitik* as a theory of state and legal governance must also be accompanied by a "corresponding policy for the social framework,"[19] one that implements a specific theory of human nature and society: "The market economy thus requires a firm framework, which we shall call in short an anthropological-sociological frame…[that would] no longer assume the social preconditions of the market economy…as given, but modify them with a specific intent."[20] This presents an important departure from Hayek's conviction that governance could only intervene through legal rules to ensure the stability of the price mechanism and the market order of competition.

Underscoring the limits of human rationality as a means for mastering reality, Hayek characterizes the rules of governance as safeguards against the dangers of relying on moral, ethical, or political forms of reason rather than the rationality of the market. In addition to the danger presented by the intentional design of socialist central planning, Hayek also considers "the mirage of social justice" a threat to the very fabric of society that derives from partisan political objectives and therefore necessarily limited rationality. Whether through protections or redistribution, Hayek paints the political demand for social justice as "the destroyer of a civilization which no brain has designed but which has grown from the free efforts of millions of individuals."[21] Instead, he argues, governance targets an "order [that] is not an object" but an "order of events."[22] Due to the limits of human knowledge, efforts to transform society through instrumental means toward a given objective threaten the coordination of the market and therefore, in Hayek's histrionic phrase, our entire human civilization. But Hayek does not disavow instrumentality altogether, only its use as a direct means of transformation not guided by market veridiction and spontaneous coordination. Government, he writes, should operate indirectly to "create the conditions in which they [individual units] will arrange themselves in such a manner" that will realize the spontaneous order of the market.[23] The construction of an

---

[17] Alexander Rüstow, *Ortsbestimmung der Gegenwart. Eine universalgeschichtliche Kulturkritik* (1950) quoted in "Neoliberalism in Germany," Ralf Ptak in *The Road rom Mount Pelerin*, 127.

[18] For an insightful analysis of Rüstow's *Vitalpolitik* as a social policy aimed at "organic social embeddedness" rather than massification see Thomas Biebricher, "The Biopolitics of Ordoliberalism," *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011) 171-191.

[19] Wilhelm Röpke, *Moral Foundations of Civil Society* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction, 1996), 33.

[20] Röpke, *Civitas Humana* quoted in Ptak, "Neoliberalism in Germany," in *The Road from Mount Pelerin*, 103.

[21] Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty Vol 2: The Mirage of Social Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 14.

[22] Hayek, *The Sensory Order: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1967), 76.

[23] Hayek, *Rules and Order*, 64.

environment conducive to free enterprise through legal heuristics generates both the conditions for individual freedom and the spontaneous cohesive integration of individual effort. The instrumental use of environmental conditions fosters the self-generating order of the market, "what the physicists call a cosmology…a theory of [the] evolution"[24] of humanity, where "the whole acts as one market."[25]

This peculiar evolutionary causality and organismic approach to the relationship between the individual and totality accounts for neoliberalism's methodological individualism and the central undertaking of depoliticization. However, as I've suggested, it takes on a different inflection and operates on a different terrain in the Ordoliberal account. Rather than see political demands as a threat to economic order derived from instrumental design based on moral and partisan perspectives rather than market rationality, the Ordoliberals argued that the market order itself, with the advent of industrialization, had produced the conditions for its own demise in the antagonistic image of the proletariat by dissolving the social and moral preconditions upon which the market depends. The "remarkable loss of social integration" that engenders the proletarian subject is

> brought about by the general atomization [sic] of society, the individualization [sic]…and the increasing standardization [sic] and uniformity that are destroying the vertical coherence of society, the emancipation from natural bonds and community, the uprooted character of modern urban existence with its extreme changeability and anonymity ('nomadisation') and the progressive displacement of spontaneous order and coherence by organization [sic] and regimentation. [26]

While market competition is the requisite "instrument of any free mass society," on its own, it cannot "breed [the] social integration" required to protect it from these threats.[27] As such, the market is "dependent upon ethical and social forces of coherence" to function smoothly. To ensure a free society, government must look "outside the market for that integration which was lacking within it," toward "psycho-moral forces" that can ward off the "social irrationality of capitalism," which the Ordoliberals characterized as the politicization of social relations, the proletarianization of workers, and the unchecked mass democratic sovereignty that threatens the rule of law.[28] The legal interventions espouse by Hayek are not enough to offset the challenges of "a world which has been proletarianised [sic] and largely deprived of its regulatory forces"; the legal framework for governance must be buttressed by "the appropriate psychological atmosphere of security, continuity, confidence and balanced judgements" that can ensure the freedom of the market.[29] The Ordoliberals thus saw the cultural promotion of "a life style under

---

[24] Hayek, *The Sensory Order*, 76.
[25] Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," in *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 86.
[26] Röpke, *International Economic Disintegration* (London: William Hodge and Co., 1942), 240.
[27] Röpke, 6.
[28] Röpke, 272. 68.
[29] Röpke, 4.

which we can live in freedom and security" as central to the project of neoliberal governance.[30] The Ordoliberals theorized this cultural politics as the promotion of a free enterprise society through the inculcation of an entrepreneurial ethos in individual workers and across all aspects of society that would equate civic duty with "individual initiative and responsibility, competition and adaptability."[31] They thus argued for a depoliticization of social relations through a politicization of economic values—a politics formulated in the economic image of a competitive entrepreneurial society and a responsibilized subject rather than democratic equality and social justice.

Though this brief sketch of neoliberal thought is in no way exhaustive, it shows how neoliberalism in theory dictates and requires the depoliticization and economization of social life—whether through a disavowal of the social fabric as an object of governance due to the necessarily limited rationality of individual design and social justice (Hayek), or through the very transformation of the domain of culture and social values in order to ingrain entrepreneurialism and free enterprise as a politics that secures both the market and society (the Ordoliberals). This dissertation centers on how the saturation of neoliberal rationality in all domains of life, particularly the subjective terrain of psychic life, engenders this economization and depoliticization through the utilization of mindfulness as a technology of subjectification. Imbued with neoliberal rationality, mindfulness encourages self-investment in human capital through techniques of subjective enhancement, management, knowledge, and responsibilization through freedom of choice. I maintain that the therapeutics of psychology, specifically those espoused in contemporary mindfulness, serve as a powerful tool of neoliberal governance because they target the "unconscious and acquired" rules that govern individual behavior and the "psycho-moral forces" of society as well as promulgate a particular "life style," one increasingly directed toward neoliberal values of entrepreneurial investment, flexibility, and personal responsibility.

The Therapeutics of Mindfulness

The application of mindfulness in the various and variable sites, practices, and discourses analyzed in the following chapters speaks to the promiscuity of mindfulness as a term applicable to seemingly all spheres of life. Its expansiveness also makes it difficult to provide a singular and specific definition. It is often defined by deferring to the words of the leading figure of mindfulness in U.S. culture, Jon Kabat-Zinn, who describes mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."[32] More recently, he defines it simply as active or purposeful "self-awareness."[33] The emphasis on mindfulness as an action carried out on oneself, suggests that it is not just a representation of the self but an active

[30] Alfred Müller-Armack, "The Social Market Economy as an Economic and Social Order," *Review of Social Economy* 36, no. 3 (1978), 329.
[31] Röpke, *International Economic Disintegration*, 238.
[32] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 4.
[33] Kabat-Zinn, "Too Early to Tell: The Potential Impact and Challenges—Ethical and Otherwise—Inherent in the Mainstreaming of Dharma in an Increasingly Dystopian World" Mindfulness Magazine (Springer, June 2017), https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs12671-017-0758-2.pdf.

construction of the self through the purposive mediation of attention and nonjudgement. The categorization of self-construction-through-mediation provides the central definition of mindfulness in this project as a therapeutic technology of subjectification.

According to social theorist Nikolas Rose, therapeutics constitute "a heterogeneous array of techniques of subjectification though which human beings are urged and incited to become ethical beings, to define and regulate themselves according to a moral code, to establish precepts for conducting or judging their lives, to reject or accept moral goals."[34] While the ethical and moral dimensions of therapeutics suggest an incompatibility with neoliberal rationality—which displaces normative moral, ethical, and political claims with the higher, objective, and amoral wisdom of market veridiction—the therapeutic mode of subjectification found in mindfulness practices is a prime example of neoliberalization precisely insofar as it offers a site of economization and depoliticization of the subject, a way of transforming moral and ethical claims into market norms and values. This neoliberalization of mindfulness in turn provides a nominally ethical framework for individual self-realization, one that conflates or subsumes the ethical imperative of therapeutics with/in neoliberal market logic. This is not to say that there exists an alternate form of psychological therapeutics guided by a self-contained or transcendent ethics devoid of economic or political values. As Rose argues, the therapeutic territory of the psychological sciences, or what he terms the "psy-disciplines," consists of "complex emotional, interpersonal, and organizational techniques by which the practices of everyday life can be organized according to the ethic of autonomous selfhood," an ethic he explicitly links to liberal governmentality and an entrepreneurial ethos.[35] The therapeutics of psychology are a technology of subjectification, a mode of constructing and governing the self that is "profoundly subjectifying because [it] appears[s] to emanate from our individual desires to fulfill ourselves in our everyday lives, to craft our personalities, to discover who we really are."[36] Mindfulness presents a particular valence of psychological therapeutics, one that expands the ethic of autonomous selfhood and self-crafting by redirecting externally oriented modes of self-realization inward toward individual transformation based on existential awareness and speculative well-being.

Mindfulness-based therapy proceeds from the "understanding that much of what we think, feel and do is the consequence of unconscious, 'implicit' processes. The task of therapy, then, is to *access* implicit, automatic, dysfunctional thought patters…[mindfulness-based psychotherapy is] a 'technology of access.'"[37] Unlike the traditional cognitive behavioral therapeutic method mindfulness-based cognitive-behavioral therapy develops out of, the technology of access offered by mindfulness is not aimed at directly intervening on the process of cognition in order to produce favorable results. Rather, mindfulness is a way of accessing these processes, through meditation, intentional experience, and nonjudgmental notation, in order

---

[34] Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 156.
[35] Rose, 17.
[36] Rose, 17.
[37] Christopher K. Germer, "Mindfulness: What Is It? Why Does It Matter?" in *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*, eds Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegal, Paul R. Fulton (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005), 21.

to realize a more holistic sense of self that lies beyond or underneath the subject's cognitive and behavioral patterns. When coupled with neoliberal rationality, the self-realization that mindfulness offers becomes both a means of economizing the self as an object of speculative investment and an avenue for the depoliticization of subjects who are compelled to continually craft themselves according to their individuality and personal freedom.

Hayek's account of human action shares a similar assumption that "in all our thinking, we are guided (or even operated) by rules of which we are not aware."[38] Unlike the Hayekian schema, mindfulness postulates that the unconscious and implicit rules that govern human cognition and action are accessible and provide a means of therapeutic self-realization. My argument is that this technology of access and self-realization offers a form of self-governance that is useful for the economic governance of society theorized and practiced in neoliberalism. In order to account for how mindfulness is not just a description of the human subject that bears some resemblance to neoliberal subjectivity but provides a technology of subjectification that may extend and foster the project of neoliberal governance, my chapters examine how mindfulness can aid in the individualization and depoliticization of subjects central to neoliberalism's world-making project. It does so in three ways: 1) through a self-actualization that disavows instrumental and therefore political ends, 2) through an emphasis on non-judgement and individual experience that can supplant political action, and, 3) as a mode of redirecting the external objects of desire inward toward an investment in self-care and self-enhancement, mindfulness risks substituting individual transformation for collective political transformation.

Mindfulness is guided by the operative principle of "letting things be and allowing them to unfold in their own way." [39] As a framework for one's relationship to the self, mindfulness intervenes at the level of the automatic order of events that make up cognitive processes in order to instill an awareness of reflexive individual responses to external stimuli. However, the temporal emphases in meditation on "slowing down" and "being present in the moment" are meant to engender a direct relationship to experience rather than to treat experience as a means to a given objective. Mindfulness locates the source of cognitive and behavioral dysfunction in one's attempt to impart ends on experience: "Meditation is neither shutting things out nor off. It is seeing things clearly, and deliberately positioning yourself directly in relationship to them…[mindfulness] cannot be attained by misguided attempts to suppress the mind's natural activity."[40] This therapeutic technique does not aim to directly transform experience, like previous modes of behavioral and cognitive-behavioral therapy, but rather to transform one's relationship to experience. Reality is not the object of mindful intervention, instead, mindfulness is a way of situation oneself to access reality "clearly" without negating it or "[suppressing]t the mind's natural activity." Mindfulness requires a respect for both experience and the natural

---

[38] Hayek, "Kinds of Rationalism" in *The Market and Other Orders*: *The Collected Works of Friedrich Hayek Vol 15* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 45.
[39] Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go*, 44.
[40] Kabat-Zinn, 30-31.

activity of the mind, because attempts to change, suppress, or render it useful lead to delusions that can hinder broader well-being. Instead it offers clarity, a transparent way to access reality that merges human mediation with the phenomenological unfolding of nature, human action with natural or immediate being.

The self-realization that mindfulness promises is framed as an "effortless activity" cultivated through intentional but not instrumental mindful practices. Mindfulness "giv[es] rise to a new capacity to let execution unfold beyond technique, beyond exertion, beyond thinking. Action then becomes a pure expression of art, of being, of letting go of all doing—a merging of mind and body in motion."[41] Instrumental rationality—thought that imparts form onto the materiality of existence, awarding it meaning and purpose—is a source of delusion when it misidentifies one's interpretation of reality as reality itself. The cognitive instrumentalization of experience is also a source of delusion in mindfulness literature because it assumes that the self is given or the agent of thought: "what we call 'the self' is really a construct of our own mind…if we could only recognize the process of selfing as an ingrained habit and then give ourselves permission to take the day off, to stop trying so hard to be 'somebody' and instead just experience being, perhaps we would be a lot happier."[42] The self is the result of a habitual cognitive construction, which is to say that the self is generated by the habit of rational thought rather than the source of this thought. Mindfulness instead compels subjects to "just experience being" through what mindfulness experts call "nonjudgement," the suspension of purposive form onto experience to render it meaningful or useful. In doing so, the mindful subject discovers a more authentic sense of self, one that actualizes the potential merging of existence and essence— "mind and body"—and encourages the development of "our truest nature."[43] Paradoxically, the means of accessing this true nature is itself instilled by an investment in intentional practice, but one purportedly guided by self-realization for its own sake rather than by the instrumental appropriation of means toward given ends. This theory of self-realization transcends externally-oriented individual desires and purposive utility at the same time that it re-embeds or redirects individual desire toward self-investment and self-transformation. As such, mindfulness can serve to contain externally-oriented political action by substituting external objects of transformation with intentional individual experience and self-fashioning.

Mindfulness espouses and engenders a certain relationship to the self, one that sees the self as an object of transformation and investment through intentional attention and nonjudgement. The emphasis on non-judgement results from the notion that our judgements are often sources of psychic pain that obscure reality and keep us from realizing our true nature and potential. Judgement arises from our attachments, from the propensity to rationalize experience and to desire external objects as means of self-fulfillment. To practice non-judgement is to let go of both the rationalization of experience and our attachment to external means of self-realization. Instead, mindfulness asks us to acknowledge experience without imparting meaning onto it and

---

[41] Kabat-Zinn, 44.
[42] Kabat-Zinn, 238.
[43] Kabat-Zinn, 135.

to redirect our desires inwards, toward the inherent means of self-realization found in just being what we already are in the moment. There is little recognition in this framework of the self's relation to others or to the world, except to accept and let go of external phenomena over which the subject has no control.

If this theory of the subject is applied to the domain of politics, the negation of external objects of desire and transformation can translate to a disavowal of the animating ends of political action and the means for achieving those ends. The stance of non-judgement and detachment adopted in mindfulness practices may thus connote a sense of political withdrawal and a sedation of political sensibility. Jon Kabat-Zinn anticipates this critique by insisting that mindfulness actually better equips subjects to live responsibly, by affording an unmediated access to things "as they really are": "meditation is not about trying to become a nobody, or a contemplative zombie, incapable of living in the real world and facing real problems. It's about seeing things as they are, without the distortions of our own thought processes."[44] But while mindfulness may provide an avenue to apprehend the ideological distortions that mediate our experience in the world as products of false consciousness, it does not provide subjects the means to address or change the external circumstances of experience. It instills a sense of responsibility but only to and for oneself. This is not to say that mindfulness is inherently depoliticizing, but rather that it cannot function as a form of (collective) politics in itself. Instead, mindfulness in its American usage adopts a theory of human action that accepts rather than labors on material externality, and seeks to transform the self rather than the world. While the coexistence of the internally oriented action of mindfulness and the externally oriented action of politics can and certainly does coexist, under the rubric of neoliberalism, the desire for political action may be redirected towards individual self-realization, a self-realization that does not depend on collective transformation. The neoliberal ordering of social and material life, which aims to diffuses collective politics through depoliticization, might, and in the cases I analyze here does, coopt mindfulness for precisely this end. The often-important self-care work of mindfulness in this schema can substitute for the collective work of political action.

This is not to say that mindfulness utilized as a neoliberal technology of subjectification provides an inaccurate or mystifying representation of reality or theory of the subject that need only be rejected. The neoliberalization of mindfulness instantiates a much more comprehensive and effective remaking of subjectivity, one that emphasizes the individual choice to, in the words of Jon-Kabat-Zinn, "take responsibility for [one's] own life."[45] It can run the risk of placing individual investment in and enhancement of personal well-being above all else:

> Mindfulness practices are centered upon the development of the individual's capacity to become more attuned to the present moment and to make active choices about how to respond to stimuli. As a widespread practice that expounds the virtues of the individual's freedom to choose as a route to a more fulfilled life, mindfulness discourse arguably

---

[44] Kabat-Zinn, 239.
[45] Kabat-Zinn, 96.

reinforces neoliberal capitalism's valuing of individual freedom of choice. Mindfulness offers flexibility and responsiveness in making decisions, which are both features of the ideal neoliberal agent. For instance, in a passage concerned with the freedom to choose, Williams, Teasdale, Segal and Kabat-Zinn (2007) state that mindful awareness 'expands the field of choices available to us and increases the likelihood that we will make healthy, wise, skillful choices rather than being carried along by the momentum of what we habitually do.'[46]

Within the framework of neoliberal governance, mindfulness is thus not primarily an ideological obfuscation but a productive construction of subjectivity that engenders certain (de-)political effects. As neoliberalism reconstructs all aspects of human life according to market metrics and goals, it necessitates and produces subjects circumscribed by market rationality, subjects who are capable of competition and free to choose, and therefore responsible for their choices. Mindfulness provides a means of expanding one's capacity for competition (a "flexibility and responsiveness in making decisions") through methods of self-investment that make subjects attentive, creative, flexible, knowledgeable, and self-regulating. It also furnishes freedom of choice in spite of external circumstances ("taking responsibility for oneself") by locating agency in one's capacity to access, enhance, stylize, quantify, manage, and realize one's "best self" through individual action. These modes of self-fashioning are central to the therapeutic regime of neoliberalism because they perpetuate the notion of individual autonomy, economize the most intimate aspects of subjective life, make subjects responsible for their own well-being, and substitute the work of therapeutics for the work of politics.

Sites of Therapeutic Governance

As a form of therapeutics, mindfulness intervenes in the subject's relationship to the self in order to instill a self-awareness that doubles as an investment in one's well-being and speculative potential. It thus provides an avenue for the neoliberalization of the subject, a means of transforming the desires, actions, knowledge, and mediation of subjective psychic life according to neoliberal metrics and goals. As a therapeutic technique for self-realization, mindfulness traffics as a means of self-enhancement, self-regulation, self-knowledge, and self-expression. The objects of analysis in this dissertation center on these self-realization techniques in order to shed light on the diverse ways in which mindfulness therapeutics are practiced and utilized in the socio-political landscape of the contemporary U.S. inflected with neoliberal logics. I argue that in all of these settings, mindfulness is incorporated into neoliberal governance to engender a government of the self that extends the neoliberal project of economization and depoliticization into the arena of psychic life.

Chapter 1, "Actualizing the Self: Mindfulness and Regimes of Corporate Governance," looks at how mindfulness is implemented in strategies of corporate wellness and administration to angle employees to invest in actualizing their own well-being and to attach their individual well-being to that of the whole corporation. My analysis is twofold: I look to how the therapeutic

---

[46] Phil Arthington, "Mindfulness: A Critical Perspective," *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* Vol 2, Issue 1 (2016), 96.

approach to corporate governance and wellness that features mindfulness strategies objectivizes the subject as a manipulatable figure of wellness and corporate control by instilling an internal regime that compels subjects to actualize themselves in every facet of life—including work. This compulsion to self-actualize, implanted through employee wellness programs, both enhances individual worker productivity and, perhaps more importantly, consolidates and locates individual investment in well-being in the well-being of the company. I begin by evaluating how workplace wellness programs and initiatives have expanded to include all aspects of employee life to positively construct the physical, social, cultural, psychological and emotional conditions of the work environment in order to situate work as an extension of one's self and a means of self-actualization. I then examine research that develops "best practices" for the administration of corporate wellness in non-profit incentives for self-enhancement like mindfulness trainings, which aim to bolster employee engagement and identification with the larger corporate culture, integrating individual self-actualization in the organic totality of the company. One popular mindfulness program in corporate wellness, the Search Inside Yourself Institute, provides an investigative case of how mindfulness gets taken up in this arena as a way to relegate the exploitative and precarious conditions of work to a matter of individual responsibility for well-being, individualizing subjects by making them responsible for how they respond to these conditions. I end by way of an anecdote that recounts a brief visit to the technology company Salesforce in downtown San Francisco, where the meditation rooms housed on every floor of the company's three towers—which have become icons of the social, economic, and political transformation of the city in recent years—are a telling example of the way individual and corporate responsibility supplant collective and political forms of interdependency under neoliberalism.

Chapter 2, "Regulating the Self: Technologies of Mindfulness and Self-Care," examines how mindfulness treks under the signifier of consumer self-care and how the technological mediation of mindfulness apps serves as form of quantifying and realizing the self in one's daily life choices. The investigation operates along two axes that situate the therapeutics of mindfulness in the marketplace as a form of self-regulation: first, in the way mindfulness is represented as a technique of self-care in consumer culture that promises both individual maintenance and improvement, it regulates individual responses to social, political, and material life through the rubric of consumer choice, and second, in the calculative schema of self-quantifying technology, mindfulness is both a means of and end for the quantification and regulation of daily life in which the locus of freedom is likewise reduced to individual choice. The first half of the chapter considers studies and data produced by market analytics and consumer profiling in order to analyze the representation of mindfulness in this literature as a product for consumer self-care, a representation that equates self-care with initiative, responsibility, and resiliency given the hardships of life under contemporary capitalism. The last half of my analysis offers a case study in the subscription-based meditation application Headspace, which allows users to quantify, track, calculate, and speculate on their meditation practices and encourages users to integrate mindfulness in their daily habits, submitting all realms of life to mindful intervention. Through the apps gameified interface, mindfulness is harnessed as a tool for unlocking the potential within the self by externalizing the self into a calculable and malleable object of knowledge and investment. Rather than a properly biopolitical regime of calculation, the technology of quantification is work carried out by the self on itself, a

way of unifying the diverse phenomena of individual daily life under the rubric of lifestyle choices and sites of self-investment. Thus, the technique of self-regulation stipulated by mindfulness through consumer self-care and technological quantification operates according to an autonomous subject who, driven by the cultivation of their potential self, is free to choose and responsible for their choices.

Chapter 3, "Instructing the Self: Evidence-Based Practices and Pedagogical Therapeutics," approaches the role of mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy in education and school-based therapeutic settings to illustrate how mindfulness operates as a technique of behavioral intervention within the backdrop of increasingly privatized education and mental health services. The chapter traces the transformation of public mental health according to best practices and public-private partnerships in a number of case studies led by Dr. Bruce Chorpita, an advocate for "evidence-based" therapeutic practices like multi-systemic therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy in public health clinics and schools. I consider how the role of scientific and institutional knowledge under the guise of evidence-based best practices becomes a guiding principle and method of pedagogic behavioral modification for stakeholders in public health institutions, including therapists and behavioral health providers. The purported neutrality, efficiency, objectivity, and consensus of best practices work to economize the non-market institutions of public health and education, transforming them into firms beholden to investors. They also depoliticize the aims and means of governance in these spheres by supplanting value-laden political demands and perspectives with the authority and impartiality of best practices. My focal object of analysis—the implementation of the behavioral health evidence-based practices program MAP ("managing adaptive practices") in L.A. county public schools—reveals how the alleged objectivity and democratic, or more accurately, "decentralized" nature of evidence-based practices obscures a process of normalization according to a regulatory schema equated with well-being that displaces responsibility of care onto the child receiving treatment, the child's parents, and/or the child's teacher under the guise of "collaborative design." This responsibilization compels subjects to constantly assess and invest in their human capital through the evaluative protocols and corrective strategies of pedagogical therapeutic systems like MAP centered on evidence-based practices. I end the chapter by considering a MAP-informed training at an understaffed and underserved elementary school in Inglewood, CA, where teachers were taught to utilize mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral techniques to deal with instances of disruptive and even violent student behavior. The example shows how the devolution of authority and the supremacy of best practices engendered by neoliberalism responsibilizes individuals for their well-being along with the well-being of institutions, and depoliticizes the conditions and stakes of collectively transforming institutions like public health and education.

Finally, Chapter 4, "Liberating the Self: The Politics of Mindfulness," looks at representations of mindfulness in popular culture as a lifestyle that embodies freedom and the incorporation of mindfulness in government as a means of realizing the freedom of the individual and a cure for the social and political ailments that plague the nation. I begin the chapter by analyzing the gendered, racialized, and classed dimensions of representations of mindfulness as a lifestyle brand in popular publications, arguing that these images neutralize the threat of social difference by framing mindfulness in a self-evidently posited universalism that presumes the

autonomy and equality of subjects who are free to choose a mindful lifestyle. At the same time, these depictions presume and elaborate the unique individuality of subjects in their capacity for mindful self-investment exhibited in an array of lifestyle choices that offer a means of self-expression. This self-expression is linked to an individual political practice by way of consumer choice, which reduces political action to the attentive selection of objects for consumption that are sustainable, healthy, and/or socially-responsible. As such, political action rendered as consumer choice effects an individualization, and therefore depoliticization, of politics as collective action. To further elaborate this claim, I examine how mindfulness is appropriated in the sphere of state politics in the mindfulness-based governmental platform of congressman Tim Ryan, who situates mindfulness as a "performance-enhancing" and regulatory cure to the U.S. body politic, which has been beset by an autoimmune social disease characterized by a lack of civility, resiliency, initiative and personal responsibility. In compelling subjects to invest and take responsibility for themselves, mindfulness works as a therapeutic immunization that both protects the integrity of the social body and helps enhance the potential of all of its members. My dissertation ends by reflecting on both the limitations and possibilities presented by mindfulness for political organizing through investigating its relationship to political activism. I do so by turning to a conversation between Jon Kabat-Zinn and Angela Davis at the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, CA, where the mindfulness expert and activist-scholar consider the implications of mindfulness in political organizing. In their dialogue, mindfulness is perceived as both a technique that sublimates politics in therapeutics aimed at managing individual symptoms rather than directed at collective or material transformation, and a potential technique for investigating political possibilities and envisioning alternative political futures.

Chapter 1: Actualizing the Self: Mindfulness and Regimes of Corporate Governance

With every breath we are continually invited to embody and therefore actualize the possible more consistently, and more ardently, more compassionately, with greater appreciation for the clarity, sanity, and well-being that are always and already right beneath our noses, and within all of us…May we continue to give ourselves over to what is deepest and best in ourselves, over and over and over again, encouraging those seeds of our truest nature to grow and flower.
–Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*

Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested…in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self.
–Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*

In a seminar at the University of Vermont less than a year before his passing, Michel Foucault describes his project and "objective for more than twenty-five years" as an investigation into the production of knowledge and its particular techniques, two of which, he maintains, have occupied his work and "most kept [his] attention":

> Technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject…[and] technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.[47]

He goes on to define "governmentality"—what he elsewhere calls the "conduct of conduct"—as an "encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self."[48] This chapter looks at one particular site of encounter between the neoliberal governmental techniques of *subjectification* that "objectivize" the subject, inscribing it within a normative regime of truth and calculation tied to the management and regulation of the population, and the governmental techniques of *subjectivation*—a "governmentality [that] implies a relationship of the self to itself"[49]—which aim to transform the interiority of the self: that of mindfulness-based psychology and practice incorporated by corporate wellness programs. I argue that mindfulness as a psychological discourse and prescriptive procedure presents a particularly potent therapeutic technics of neoliberal corporate governance that both "objectivizes" the subject, making the subject manipulatable as a figure of administrative wellness and constitutes an internal regime by

---

[47] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" in *The Essential Works of Foucault Volume I: Ethics Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Rabinow, Paul (New York: The New Press, 1997), 225.
[48] Foucault, 225.
[49] Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" in *The Essential Works of Foucault Volume I: Ethics Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Rabinow, Paul (New York: The New Press, 1997), 300.

which subjects work to actualize themselves and develop their "truest nature" in accordance with development and enhancement of the company.

From Behavioral Modification to "Behavioral Activation": Mindfulness and Behavioral Psychology

The subjective conditions required and engendered by governmenality entail normative regimes of subjecthood, or what Michel Feher calls a novel "moral anthropology": "a representation of the human condition" that is in "a relationship of mutual presupposition" to a particular mode of government.[50] Following Feher, "if the role of government is to enhance good dispositions and ward off bad propensities of its subjects," then this moral anthropology, this theory of the human condition, functions as its rationale and justification at the same time that it effectively inscribes subjects in reality.[51] There has been much work done on explicating this moral anthropology of the subject in critical studies of neoliberalism—in terms of human capital, an indebted, precarious, or responsibilized self, a subject defined by self-investment and self-appreciation of one's subjective portfolio, etc. But rather than begin with an abstract model of the neoliberal subject, I'd like to focus on a particular domain and set of techniques brought to bear on the subject in order to render it intelligible and amenable to biopolitical governance and self-governance; that is, the discipline of psychology and psychological mechanisms for understanding the human condition.

While there are numerous competing and overlapping accounts of the psychological subject enshrined in the discipline and practice of psychology, the most recent and prevalent paradigm is one arising from Buddhist-infused mindfulness philosophy, variously referred to as mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral theory, mindfulness-based stress reduction, or simply, mindfulness. In the psy- disciplines, the mindfulness approach to therapeutic practice is most often mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy (MBCBT), and, as the name suggests, it splices mindfulness philosophy onto cognitive behavioral theory, the dominant psychological school of the late 20th century. MBCBT is the latest iteration of cognitive behavioral psychology, which itself developed out of the school of behavioral psychology. In reference to this development, historians tend to categorize behavioral psychology in three distinct "waves": 1) the early functionalist behaviorism of early 20th century adopters like John B. Watson and

---

[50] Feher identifies the Augustinian condition of the 15th through 17th centuries and the liberal condition of the 18th through 19th centuries as the immediate predecessors of the neoliberal condition, which he defines as one fundamentally rooted in self appreciation and credit rather than self-recognition and profit as in classical liberalism. This transformation signifies correlating shifts according to Feher: in the field of economics from profit to credit as the primary valuation, a social shift from exchange to sharing, and a psychological shift from want and satisfaction to self-loathing and self-esteem. See Michel Feher, "The Age of Appreciation: Lectures on the Neoliberal Condition" (London: Goldsmiths University, 2013-2015), https://www.gold.ac.uk/architecture/projects/michel-feher/.

[51] This is not to say that there is a single cohesive logic to the moral anthropologies corresponding to particular modes of government. While representations of the human condition in a particular epoch may and often do intersect, they are also heterogeneous. Thus, we might amend Feher's argument by emphasizing the various competing and loosely conglomerated representations of the subject that have formed governing moral anthropologies.

subsequent neobehaviorism of B.F. Skinner 2) the cognitive revolution of the 1960s and its subsequent synthesis of behaviorism into a cognitive-behavioral approach to the psyche and 3) mindfulness-based techniques garnered from Buddhist insights into the psychological disposition of subjects developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Stephen Hayes, a psychologist credited with creating one type of therapy emblematic of this mindfulness-based approach (acceptance and commitment therapy or ACT), provides a useful description of the three waves of behavioral psychology with reference to their philosophical differences. Empiricism was the basic underlying tenet of the early behaviorism of Watson and neobehaviorism of Skinner, who "believed that theories should be built upon the bedrock of scientifically well-established basic principles, and that applied technologies should be well-specified and rigorously tested."[52] Hayes also situates such behavioral approaches in explicit opposition to the project of psychoanalysis: "Behavior therapy focused directly on problematic behavior and emotion, based on conditioning and neo-behavioral principles. The goal would not be to resolve the hypothesized unconscious fears and desires of Little Hans and others like him—the goal would be to get him to go out of the house and to school."[53] In other words, behaviorism at its core is (ostensibly) purely functional, not a hermeneutic or interpretative practice like psychoanalysis. The second wave of cognitive therapy, first formulated in the 1960s, took the inferred events and processes of the psyche as legitimate objects of study, but rather than remain a descriptive theory like psychoanalysis, it was both an objective and prescriptive means of identifying and altering faulty information processing and subsequent undesirable behavior, which "would be weakened or eliminated through their detection, correction, testing, and disputation."[54] Hence it preserved the empiricism of earlier behavioral theories, while making room for the role of human cognition in behavioral phenomena and the goal of behavioral modification. In contrast to its predecessors, the third wave of behaviorism, which originates in the theoretical wedding of CBT and mindfulness, is a response to the limitations of direct cognitive-behavioral intervention and serves as a critique of "the core idea that direct cognitive change is a necessary or primary method of clinical improvement."[55] Instead of behavioral intervention, Hayes sees MBCBT techniques as based in and oriented towards an "explicitly contextualistic 'behavioral activation' model that has the potential to be more readily disseminated than cognitive therapy (Hollon, 2001)."[56] In MBCT, the goal is not to modify the subject's behavior according to normative ends or judgments per se, but to activate the self's potential within a particular milieu in order to better-equip the subject to manage their life given the Buddhist insight of the inevitable fact of suffering. This recognition

---

[52] Steven Hayes, "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Relational Frame Theory, and the Third Wave of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies" in *Behavior Therapy*, 35. (2004): 640.
[53] Hayes, 641.
[54] 'Although there have been many definitions of cognitive therapy, I have been most satisfied with the notion that cognitive therapy is best viewed as the application of the cognitive model of a particular disorder with the use of a variety of techniques designed to modify the dysfunctional beliefs and faulty information processing characteristic of each disorder' (Beck, 1993, p. 194)," quoted in Hayes, 643.
[55] Hayes, 644.
[56] Hayes, 644.

of suffering as a necessary and unavoidable part of life entails a therapeutic approach that is aimed at working with and redirecting the purpose of suffering rather than avoiding or "curing" it.

In beginning with the premise of the inevitability of suffering, the third wave of behavioral psychology prevalent today shifts the focus, scope, and treatment goals of psychotherapy. This premise is directly drawn from Buddhist teaching, as suffering or *dukkha*, the first of the Four Noble Truths that form the basis of Buddhism, is a fact of existence that results from our attachment to impermanent states and desires that in turn traps us within the cycle of death and rebirth, or *samsara*. The path to Enlightenment, to the cessation of suffering and release from *samsara*, is through *nirvana*—described in the third Noble Truth as "the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it."[57] It is this insight that forms the paradoxical notion of autonomy that mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral psychology centers on: in order to be "free" one must recognize one's fundamental dependence on heteronomy, that is, that we are not autonomous beings but fundamentally dependent on externality.[58]

The "mindfulness revolution" in psychotherapy (and its implementation in corporate business practices) reflects a specifically secular and Western appropriation of selective tenants of Buddhist philosophy particularly with regards to the nature of consciousness and the role perception, feeling, and intention play in it. President of the American Buddhist Association Bhikku Bodhi, an ordained Buddhist monk and popular source in mindfulness literature, describes consciousness as "an emergent, conditioned phenomenon, manifesting in a series of momentary occurrences, which is simultaneously the agent, instrument, and activity of awareness (Bhikku Bodhi, 2000)."[59] Neither materiality, phenomenological experience, or thought/consciousness is given any primary ontological role in Buddhist philosophy: "the organs are not in the service of an entity that is 'having' the experience; and consciousness is not something that can exist other than in the instant of its being enacted. Mind cannot be reduced to matter in this model, and neither is materiality merely a projection of the mind. Rather, each is an equally important facet of a single psychophysical organism, which itself does not exist as much as it occurs."[60] Buddhist psychology describes three coterminous effects of "the moment of

---

[57] *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion* (SN 56.11), translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Access to Insight, BCBS Edition (30 November 2013):
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html.
[58] The last of the Four Noble Truths describes the method for achieving freedom from suffering: "this noble eightfold path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration" (Ibid). The primary technique of third wave CBT, the practice of "mindfulness," draws from the last two paths (mindfulness and concentration) while generally ignoring the moral prescriptions of the first five.
[59] Quoted in Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegal, and Paul R. Fulton, eds. *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2013), 245.
[60] Germer et al., 246. That this account shares similarities with certain strains of post-war French thought—for example, the ontology of Deleuze, the emphasis on creative self-formation and subjective practice in the late

contact between organs, objects, and consciousness": perception, understood as "a creative process of construction and categorization" rather an a passive reception of external stimuli, feeling or the affective "tone associated with every subject of sense of cognition," and intention, which is an attitude or orientation taken up towards experience.[61] While perception and feeling are difficult or impossible to modify, given their dependence on environmental and internal constraints, intention is the locus of human freedom insofar as it is amenable to conscious direction: "Intention manifests also as action when activities of body, speech, and mind are initiated—either consciously or unconsciously—by the choice or decision to act one way or another…we might also call these learned behaviors, conditioned responses, or personality characteristics."[62] The subject is awarded agency but in a provisional, dynamic, and environmentally dependent form: "a person is regarded as a process of continually unfolding dynamic systems, responding to a changing environment and perpetually reshaping itself as it constructs a meaningful order out of each moment's external and internal data."[63] One can perceive the influence of the previous schools of cognitive behavioral psychology in this account (the functionalism, environmentalism, and emphasis on choice) as well as parallel inflections in neoliberal theories of the subject defined primarily through action circumscribed by environmental constraints.

The "healthy" mind in Buddhist teaching is one that has reached Enlightenment, that is, the cessation of suffering and freedom from desire. Thus, "from this perspective, we are all mentally ill."[64] Beginning with this recognition, the task of mindfulness-based therapeutic techniques is not to cure maladaptation, negative thoughts, or mental illness exactly—as if we could reach this goal once and for all—but to perpetually redirect our suffering towards enhanced well-being. Thus, the discourse of mindfulness and its correlative therapeutics offer a different account of abnormality and normality, sickness and health than the apparatus of normation at the heart of the disciplinary practice of the psychological sciences that Foucault famously describes in *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*. Instead, of suppressing or correcting difference, it is tolerated and inscribed within a particular grid of normality and regime of truth. This governmental technique categorizes a regime of normalization rather than normation for Foucault that is central to biopolitical forms of governance:

> In the disciplines one started from a norm, and it was in relation to the training carried out with reference to the norm that the normal could be distinguished from the abnormal. Here, instead, we have a plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different curves of normality, and the operation of normalization consists in establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality and [in] acting to bring the most unfavorable in line with the more favorable. So we have here something that starts from the normal and makes

---

Foucault, and the "instrumentality" in Derrida's account of the prosthetic and generative technics of writing—is a compelling observation that remains to be expanded upon.

[61] Germer et al., 246.
[62] Germer et al., 248.
[63] Germer et al., 248.
[64] Germer et al., 24.

use of certain distributions considered to be, if you like, more normal than the others, or at any rate more favorable than the others. These distributions will serve as the norm. The norm is an interplay of differential normalities. The normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it, or the norm is fixed and plays its operational role on the basis of this study of normalities. So, I would say that what is involved here is no longer normation, but rather normalization in the strict sense. [65]

The operation of normalization shares with behavioral psychology a functionalist account of the production of truth and correlating modification of the subject, where "the norm plays an operational role"; i.e., the truth or norm is what works to bring about a certain "more favorable" operation or objective. But that objective is recast, with the introduction of mindfulness in the development of behavioral psychology, as one that is never reached once and for all, but is rather a perpetual state of constant striving and vigilance. That is to say, the norm of "health" or a normatively healthy functioning mind in psychotherapy is replaced with the norm of "well-being" or wellness as an ongoing process of self-enhancement and self-realization in MBCBT. Normalization thus becomes a much more expansive "holistic" process that is carried out not just by the external institutional regimes of power and knowledge, but via an internal regime carried out by the subject on the self.

Despite distancing itself from the empiricism of earlier behavioral therapies, the functionalist orientation of mindfulness is—often loudly—supported by scientific studies and "evidence-based practices." Hayes maintains that the data collected by Teasdale and his associates in their landmark assessment of the effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy (Teasdale, et al., 2002) "provided dramatic evidence that it was possible to alter the function of thoughts without first altering their form."[66] The emphasis on altering function rather than form entails a purposive and active rather than coercive, prescriptive, or descriptive therapeutic technique.[67] This is true insofar as the means of "activation" is a certain type of intentional access—to be aware of one's present thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions. In this way mindfulness retains the functionalism, environmental constrictions, and inferred objects that characterize the previous waves of behavioral psychology, but it involves a different account of causality in replacing the ends of behavioral modification with behavioral actualization. Both neobehavioral and cognitive behavioral approaches stress mechanistic assumptions about change in behavior or thought patterns. They assume that with enough conditioning or intentional judgement, a subject may alter their negative patterns to better reflect the healthy norm. Mindfulness-based psychology stresses instead the realization of one's already inherent potential—being and accepting who you already (potentially) are—and the actualization of that potential self as something internal to the subject rather than an objective carried out via

---

[65] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (New York: Picador, 2007), 63.
[66] Hayes, 655.
[67] Paradoxically, mindfulness also entails a type of passivity—the recognition of environmental constraints, the inevitable fact of suffering, and the encouragement to be nonjudgmental and accept thoughts, emotions, and sensations are all important components to its approach.

external stimuli. MBCBT still involves behavioral psychological techniques but ones that are directed internally rather than externally, an instrumentalization of the function of consciousness itself. Thus mindfulness as both a type of knowledge and practice allows for a uniquely programmatic and environmental axis of control (not directly aimed at behavior but the activation of a self-monitoring, self-assessing, and self-enhancing subject), a peculiar understanding of freedom (in intentional redirection of function rather than form), and a specific theory of the subject and consciousness (as emergent and provisional) that, I argue, is particularly effective for neoliberal governance when imbued with market rationality.

Like the tools for the production and management of subjectivity and the administration of behavior at the level of population that were made possible by and coextensive with the cognitive behavioral insights of 20th century psychology, mindfulness too instantiates a revised mode for "conducting the conduct of men." As a technology of self-actualization, it represents a nuanced form of discursive power and subjectivization, one that proceeds less through direct disciplinary control or prescriptive behavioral management than through self-knowledge and self-investment. It targets affects and thought patterns, sensations and bodily responses, rather than choice, action, or behavior per se, and it does so not in order to "fix" these phenomena according to scientifically established rational principles or moral norms, but to redirect their function towards a self-enhancing rather than self-restricting end. Thus, despite its emphasis on "nonjudgment," mindfulness does entail animating norms and goals (namely the well-being of the subject), but it escapes the charge of both mechanism and teleology through recourse to a type of technics that is intentional but only according to a principle of unfolding that cannot be said to properly belong to the subject as a conscious end, but rather discovered only as a kernel of internal always already existing potentiality. In a sense it is a form of dynamism that is centered on the continual discovery and effacement of the self. The purpose of mindfulness practice is both to realize your "true nature" to activate your potential and to "let go" of the self habits that cause suffering.

Workplace Wellness as a Site of Neoliberal Governance

In 2011, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), part of the national Center for Disease Control and Prevention, launched the Total Worker Health (TWH) Program, an initiative to expand research and policies related to workplace safety and wellness that incorporates a more comprehensive method to employee health and well-being. Defined as a set of "policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being," the trademarked approach of TWH is premised upon "the recognition that work is a social determinant of health" and the assumption that "advancing the safety, health, and well-being of the workforce may be helpful for individuals, their families, communities, employers and the economy as a whole."[68] TWH presents a distinct methodology to the traditional field of

---

[68] "What is Total Worker Health?" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/totalhealth.html.

workplace wellness as a site of governmental intervention. While the necessity of regulating workplace safety has been an integral part of governance since the early 20th century in the U.S., it is only recently that such interventions have expanded to include not just the compensation for or even prevention of injury or illness in the workplace, but a positive construction of health and well-being in and through the work environment. This approach appears incompatible with traditional liberal governance, which understands the economy and work as a realm of private exchange—a sovereign and independent sphere that governmental politics should respect and intervene in sparingly. Hence governmental regulations of private business in the arena of workplace wellness have, for the most part since their inception in the early 20th century, focused on minimal and basic protections from and affordances for injury and illness caused by work (the requirement of worker's compensation is a primary example). By contrast, the nationally sanctioned agenda of TWH betrays a novel and more "comprehensive" governmental tactic targeting work and business:

> As work and work environments change to meet the demands of 21st century economies, comprehensive approaches are needed to address complex realities. TWH is a comprehensive approach that looks for new solutions to long-standing issues related to worker safety and health. The TWH approach provides a pathway to improve worker creativity, innovation, and productivity by creating work and work environments that are safe and health-enhancing.[69]

The ever-expanding list of sites that make up well-being and thus may be objects of investment for corporate improvement include the built-environment of the workplace, the social structure and company culture, and worker psychological and emotional health (see fig. 1).[70] This extensive governmental apparatus is reflected in company norms and best practices, with the understanding that promoting individual wellness will likewise translate into the wellness of the larger organism—not just the company, but "the economy as a whole." Here "wellness" is measured not through a utilitarian axis of ever-increasing profit—though a "healthy" company (or economy) is surely one that functions efficiently and profitably—but more primarily by referencing a larger sense of social value. This social value is not however, altruistic. The promotion of individual employee wellness is couched as an investment in individual human capital—"a pathway to improve worker creativity, innovation, and productivity"—through environmental "enhancements" rather than direct disciplinary action. But individual human capital enhancement, rather than merely labor exploitation, becomes a central means to the speculative capital enhancement of the company. I say speculative because this investment is based in an anticipatory value of enhanced economic, social, and political credit, not solely or primarily in the inherent value of a company tied to production and profit.

---

[69] "Total Worker Health."
[70] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Issues Relevant to Advancing Worker Well-being Through Total Worker Health®," (2015), graphic from "Total Worker Health."
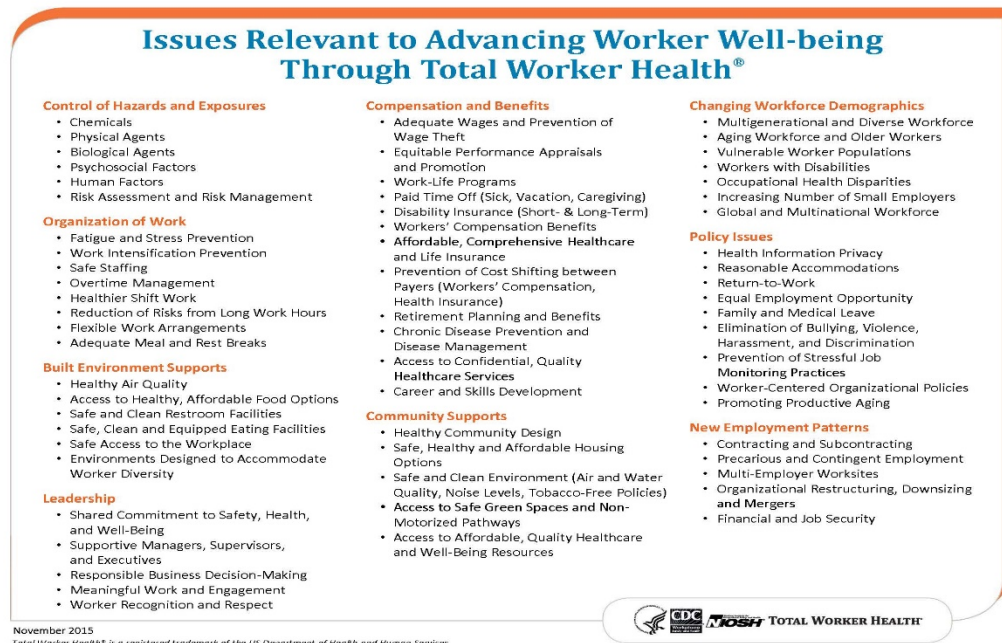
Fig. 1. "Issues Relevant to Advancing Worker Well-being Through Total Worker Health®"

TWH betrays a neoliberal logic to corporate governance, one that is not merely negative, that is to say, focused on minimal intervention or the principle of laissez-faire to ensure the "natural" functioning of the economy; but more primarily positive in its active construction of what is natural. Here the economy of the corporation must be made to function, not left to function, and its function is equated to a larger sense of social well-being measured by credit. Instead of centering on security, the "night watchmen" state of classical liberalism, neoliberal governance aims to enhance and positively construct its object through environmental interventions. These positive interventions are justified not only through recourse to the securitization of the population's physical health or economic health, but more generally through a logic of speculative enhancement—the realization of potential latent value that is not inherent but socially or relationally derived.[71] The TWH initiative provides a particularly insightful example of this neoliberal approach to governance in that it treats the workplace not as a neutral setting that need only be regulated to offset negative effects to worker health and productivity but as a positive object of intervention that, through particular governmental techniques may provide expanding sources of valorization, a site to expand not just productivity but "creativity" and "innovation" by investing in the well-being of employees:

> TWH explores opportunities to both protect workers from hazards and *advance* their health
> and well-being by targeting the conditions of work. Scientific evidence now supports what

---

[71] I say socially because in a financialized order, the value of an asset is generated through an array of competing claims that are at once economic, political, and socio-cultural, reflecting the confidence (or lack thereof) of investors. See Max Haiven, *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York: 2014).

many safety and health professionals, as well as workers themselves, have long suspected—that risk factors in the workplace can contribute to health problems previously considered unrelated to work…In recognition of these relationships, some newly observed and others based on established scientific evidence, the TWH approach focuses on how environmental and organizational factors related to work can diminish or *enhance* overall worker health.[72]

The focus on environmental and organizational interventions ("the conditions of work") in corporate wellness is a central tenant of neoliberal governance—both in early Austrian formulations of governance as a type of "highway code" and Ordoliberal insistence on constructing an appropriate "social framework" for economic actors—but it also insinuates a particular notion of causality prevalent in cognitive behavioral psychology in the U.S., which approaches behavioral modification through environmental conditions and organizational programming. It is noteworthy within this context that corporate wellness programs have also increasingly adapted the recent "third wave" cognitive behavioral emphasis on mindfulness as an effective therapeutic method in not only the treatment of a wide range of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional health disorders, but an enhancement of total well-being. Indeed, TWH has provided a number of studies through the CDC and other institutions that advocate for the efficacy of mindfulness practices in corporate wellness and its integration as a useful governmental therapeutic technique for improving overall employee and corporate well-being. One recent research study, conducted through the National Health Interview Survey and published in the 2017 CDC journal *Preventing Chronic Disease*, found that "mindfulness-based practices can improve workers' health and reduce employers' costs by ameliorating the negative effect of stress on workers' health" and concludes that "worker groups with low rates of engagement in mindfulness practices could most benefit from workplace mindfulness interventions." [73] Whereas work-related stress has often been characterized as a necessary and productive feature of corporate culture, TWH treats stress reduction as a primary target of corporate wellness programs, not just because it is linked to improved employee health and health-related cost reduction for the employer, but because it has a positive influence on increasing "engagement" in the workplace. The study further prescribes that mindfulness-centered wellness programs be implemented within the larger workforce landscape, not only in large business firms like those in the technology industry where mindfulness has become a normative feature of corporate wellness, but in blue collar and service industries as well: "Improving institutional factors limiting access to mindfulness-based wellness programs and addressing existing beliefs about mindfulness practices among underrepresented worker groups could help eliminate barriers to these programs."[74] One can assume that given this backing by

---

[72] "Total Worker Health," emphasis mine.

[73] Diana Kachan et al., "Prevalence of Mindfulness Practices in the US Workforce: National Health Interview Survey," *Preventing Chronic Disease* 14:160034 (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd14.160034.

[74] Kachan et al.

governmental health agencies like the CDC, mindfulness will soon comprise a normative technique in workplace wellness—indeed it is already well on its way.

Mindful Administration: Individual and Corporate Well-being

Empirical research on organizations has shown that self-interest is strongly buttressed by the mechanisms of identification—that is, attachment to the organization and its goals both cognitively and motivationally.
–Herbert Simon, *Economics, Bounded Rationality, and the Cognitive Revolution*

The rise of mindfulness as a legitimate movement in psychology paralleled its embrace by another, apparently unrelated field aimed at the management of human productivity: business administration. Before incorporating mindfulness within its mode of governance, business administration in the latter half of the 20th century was already heavily informed by cognitive behavioral psychology, particularly in its distillation and application of the behavioral economics of Herbert Simon and his account of the role of cognition in economic decision-making. Before analyzing the administrative techniques and effects of mindfulness in a corporate setting that reveal a strong complicity with neoliberal governmentality, I'd like to point out one aspect of Simon's theory that intersects with and allows for a specifically neoliberal benchmark for assessing value and effectiveness within this setting.

In his work on the "decision-making processes in administrative organization," *Administrative Behavior* (1945), Simon argues that it is the task of administration to provide the conditions for members of an organization to make rational decisions, with the recognition of and allowance for the limits of *homo oeconomicus*' bounded rationality.[75] These limitations are encountered in both a lack of all relevant information and the limited capacity of the decision-maker, whether external (environmental constraints) or internal (computational ability). This led to the insight, for Simon, that the rational liberal principle of utility maximization for explaining behavior—whether at the level of the individual actor or larger conglomerate units—is insufficient to account for all the necessarily spontaneous conditions that engender and guide the decision-making process in a given moment and environment. Thus, at the level of the individual and the firm, the principle of profit maximization that underlies classical liberalism is abandoned by behavioral economics and replaced by a more comprehensive account of interest as a causal mechanism. More specifically, behavioral economics' subject of interest is animated not by utility-maximization—which in classical theory leads to market equilibrium—but more fundamentally by the conditions of "survival," that is, a positive investment in well-being that engenders an equilibrium between "motivations" (including but not limited to profit) and "contributions" (including but not limited to labor). In his Nobel Prize lecture in 1978, "Rational Decision-Making in Business Organization," Simon states that a given organization's "survival conditions [are] positive profits rather than maximum profits," which "permits a departure from

---

[75] Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organization* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1959).

the assumptions of perfect rationality."[76] Simon's central insight is that maximum profits may not be in a firm's best interest—that is, may negatively affect its survival—and that thus a theory of rationality based purely on utility maximization as a constant and absolute motivation for economic actors is necessarily limited. This presents a point of departure from classical liberalism: here interest is not an already-existing constant motivation—the maximization of profit—but one that can and must be cultivated and induced by organizations. We can extrapolate from Simon's emphasis on positive profit that an organization's survival itself depends on not only monetary "inducements" but on more expansive investments in participants' identification with and "attachment to the organization and its goals."[77]

A model of speculative investment oriented towards survival and ongoing positive surplus understood expansively rather than purely monetary maximum profit serves as an animating motivation for the various corporate wellness programs prevalent in the world of business and finance today, including the increasing integration of mindfulness in the workplace. Mindfulness presents a particularly attractive investment on behalf of firms because it helps "activate" better employees and managers, aiding in the decision-making process that can no longer be understood as purely utility-maximizing and rational, and enhancing the overall smooth functioning and speculative value of organizations. This explains its embrace by corporate culture at the turn of the 21st century and its increasingly prominent role in contemporary business administration and decision-making.

For example, the larger-than-life tech prodigy Steve Jobs was a student of Zen philosophy in the 1970s and was one the first CEOs to introduce mindfulness to corporate culture. Today, Apple affords its employees half an hour during the work day to meditate and provides on-campus meditation rooms and mindfulness trainings. Similarly, Monsanto, the billion-dollar multinational agricultural corporation, is credited with implementing the first corporate mindfulness program in the United States in 1996, when then-CEO Bob Shapiro initiated a three-day silent retreat for company executives led by a meditation expert. But before Jobs and Shapiro, mindfulness was already, though perhaps unknowingly, a useful technique in the corporate world. Pierre Wack, an executive at the Royal Dutch/Shell group of companies in the 1970s, was an avid student and practitioner of Buddhist meditation who incorporated the insights gained from his mindfulness practice into the strategic administrative practice of scenario planning. Scenario planning, widely used in a variety of sectors, is a structured and flexible way for organizations to plan for the future in order to mitigate the negative effects of unpredictable events. For Wack, scenario planning involves "training the mind" in a conscious way in order to transform one's perception of a particular situation: "Scenarios deal with two worlds; the world of facts and the world of perceptions. They explore for facts but they aim at perceptions inside the heads of decision-makers. Their purpose is to gather and transform

---

[76] Herbert A. Simon, "Rational Decision-Making in Business Organization," Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (1978), https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/1978/simon/lecture/.

[77] Herbert A. Simon, Massimo Egidi, and Robin Marris, *Economics, Bounded Rationality and the Cognitive Revolution* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1992).

information of strategic significance into fresh perceptions."[78] The mindfulness-based technique of redirecting perception—in psychological parlance, intentionally altering the form rather than the content of a particular experience—is utilized in scenario planning in order to arrive at more beneficial strategies for future action. Here mindfulness is transformed from an exercise for mental health and fitness to a corporate technique for actualizing better business practices. As Wack puts it, "The practice [of mindfulness] is helping people manage stress and maximize creativity. But mindfulness is much more than a mental fitness tool; it's an asset for leaders seeking to perceive — and re-perceive —the world and make better strategic choices."[79]

Though mindfulness proved effective as a basis for organizational strategy and corporate contingency planning in the 1970s,[80] it properly entered business administration in the late 1990s, under the rubric of employee wellness programs. While workplace wellness itself has a long history in the U.S.,[81] it did not see widespread implementation as a project of business administration until the late-1970s, when the dismantling of welfare programs and decline of welfare policy led to a shift in financial responsibility for health care from government to employer.[82] While originally focused on mitigating health costs by targeting high-risk health behaviors displayed by employees, by the mid-2000s a different approach began to take shape towards wellness solutions in corporate practices. In the wake of studies done by Dee Edington and others that found that individuals oscillate between low and high risk with regards to health behaviors and outcomes often within a short period of time,[83] the focus shifted from the mitigation of cost due to specific "high risk" behaviors to targeting "factors that affect an employee's total well-being — stress, sleep, job satisfaction, financial health and more."[84] Hence today we have a whole array of wellness programs aimed at employee general well-being, not just physical or even mental health through the identification of specific risk-prone subjects. Well-being, while an illusive term, signals not only a more holistic or comprehensive approach to health, but an understanding that the subject's health capacity is not fundamentally given but

---

[78] Pierre Wack, "Scenarios: Uncharted Waters Ahead," *Harvard Business Review* (September 1985).

[79] Wack.

[80] This early incorporation of mindfulness as a strategy to deal with contingency was probably a response to the era's economic instability with the collapse of the Bretton-Woods monetary system and the Arab oil crisis, which induced a lack of confidence in the Keynesian status quo. In an interesting historical parallel, neoliberal economists and policy-makers also responded to this very instability, taking advantage of the global economic shifts of the 1970s to implement neoliberal policies.

[81] As early as 1879, for example, the Pullman Company provided an athletic fitness program for its employees.

[82] There were other causes as well: "Greiner (1987) cites the following reasons behind the emergence of worksite wellness during this period: a general culture shift that promoted fitness, emerging research findings that showed the cost of employees' unhealthy habits, [and] newly formed workplace health promotion groups such as the Washington Business Group on Health and the Wellness Councils of America." Michael Rucker, "The History of Workplace Wellness" (May 2016), https://michaelrucker.com/well-being/the-history-of-workplace-wellness/

[83] The study concludes: "The design of health promotion programs may need to be adjusted from risk reduction in the short-term to programs that maximize retention of individuals within low-risk categories over the long-term." Shirley Musich, Dee Edington et al., "Examination of Risk Status Transitions Among Active Employees in a Comprehensive Worksite Health Promotion Program," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 45, no. 4 (2003), doi:10.1097/01.jom.0000052969.43131.fc.

[84] Musich et al.

contingent and expansive. To be healthy is not a state to be reached but an investment in well-being that continually takes into account all facets of human life. Thus, the effect of monitoring, incentivizing, and disciplining subjects to invest in well-being penetrates much more deeply into our lives than previous regimes of health governance and corporate wellness. The goal, in the words of Henry Albrecht—CEO of Limeaid, a "corporate wellness technology company"—is to "help employees bring their full potential to work" rather than merely mitigate the corporate costs of illness, general considered in terms of a loss of profit.[85]

Following from the theory of human capital, the realization of the subject's potential is one of the primary techniques of neoliberal governance. This technology serves a dual purpose: the (self-)management of individual subjects, inculcating an investive relationship of the self to the self, and the regulation and securitization of the population to which individuals belong; that is, technologies of the self and technologies of government generate subjects that enhance both their own well-being/individual human capital and that of the larger organic whole. Alongside the emphasis in corporate wellness on individual employee well-being, these programs promising to unlock the potential capacities of employees are done for the well-being (borrowing from Simon, we might say "survival") of the whole company: "every wellness program contributes to the strides being made toward a healthier corporate environment."[86] Corporate well-being is reflected in the very value of the company. A 2016 study done by the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that "Stock values for a portfolio of companies that received high scores in a corporate health and wellness self-assessment appreciated by 235% compared with the S&P 500 Index appreciation of 159% over a 6-year simulation period."[87] The value of the company is measured here not purely by profit but by a speculative appreciation, or an overall positive composition of the company's well-being. It is within this context of corporate well-being that mindfulness comes to play a major role.

A survey titled "Embracing a Broader Definition of Well-Being" conducted by the National Business Group on Health (NBGH) sponsored by Fidelity Investments and published in 2017 found that 35 percent of the 141 companies who responded offered mindfulness classes or in the workplace, with an additional 26 percent of responders considering adding it in the future. The survey and subsequent "webinar" the NGBH provided to its members—most of them Fortune 500 companies—as part of its consulting services promised to improve corporate wellness by outlining the following:

• Defining well-being

---

[85] Henry Albrecht, "Back to the Future: How the Evolution of Corporate Wellness Influences its Destiny" *The Huffington Post* (2016), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/henry-albrecht/back-to-the-future-how-th_b_9637092.html.

[86] Alan Kohll, "8 Things You Need to Know About Employee Wellness Programs" *Forbes* (April 21, 2016), https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2016/04/21/8-things-you-need-to-know-about-employee-wellness-programs/#69bd9e040a3b.

[87] Jessica Grossmeier et al., "Linking Workplace Health Promotion Best Practices and Organizational Financial Performance: Tracking Market Performance of Companies With Highest Scores on the HERO Scorecard" *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* V. 58 (January 2016), 6–23.

• Types of health and well-being programs offered
• Levels of incentives to engage employees and spouses/domestic partners
• Use of outcome-based incentives to reward for goals/outcomes
• Use of non-financial-based incentives to reward for goals/outcomes
• Measurement tactics and program participation results
• Future of health improvement investment amidst healthcare reform[88]

The publication includes an "overall" definition of well-being that, in addition to physical and emotional or mental health, includes "financial security," "social connectedness," and "community involvement"—each on the rise as aspects of the "well-being strategy" of companies surveyed (see fig. 2). It also provides evidence that employees are increasing investment in incentives, from health-risk and finance management programs to "lifestyle management coaching," "resiliency training," "happiness programs," "teletherapy," and of course, "mindfulness classes or trainings." Non-financial incentives are also on the rise, with 67 percent of companies offering at least one type of non-financial incentive including "employee or group recognition," "raffles," "charitable giving," "PTO," "branded SWAG," and "health and wellness equipment/prizes." The integration of all these varied aspects of well-being into business strategy lays bare the neoliberal lapse between the separate realms of human social, economy, and political life, with the corporate investment in human capital penetrating ever deeper into personality, individuality, and subjective experience.
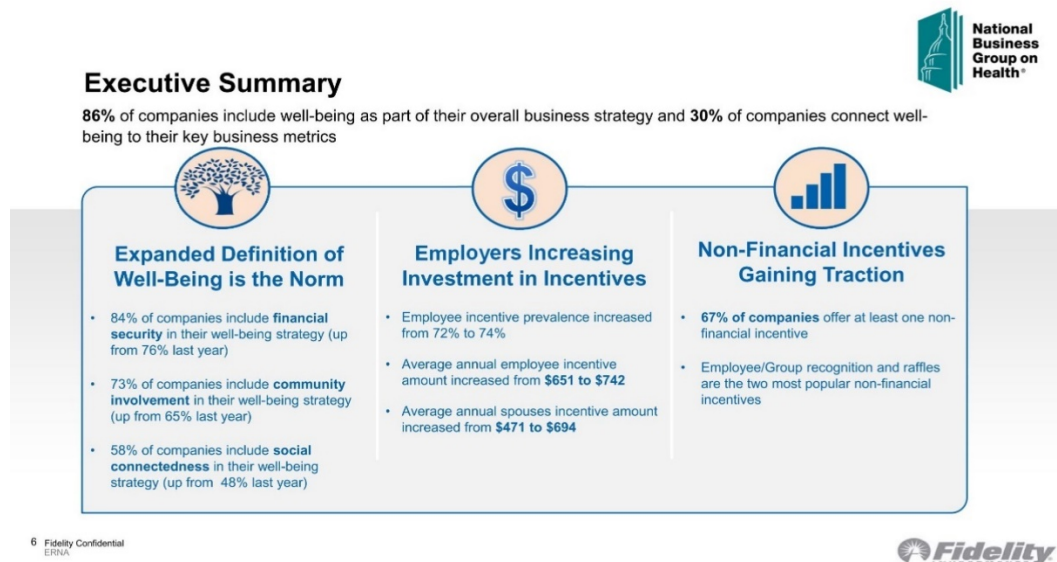
Fig. 2. "Executive Summary"

---

[88] National Business Group on Health, "Embracing a Broader Definition of Well-Being: Eighth Annual Employer-Sponsored Health and Well-being Survey," Fidelity Investments (2017), https://workplace.fidelity.com/sites/default/files/NBGH%20Fidelity_2017_WellbeingWebinar_Presentation0502201 7.pdf
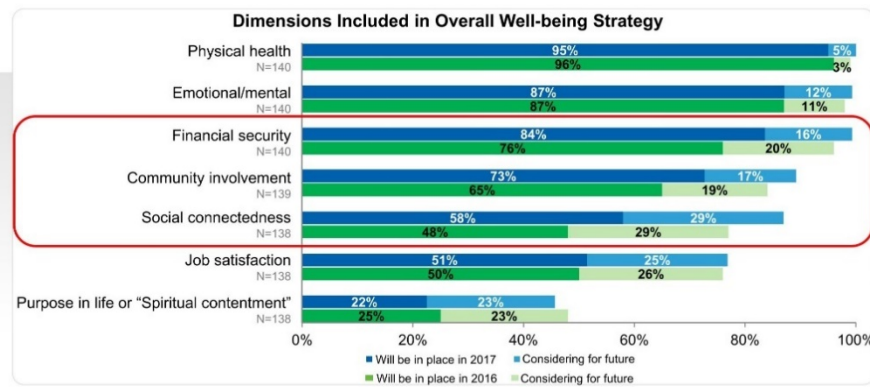
The expanded notion of well-being evident in the NBGH survey, one that entails not just physical or psychological but also social and cultural aspects, parallels the type of speculative value particular to finance capitalism. Financial speculation is a process of valorization based on the anticipated market value of a commodity rather than its intrinsic value tied to production. In speculation, value is severed from the inherent properties of the object of investment; instead, it is generated from the anticipatory difference between its present stock or market assessment and its projected future one, which is itself based on the attitudes and subjective dispositions of investors. In other words, it is purely relative—the speculation of an asset's value need not even be correct, i.e., accurately correspond to its actual future assessment, but is purely based on the disposition and conviction of the investing community. I contend that in neoliberal regimes, the valorization of human capital operates through a similar speculative investment in and extraction of not only the monetary value, but a much more comprehensive social or relational value of the subject. Following the premise that subjectivity is primarily defined functionally rather than ontologically from the perspective of neoliberal rationality, identities and characteristics previously understood to naturally belong to the subject are untethered from their origin in the subject and transformed into capacities or speculative units of potential investment. Thus, while subjects under neoliberalism can "alter their human capital—by means of either diversifying or modifying their behaviors and social interactions—they can never sell it. In short, rather than a *possessive* relationship, as that of the free labor with his or her labor power, the relationship between the neoliberal subject and his or her human capital should be called *speculative*, in every sense of the word."[89]

Workplace wellness programs, where an "expanded definition of well-being is now the norm," betray how these sites of speculative investment may enhance not just an individual's human capital portfolio but the larger credit of the company. Indeed, the speculative value of the organization is now treated as directly connected to myriad intimate aspects of individual life. This is evident in how the expansion of well-being now includes, according to the NBGH survey: "financial security," "community involvement," "social connectedness," "job satisfaction," and "purpose in life or 'spiritual contentment'" (see fig. 3). Importantly however, the organismic relation between the individual and the whole does not follow the same logic as the invisible hand of classical liberalism. Adam Smith's formulation—that individual self-interested pursuit would, if left alone, automatically lead to the maximum prosperity of the collective—understood self-interest too narrowly as a given drive to maximize profit. Further, the notion of freedom underwriting Smith's schema is understood negatively, as individual freedom from interference. Here we instead see interest defined as something fundamentally malleable, contingent, and social/relational—belonging to a different order of rationality than utilitarian maximization—and freedom as a positive form of investment in one's whole self or well-being.

---

[89] Michel Feher, "Self-Appreciation; or, The Aspirations of Human Capital" *Public Culture* 21, no. 1 (January 2009), 34.

Expanded Definition of Well-Being Is Now the Norm

Dimensions Included in Overall Well-being Strategy

	Will be in place in 2017	Considering for future	Will be in place in 2016	Considering for future
Physical health (N=140)	95%	5%	96%	3%
Emotional/mental (N=140)	87%	12%	87%	11%
Financial security (N=140)	84%	16%	76%	20%
Community involvement (N=139)	73%	17%	65%	19%
Social connectedness (N=138)	58%	29%	48%	29%
Job satisfaction (N=138)	51%	25%	50%	26%
Purpose in life or "Spiritual contentment" (N=138)	22%	23%	25%	23%

10 Fidelity Confidential
ERNA

Fig. 3. "Dimensions Included in Overall Well-being Strategy"

The more "holistic" approach to health and wellness evidenced here, especially the recognition that "community involvement" and "social connectedness" comprise an important aspect of individual well-being, presents a significant departure from both previous corporate management techniques—which considered employee wellness as an issue of individual or at most familial health—and classical liberal approaches to governance as a problem of protecting the individual from the negative effects of the masses. Corporate governance in the form of wellness programs treats communal life not as a problem to be overcome or ignored but as an avenue through which an individual can realize their potential well-being. This positive relation between the individual and totality bears some resemblance to neoliberal approaches to the social framework as a primary site of intervention and behavioral psychology's emphasis on environmental causes and determinants, though instances of neoliberalism often eschew, if only rhetorically, the category of "society" in favor of the individual and the family. In the Austrian tradition, society is replaced by the market as a collection or coordination of individuals, because the market provides a rationality that goes beyond the limitations of individual knowledge and a means of affecting or governing the individual. Hayek's conviction that individual knowledge is necessarily limited and that individual demands actually interrupt the cohesion of the spontaneous order of the market which alone can coordinate individual knowledge is, in this sense, a kind of collectivist idea.[90] Similarly, the Ordoliberal elaboration of the social framework and *Vitalpolitik* for governance speaks not only to how economy and society are intertwined, but how governmental intervention into the social fabric can and must reintegrate atomized individuals in an enterprise society, offsetting the collectivizing consequences of what the

---

[90] I am indebted to Michel Feher for this point, which was made at a lecture titled, "When Capitalism Changes Direction: Political Engagements With Our Invested Selves" at the University of California Berkeley on November 2, 2018.

Ordoliberals referred to as proletarianization, or "the social irrationality of capitalism."[91] It is this peculiar conception of the relationship between the individual and the collective or totality that aligns neoliberal governmentality with the corporate governance I analyze in these wellness programs, which likewise seek to integrate employees into the corporate social organism through "mechanisms of identification" like those that wellness therapeutics offer. Society is not absent from neoliberal thought, despite the Thatcherian rhetoric we often associate with it, but is relegated to an environmental means by which government can access and modify the individual in their heterogeneity. The end of such environmental administration aligns with Foucault's description of "the modern art of government" which aims "to develop those elements constitutive of individuals' lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the state."[92] Neoliberalism follows in this vein, as a government that "is both individualizing and totalitarian"—individualizing insofar as it enhances or develops the individual's capacities, and totalitarian in that these capacities serve the totality of the market.[93]

One way in which the corporate administration of well-being engenders individualizing and totalizing effects through intervention in social life is through the specific implementations of non-financial incentives and programs in corporate wellness. The NBGH study shows that almost 80% of companies surveyed had "emotional or mental health" programs, including "stress management," "resiliency training," "mindfulness classes or trainings," "teletherapy," and "happiness programs" (see fig. 4). Rather than provide mental and emotional health care through company insurance policy, these are often found in-house or contracted directly through the company itself. The importance of emotional and mental health programs is twofold: 1) in proceeding from an understanding that the work environment is a social determinant of health, they counterbalance the negative health outcomes that derive from the very nature of work that might lead to low productivity, disengagement, or recidivism, and 2) these programs provide insurance against any collectivizing tendencies that result from such outcomes—employees are less likely to unionize if their work provides them with stress management and resiliency training, mindfulness classes and happiness programs. They substitute identification with the collective of labor for identification with the totality of the company.
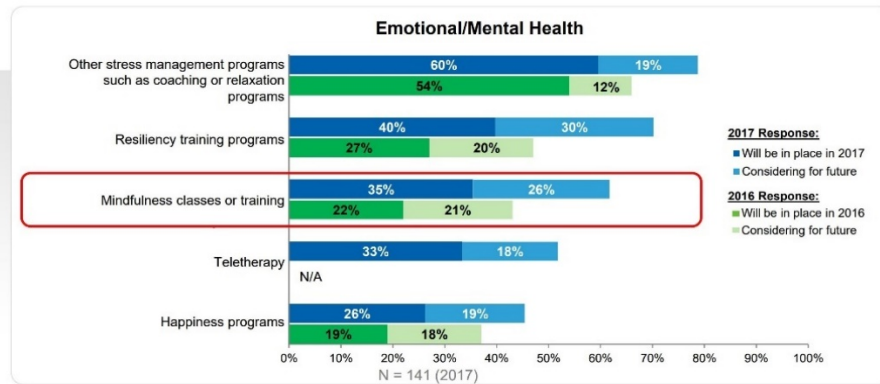
---

[91] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at the College De France, 1978-1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 106. On "de-proletarianization" see Wilhelm Röpke, *The Social Crisis of Our Time* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1950), 218-22.
[92] Michel Foucault, "Omnes Et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of 'Political Reason'," Stanford University, October 10, 16, 1979, in *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 3 (New York, NY: New Press, 2000), 251-251.
[93] Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim," 254.

Fig. 4. "Emotional/Mental Health Programs On The Rise"

The NBGH study also displays a number of revealing trends, including an 13% increase in mindfulness classes or trainings offered among companies' emotional/mental health programs, with a majority (61%) of companies implementing or planning on implementing mindfulness in their well-being strategy. Why the upsurge in mindfulness programs, in particular?[94] I would posit that it has to do with the way mindfulness is often considered an effective treatment for cognitive issues with attention and engagement. The NBGH report indicates that in addition to keeping health costs low, the primary objectives of corporate wellness programs implemented by members include employee "engagement," "productivity," and "retention," with employee engagement seen as the most "critical business operational metric" by 78 percent of the companies surveyed, even above "customer satisfaction and retention" (see fig. 5). The concern with employee engagement above all else illustrates Simon's theory that the survival of firms depends on the identification or attachment of individual organs to the larger organismic whole of the corporation. The necessity of identification with totality is illustrated in the larger goals of creating a harmonious corporate culture—not just an environment that raises productivity but one in which and through which employees can realize their potential, thereby realizing the potential of the company. Again, the axis of value is not merely economic. The process of valorization is less defined by corporate earnings and more by the larger relational or social value, that is, by a perceived positive potential for credit.

---

[94] The only other category that had a similar increase in programming (also 13%) was "resiliency training," which I imagine is equally insightful, but outside the scope of this chapter.

Critical Business Operational Metrics

Beyond financial metrics, which of the following does your company consider critical business operational metrics?
(Please select all that apply.)

Metric	Percentage
Employee engagement	78%
Customer satisfaction and retention	75%
Recruitment of desired talent	68%
Workplace accidents	55%
Voluntary turnover	53%
Absenteeism	44%
Quality of products produced	43%
On-time product delivery	40%
Net Promoter Score	17%
Customer acquisition cost	17%
Inventory levels	16%
Other	4%

N = 139

Other:
- Safety (x2)
- Occupational illnesses (different from workplace accidents)
- Shareholder Value (i.e., stock price)
- Sales
- Glassdoor Rating

44 Fidelity Confidential
ERNA

Fidelity INVESTMENTS

Fig. 5. "Critical Business Operational Metrics"

What do such increased investments in non-profit-motivated incentives suggest? We can make a number of preliminary inferences. First, this data seems to confirm the insight of behavioral economics that organizational decisions are based upon an investment in "survival" before utility-maximization or profit, and that a company's survival is tied not just to worker productivity driven by financial incentives, but to their investment and engagement in the identity of the company itself (and it is worth remembering that this specific account of interest explicitly draws from cognitive-behavioral theories of the subject in psychology). This form of value, one based on credit or self-esteem, is the principle site of valorization in the financialized economy today, a valorization process that produces value primarily via speculative rather than capital investment.[95] So not only is the primary means of economic valorization transformed in finance capitalism, the economic mode coinciding with/constitutive of neoliberal governance, but what I term subjective valorization is transformed accordingly. The value of the subject is similarly viewed not (only) in terms of labor-power, as a source of economic wealth, but more primarily in terms of the functional capacity to realize emergent potential. This technical but not strictly teleological causal mechanism understands the "organs" of organizations and institutions—in this case, the employees of the business—to be functional parts in the service of a larger corporate autonomy that need to be "incentivized" to self-invest in their individual well-being to enhance the well-being of the corporation, a well-being measured by credit, self-esteem, or share-holder value.[96] Here we have a strange and disturbing neoliberal substitution—an inversion of the roles between the state and economy in liberal thought—where the organismic principle of organizational politics at the heart of the constitution of a social or political

---

[95] Michel Feher, *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age* (New York: Zone Books, 2018), 16-18.
[96] Feher, *Rated Agency*, 24.

community (the state in Hegel or class in Marx) animates the corporate organism, transforming politics into an economic technics in the investment/preservation of a "corporate community." Secondly, this peculiar form of organization suggests that the administration and management of the population—in this case the company—involves as well the administration and management of the individual employee—not just their physical capacities, but their "whole well-being"— conforming to Foucault's account of both biopolitical governance and the individualizing techniques of the self.

Following Foucault, I have labeled these modes of administrating behavior that focus on wellness, whether in clinical, corporate, or other institutional settings, technical therapeutics. Importantly, the goal of these therapeutic techniques is not "health"—some objective standard for measuring normality—but "well-being," a much more subjective (and illusive) concept, one that entails an ongoing holistic process rather than a state that can be properly physically reached and understands individuals' well-being as embedded in their social environments. Mindfulness practices and more generally programs that target emotional and mental health such as "resiliency trainings" and "stress management" courses have become a central part of corporate administration "best practices"—as the NBGH survey suggests.[97] I'd like to now analyze one particular case study—Google's Search Inside Yourself (SIY) mindfulness program—to see how this therapeutic technics is put into practice, and what possible political effects it may have.

Search Inside Yourself: Mindfulness as Self-Knowledge and Self-Mastery

In 2007, Google—ranked by *Forbes* as the 4th largest technology company in the world—began a mindfulness-based seven-week leadership training course for its employees called Search Inside Yourself (SIY). SIY was created by Chade Meng-Tan, a Google engineer who believed a translation of his personal Buddhist mindfulness practice to the workplace would greatly benefit his peers and the larger Google corporate culture. After a few failed attempts to provide meditation workshops at the company due to the perception that such an approach was "hippie bullshit," Meng—as he's known at Google—found success by branding his mindfulness program as a "curriculum for emotional intelligence," an exercise program for mental and emotional fitness.[98] SIY has been hugely successful: since its inception, between 1,000 and

---

[97] According to research completed by Hoffman and Kennedy-Armbruster (2015), and published by the American College of Sports Medicine Health and Fitness Journal, Workplace/Worksite Wellness Best Practices include:
 1. Leadership Support (i.e. modeling, resource allocation, etc.)
 2. Relevant and personalized programs (using employee interests and available aggregate data)
 3. Partnership with employees, employer, organizations, and local community.
 4. Comprehensive and evidence-based programs (using eight dimensions of wellness can be a helpful tool- emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual)
 5. Implementation that is well planned, coordinated, fully executed, and evaluated for success and accountability
 6. Employee engagement through organization and planning wellness efforts
 7. Formal and comprehensive communication strategies/plan
 8. Data driven decisions that include measurement, evaluation, reporting, and analytics

[98] Chade Meng-Tan, "Google's Chade Meng Tan Wants You to Search Inside Yourself for Inner (and World) Peace," Knowledge@Wharton Podcast interview (April 25, 2017),

1,500 Google employees have enrolled in the program every year, with "proven" reductions in stress, enhanced work performance, and increased leadership skills.[99] The program has received a 4.7 out of 5 rating by participants in anonymous surveys,[100] with many claiming the course has had a larger positive impact on not just their work life but their life in general. One participant commented on how the program transformed their very relationship to their self: "I have completely changed in the way I react to stressors. I take the time to think through things and empathize with other people's situations before jumping to conclusions. I love the new me!"[101]

The popularity of the course at Google led Meng to branch out and create the Search Inside Yourself Institute (SIYI) in 2012—a nonprofit organization that provides mindfulness trainings based on the original SIY Google course to a wide-range of organizations, spanning health care, energy, education, and entertainment, with over 20,000 individual participants worldwide.[102] The institutes' website promises to "unlock [the] full potential" of its participants, by training leaders to "manage change, stay resilient, and inspire growth." The program cites SIYI's expert credentials ("developed at Google by leading experts in neuroscience, business, and psychology") and empirical results: "our training has been proven to: reduce stress, improve focus, raise peak performance, and improve interpersonal relationships."[103] The program's effectiveness is evidenced by reference to the organizational benefits (both in terms of company productivity and company "culture") of mindfulness in general (see fig. 6).

---

http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/googles-chade-meng-tan-wants-you-to-search-inside-yourself-for-inner-and-world-peace/.

[99] "Search Inside Yourself Program Impact Report," Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (2019), https://siyli.org/downloads/Program-Impact-Report.pdf.

[100] Caitlin Kelly, "O.K., Google, Take a Deep Breath," *The New York Times* (April 28, 2012), https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/technology/google-course-asks-employees-to-take-a-deep-breath.html?smid=pl-share.

[101] "Search Inside Yourself," *Mindful* (June 19, 2015), https://www.mindful.org/search-inside-yourself/.

[102] "Our Story: The Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute," Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, https://siyli.org/about.

[103] "Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence Leadership Training," Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, https://siyli.org/.

Mindfulness can create better organizations.

Recent research reveals that these benefits add up to make an impact on organizational culture and effectiveness. Most compelling of these comes from insurance giant Aetna, which developed an internal mindfulness training programs with much support from their CEO Mark Bertolini.

Aetna Write-up >

Journal Publication >

36%
reduction in stress levels

62.0
minute increase in production each week

7%
lower healthcare costs

Fig. 6. "Mindfulness Can Create Better Organizations"

Meng describes mindfulness as the primary technique for enhancing emotional intelligence, which reduces individual stress and improves work effectiveness. He understands the increased emotional intelligence promised by mindfulness as an essential entrepreneurial skill, one that drives the innovation necessary to capitalism: "emotional intelligence is important for innovation. For example, there is a recent study that shows if you're happy today, you're more creative today and tomorrow…and there are neurological explanations for this. An emotional skill like happiness has an effect on work, on creativity."[104] Here the target of mindfulness as a technique of governance is characterized as a type of education that seeks to enhance not only cognitive but affective capacities. Happiness is characterized as "an emotional skill," something that can be accessed and developed with the right training, regardless of material circumstance. One can perceive how the potential sites of valorization are not just material—aimed at training the body—or even ideological or discursive—aimed at producing knowledge or consciousness—in this agenda, but much more expansive, penetrating into the emotional and psychic life of subjects and their individuality.

While the SIY program is sold to companies by appealing primarily to the bottom line,[105] what it promises individual participants is much more expansive. Caitlyn Kelly, a New York Times journalist who sat in on an SIY class, observed the following:

---

[104] Meng-Tan.

[105] As Meng crudely told WIRED magazine: "Everybody knows this EI [emotional intelligence] thing is good for their career…and every company knows that if their people have EI, they're gonna make a shitload of money. " Quoted in Nicholas Carr, *Utopia is Creepy and Other Provocations* (New York: Norton. 2016).

> 'We need an expert,' Mr. [Meng-]Tan says as the class begins. 'That expert is you. This class is to help you discover what you already know.' To illustrate his point, he shows a slide of a pile of four smooth polished stones, balanced atop one another. 'We're looking for alignment, finding our deepest values, envisioning how they'll take us to our destination and the resilience we need to achieve that.'[106]

The role of expert knowledge in governmental regimes is transferred here onto the individual in order to equip them to manage themselves in "alignment" with their "deepest values." This knowledge, paradoxically, is one that the individual "already knows"—mindfulness is the technique that will actualize it. This method for self-actualization, the transformation of oneself into an authority of oneself, requires however the expert intervention of guides like Meng and is given objective credence by expert knowledge derived from psychology and neuroscience.[107] Like the theories of neoliberal statecraft and both economic and psychological behaviorism, the technical therapeutics of corporate wellness approach the problem of governance and self-management as one fundamentally centered on the production of and access to knowledge. The limits of knowledge and information processing that both the neoliberal theorists and cognitive behavioral psychologists acknowledged as fundamental to the constitution of the subject of interest is transformed into a site of potentiality here. In the words of mindfulness guru Jon Kabat-Zinn, in mindfulness practice "with every breath we are continually invited to embody and therefore actualize the possible more consistently."[108] The animating question of mindfulness programs like SIY can be formulated thus: How do we access what we do not yet know actually, but already know potentially? It is telling that this same question animates the process of financial speculation—finding a source of valorization in potentiality.

Meng describes the SIY framework as a program containing "three steps" to the actualization of this knowledge. The first is mindfulness, a "way to train your mind…which is defined as paying attention moment to moment non-judgmentally."[109] Mindfulness is an intentional exercise, a way of "[training attention] that allows you to make your mind calm and clear on demand." As such it is an internal sort of behavioral modification aimed not at changing thought content (a technique of second wave CBT) but purposively redirecting one's cognitive capacity. The second step is "creating self-mastery. Once your mind is calm and clear, you can

---

[106] Kelly.

[107] Meng is insistent that his SIY program is based on empirical findings in psychology and neuroscience that "prove" the benefits of mindfulness: "Through brain scans, for example, we know that if you focus attention on breathing for a certain amount of time, your prefrontal cortex becomes stronger. That is the part of the brain that has to do with attention and executive thinking and decision making. Your prefrontal cortex also regulates the amygdala. The stronger you are in this part of your brain, the more you can regulate anger and feelings of powerlessness. Meditation and mindfulness develop this part of the brain. There's a practice called body scan, where you focus your attention on parts of your body. Again, there's science behind it. If you do that a lot, you find that the part of the brain called the insula becomes more active. If that part of the brain becomes active, the person becomes emotionally self-aware. There's brain science behind all of this."

[108] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 135.

[109] Meng-Tan.

create a quality of self-knowledge or self-awareness that improves over time and it evolves into self-mastery. You know about yourself enough that you can master your emotions." The notion that self-knowledge leads to self-mastery is an old one, but it is explicitly utilized in this context to responsibilize the subject, to make them the author and authority of their own lives. As Jon Kabat-Zinn puts it, "the whole point of mindfulness… is to challenge and encourage people to become their own authorities, to take more responsibility for their own lives, their own bodies, their own health…Participating more fully in our own health and well-being…means authoring one's own life and, therefore, assuming some measure of authority oneself."[110] Paradoxically, the freedom to author one's self and liberate oneself from external authority is tied to coercion—one can only be free from external compulsion if one takes personal responsibility for one's life, body, and health, regardless of the environmental, social, economic, or political determinants over which one has no control. Importantly this therapeutic relationship to the self is removed from any ethical obligation to the other or the world that lies outside oneself: "Mindfulness carries the embedded suggestion that the individual must adjust to the realities in which they find themselves; it is not the world that must change. The dialectic of acceptance and change associated with mindfulness-based psychotherapies describes a process in which the person must accept their situation and change their behavior; not to be accepting of their behavior and to change their situation."[111] The political effects of such a conception of change and responsibility are detrimental to any collective liberation. Instead of political demands addressed to systemic conditions, the political claim is turned inward, becoming a privatized endeavor of self-modification.

The third step of Meng's SIY initiative, "to develop good mental habits," speaks further to this process of depoliticization. Despite its distance from first and third wave CBT techniques that aim at directly modifying behavior, mindfulness is oriented towards using the potential for self-mastery in an intentional way, guiding it towards specific goals. This involves "practicing compassion" towards oneself in the form of cultivating nonjudgmental attitudes. While removed from a properly Buddhist ethics, there is a moral obligation underpinning the secular mindfulness practice advocated by Meng and others. Mindfulness is morally prescriptive, and, framed through the "objectivity" and technical functionality of cognitive behavioral psychology and neuroscience, it reorients the actions and endeavors of subjects around neoliberal values:

> It is 'wise' to pursue happiness (albeit by paradoxically exchanging striving or doing with 'nondoing' as the preferred method of pursuit); to make effective decisions; to accept 'reality' rather than wish one's circumstances were different; to be flexible and present in one's life rather than having fixed, automatic reactions, etc. These moral positions are shared with many psychotherapeutic models and serve the self-governing social function required by neoliberalism by encouraging those practicing mindfulness to approach life as

---

[110] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go,* 193-4.
[111] Phil Arthington, "Mindfulness: A Critical Perspective," *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* Vol 2, Issue 1 (2016), 95.

an enterprise, to attempt to overcome social constraints through personal endeavor and thereby conform to the requirements of the competitive society.[112]

The three "skills that SIY is designed to develop"—the self-knowledge and self-mastery gained through mindfulness and actualized in intentional, habitual practice—work by enhancing emotional intelligence, which, according to Meng, "creates the conditions for happiness" through [operating] on the subconscious level."[113] In the workplace this translates to effective interpersonal relationships that enhances individual self-esteem and social relationships ("then everything in your work life changes because people want to associate with you and they like you") and ensures the cohesive functioning of the organization. In the words of Bill Duane, an engineer at Google who participated in the SIY program, "Business is a machine made out of people. If you have people, you have problems. You can have friction between them or smoothness."[114] SIY and mindfulness-based wellness programs like it function as "a necessary lubricant between driven, ambitious employees and demanding corporate culture" ensuring that both operate smoothly by promoting the well-being or self-esteem of employees and of the company. Because work environments are social environments, and social environments encourage class struggle and collective political demands (or proletarianization), the lubricating effect of mindfulness-based wellness ensures smooth functioning while preventing friction between the corporate organism and its organs. The therapeutic technics embodied by such corporate governance are thus primarily aimed at programming individuals in self-management, a way of "conducting" individuals to conduct themselves in service of the cohesive functioning of the whole corporation.

That this model of governance is also the form of social organization espoused by neoliberalism is not merely incidental. The neoliberal theories of how to best govern the subject of interest—indirectly, through environmental interventions and internally, through the subjective education and instillation of interest—reflect not just novel techniques of controlling the population and individual in the service of the life of the organismic whole, but new modes of subjectivation and social/political organization that have permeated all aspects of life. The practice of mindfulness, whether in its implementation in corporate, clinical, educational, or other settings, is an effective technique for the activation of the subject espoused in behavioral psychology and the transmission of neoliberal rationality into the subjective field.

While it may very well be that these programs improve worker productivity and therefore profit, their more primary goal and given rationale is to invest in the well-being of the employee and therefore the company at large. This appears as a more moral and benevolent justification, one that serves to obfuscate the fundamentally exploitative conditions of work and employment in neoliberal capitalism at the same time that it may actually have positive effects for the individual worker—for example, a corporate-sponsored mindfulness-training or retreat may help

---

[112] Arthington, 86.
[113] Meng-Tan.
[114] Kelly.

alleviate stress and anxiety in the workplace, but it does little to address the causes of stress and anxiety that arise from the workplace and the very nature of work itself conditioned by contemporary capitalism. In a striking example, Google software engineer Eric Chang narrates how the entrepreneurial ethic that brought him success in his work and career also produced a debilitating stress-induced crisis in his personal life. In the demanding work environment at Google, he suffered from stress-induced back pain, bouts of emotional outbursts that negatively affected his family life, and what he calls constricting "burn out."[115] Chang describes how his "punishing work schedule" did not afford him time to visit his ill mother in Toronto before she died. Instead of recognizing that these consequences stem from the exploitative demands of the workplace central to capitalist logics, Chang blames his immigrant upbringing. It was his failure to assimilate to the fast-paced company culture that was to blame for his emotional, physical, and familial troubles, not the work itself, even if he describes his immigrant "mind-set" as one that "thrives on stress": "'I'm from Taiwan,' he says. 'Half of Silicon Valley is born elsewhere. It's the immigrant mind-set to thrive on stress, go to the best schools, work hard. No one realized that way of working was really unsustainable…I knew I had to get help,' he says. 'The question was when and where.'"[116]

The answer for Chang apparently came in the form of the Search Inside Yourself program: "since taking SIY, Mr. Chang and his wife agree that he's changed a great deal—becoming calmer, more patient, better able to listen."[117] The therapeutics of mindfulness that Chang encountered in SIY aimed not to improve his conditions, but to improve his well-being, thereby making him more amenable to the very conditions responsible for his deteriorating physical, mental, and even familial health. In the same article Chang is interviewed, Blaise Pabon, a sales engineer at Google, comments on how the mindfulness training he learned at SIY is effective as a coping mechanism for the increased precarity of contemporary capitalism: "The reason I think it will be broadly applicable is that everyone struggles…they're worried about losing their job. Everyone's got some fear of not being able to survive." Mindfulness, according to Pabon, staves off that fear by encouraging acceptance of one's situation and responsibility for managing one's emotions and private life.

Mindfulness advocates often recognize the material causes of suffering—the subject's dependence on and determination by externality—even the suffering caused by the material conditions of work, but they do so only to disavow any responsibility or ability to alter these conditions. As John Kabat-Zinn states: "given that many job descriptions will not be rewritten in the short run to lower employee stress, people are forced to cope as best they can using their own resources. The degree to which you are affected by stressful circumstances can be influenced positively by your own coping skills."[118] This has the effect of individualizing political claims—

---

[115] Kelly.
[116] Kelly.
[117] Kelly.
[118] John Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living* (New York: Bantam, 2013), 387.

making oneself responsible only for and to oneself—and partakes in what Wendy Brown calls neoliberalism's "undoing" of democracy through the economization of social and political life:

> the normative reign of *homo oeconomicus* in every sphere means that there are no motivations, drives, or aspirations apart from economic ones, that these is nothing to being human apart from 'mere life.' Neoliberalism is the rationality through which capitalism finally swallows humanity—not only with its machinery of compulsory commodification and profit-driven expansion, but by its form of valuation.[119]

Brown argues that what is lost in this reconstitution of the subject as purely *homo oeconomicus* "is the agent, idiom, and the domains through which democracy…materializes."[120] Neoliberalism instantiates the gradual constriction and disappearance of the agent of political action (*homo politicus*), the idiom of a humanist notion of political freedom as interdependent, and the domain of politics itself (the public sphere), replacing each respectively by the agent of *homo oeconomicus*, the idiom of individual market freedom, and the increasing privatization and economization of all domains of life. This has a particularly insidious effect: while neoliberal policy is enacted through "best practices and legal tweaks, in short, through 'soft power' drawing on consensus and buy-in, [rather] than through violence, dictatorial command, or even overt political platforms," the subject as human capital engendered by neoliberalism "is at persistent risk of failure, redundancy and abandonment."[121] The precarity of this subject derives from both neoliberalism's embrace and accentuation of the inherent inequality of competition that generates value in economic processes, and to the logic of responsibilization that forces the subject to take responsibility for their self-investment and self-mastery as well as their provision of needs. This is "a particular form of self-sustenance" that tethers the subject to "the project of macroeconomic growth and credit enhancement…When individuals, firms, or industries constitute a drag on this good, rather than a contribution to it, they may be legitimately cast off or reconfigured."[122] Mindfulness training, I argue, is one technique of reconfiguration in this regard, an attempt to craft subjects to be self-invested and self-actualizing, oriented towards their own and the corporation's well-being and credit enhancement.

The role of mindfulness in corporate wellness is a clear example of how positive investments (whether in personal well-being or the well-being of a larger community) that are effective can exist simultaneously with, be coopted by, or engender and buttress conservative, exploitative, or coercive regimes that are fundamentally at odds with sustainable individual or communal well-being. This is not accurately accounted for by a Marxist theory of exploitation, ideology, or commodification because it does not assume a primary actor or class to be opposed, nor does it betray a specific telos—that is, it would be inaccurate to say that the wellness industry can be fully explained by corporations commodifying wellness for the purposes of profit. It is

---

[119] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015)*, 44.
[120] Brown, 54.
[121] Brown, 35, 37.
[122] Brown, 84.

more closely allied to Michel Foucault's account of governmentality as an encounter between techniques of power and techniques of the self that functions not only through techniques of domination aimed at profit, or techniques of subjectivation that transform both the body and consciousness of the worker, rendering them a productive source for capital; but also as a more comprehensive, speculative process of valorization that produces credit and enhances the "well-being" of both the individual and the larger population.

"Welcome to our Mindfulness Zone": The Mindful Corporation and the Disavowal of Politics

The most powerful motivator isn't money; it's the opportunity to learn, grow in responsibilities, contribute, and be recognized. That's why management, if practiced well, can be the noblest of occupations; no others offer as many ways to help people find those opportunities. It isn't about buying, selling, and investing in companies, as many think…[corporate management] can help people attain happiness…[if] managed masterfully
–*Harvard Business Review*

After recently attending an event in San Francisco, I was asked by a friend who works for the technology company Salesforce to accompany them in retrieving something they had left at their office. I had not been to the financial district of the city in some time and upon exiting the BART station was struck by the sight of my friend's workplace. Aside from the enormous scale—the buildings that comprise Salesforce's base of operations ("Salesforce Tower," "Salesforce East," and "Salesforce West") are the tallest in San Francisco and take up two whole blocks of prime real estate in a city that has long been experiencing a housing shortage crisis—I was stunned by the surreal design of the environment where the company is located. With the shimmer of glass meeting perfectly manicured greenery, the atmosphere is one more akin to that of a theme-park or mall complex than a place of business. Indeed, in a partnership with the city, the company has sponsored the creation of a 5.4-acre rooftop public park ("Salesforce park") featuring an amphitheater, children's play area, restaurant, and café. An "aerial tramway" encased in glass marks the park's entrance and will provide access to the soon-to-open "Salesforce Transit Center"—a hub connecting various public local and statewide transportation lines. The two projects reflect, according to the company website, Salesforce's "commitment to community" and "corporate philanthropy model," one based in "creating a 'home' that serves as an integral part of the community and is open to the entire Salesforce Ohana."[123] Ohana, the press release goes on to say, "is the Hawaiian word for family, and for us, it includes our employees, customers, partners and the community." The disconcerting irony is that the creation of this home is premised on the destruction of the homes of thousands and the removal and policing of many from the public space that makes up their only home and community.[124] The

---

[123] "Announcing Salesforce Transit Center and Salesforce Park!" Salesforce Blog, https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2017/07/announcing-salesforce-transit-center-salesforce-park.html.
[124] According to the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, there have been over 40,000 evictions in San Francisco in the last two decades since the rise of the tech industry in the area. "All SF Evictions, 1997-2018," Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, https://www.antievictionmap.com/sf-evictions.

inundation of tech companies like Salesforce and their employees—or "techies" as their workers are often derisively referred to—in the Bay Area has engendered the exclusion and displacement of native communities that have been driven out of San Francisco due to the rising cost of housing, making the city the most expensive to live in in the U.S. Not coincidently, San Francisco and the greater Bay Area has experienced an unprecedented upsurge in its homeless population in recent years, manifested by the cropping up of dozens of "tent cities" under urban overpasses and along city sidewalks. The material shifts have restructured the social and political environment as well, leading to tensions between long-term residents, community activists, and tech employees who see the homeless encampments as a blight on the city's landscape.[125]

While Salesforce describes its partnership with the city in funding a public park and transit center as an investment in the local community, the context of the changing urban milieu begs the question: for whom is the changing landscape of San Francisco and the greater Bay Area for? Certainly not the community that has been displaced, forced to relocate and commute to distant suburbs, or the community of people living on city streets. Investments in the infrastructure of the city, while operating under the guise of corporate philanthropy and social responsibility, actually work to sediment, in the very materiality of urban design, the displacement, exclusion, and segregation of those outside the tech-driven nouveau riche. The architecture of urban space, far from a passive reflection of its environment, works to make the vast gap of wealth and social capital between tech and its others appear natural. It also works as a kind of alibi for tech companies looking to shirk responsibility for their role in the current housing crisis, since the park and transportation center, as well as the millions donated to philanthropic causes, bear witness to their unquestionable commitment to social responsibility. Perhaps most relevant for our purposes is the way the influx of tech wealth in the city contributes to and coincides with the neoliberal elision of public space, properly collective political claims, and a government that serves the people, rather than the "stakeholders" of firms. The very structure of private-public partnerships, espoused by neoliberal thinkers as a market-friendly alternative to Keynesian-style public funding, merges the distinction between what is public and what is private and transforms the aims of government from service to the public to service for the private interests of business.

But all of this is well-trodden terrain in Leftist academic and political organizing circles. The shock I felt during this brief visit to Salesforce was mostly due to what greeted me upon entering the interior of the building where my friend works, not just the shiny exterior of the

---

[125] One representative example is a 2016 open letter to then-mayor of San Francisco Ed Lee by entrepreneur and tech start-up founder Justin Keller in which Keller penned his frustration with the issue: "I know people are frustrated about gentrification happening in the city, but the reality is, we live in a free market society. The wealthy working people have earned their right to live in the city. They went out, got an education, work hard, and earned it. I shouldn't have to worry about being accosted. I shouldn't have to see the pain, struggle, and despair of homeless people to and from my way to work every day." Julia Carrie Wong, "San Francisco Tech Worker: 'I Don't Want to See Homeless Riff-raff'," The Guardian (February 17, 2016), https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/17/san-francisco-tech-open-letter-i-dont-want-to-see-homeless-riff-raff.

company's buildings, park, and transport hub. Inside Salesforce, there are no cubicles or offices per se—the building's design follows an open concept that includes various tables and couches where one can work—and each floor provides a locker storage area, a large kitchen space stocked with a hefty variety of beverages and organic snacks, and a designated meditation room where employees can find some respite from the stress of a fast-paced work environment. The area is labeled a "mindfulness zone" and stands out as the only enclosed room on the floor (aside from the gender-neutral restrooms)—dimly lit and minimally furnished with zabuton pillows, pictures of lotus flowers and stacked meditation stones, a few meditation guidebooks, and a handful of small personal listening devices. A sign greets the mindful employee upon entrance:

> Welcome to our Mindfulness Zone
> You are entering a space reserved for mindfulness practice including:
> -Taking a mental reset and renewal break
> -Meditation
> -Pausing to invite calm and balance
> -Quiet reflection
> To support you in your practice, we have offered you printed mindfulness materials and digital guided meditations. Enjoy and be well.

Even this brief visit to Salesforce provides insight into how the therapeutic technique of mindfulness contributes to a form of governance that shapes the architecture and materiality of our daily lives. But it also reveals how the integration of mindfulness within corporate business practices and wellness programs serves to further constrict the subject as homo oeconomicus by stripping it of its political constitution, at once acknowledging and disembedding it from its socially-determined environment, and disavowing any ethic of political responsibility to and for others. The injunction to "enjoy and be well"—to cultivate individual well-being through mindfulness practice—obscures the motivation behind the inclusion of "mindfulness zones" at Salesforce. As the company CEO Marc Benioff remarked at a recent summit: "There's a 'mindfulness' zone where employees can put their phones into a basket or whatever, and go in to an area where there's quietness. I think this is really important to cultivating innovation in your company…You need to create space and connect with people that are innovative…[to develop] a beginner's mind."[126] Cultivating innovation, an essential entrepreneurial skill, is one aim of mindfulness, but Benioff also underscores the importance of creating connections between employees and the company, compelling individuals to identify with the "community" of the corporation, rather than the one outside its walls.

Upon exiting the building where meditation rooms are available on every floor, I encountered the violent reality of social life in the sight of several houseless individuals sleeping on the street a yard or two from Salesforce's entrance. I am sure this image greets Salesforce employees every day before they enter and after they exit their place of work, and I imagine any

---

[126] Eugene Kim, "Salesforce Put a Meditation Room on Every Floor of Its New Tower Because of Buddhist Monks," Business Insider (March 7, 2016), http://www.businessinsider.com/salesforce-put-a-meditation-room-on-every-floor-of-its-new-tower-2016-3.

sense of guilt or responsibility for the people displaced at the hands of their employer is acknowledged without judgment and redirected towards the end of individual well-being within the mindfulness zone. Despite the goal of cultivating economic innovation—and therefore enhancing one's credit—within the company, the mindfulness zone, like the construction of Salesforce park that exemplifies the company's social policy, reinforces the limits of political innovation outside of oneself. It betrays an alignment with a particular neoliberal rationality that elides politics as a transformative mediation of material and social relations that proceeds from a recognition of the fundamental interdependency of the self on others and replaces it with an economized politics that "privilege[s] the individual over society; either by considering social action as a form of promoting individual wellbeing, or by carrying an underlying assumption that social problems might emerge from changes at the level of the individual."[127]

The mindfulness zone and the Salesforce park are both meant to provide a place of refuge from the stress of work life. Benioff describes the purpose of the meditation room in these terms: "You can go there and not have kind of a chit-chat going on in your mind for a few moments. That's more important today because we're in this always-on economy."[128] Likewise, according to the press release on the Salesforce website, the park is meant to be a "space to enjoy a break from the hustle and bustle of the city."[129] But this removal from one's material conditions—whether from work or from the sociality of urban space—acts to further alienate oneself from the community the company claims a "commitment" to. It replaces any notion of commitment or responsibility to others and our environment with a responsibility only to the self and to the corporation. This responsibility—concretized in the techniques of mindfulness and their therapeutic imperative to be mindful, to be present, to "enjoy a break"—derives from neoliberal technologies of the self that engender a particular mode of actualization, of self-creation, constituted by speculative valorization. A wellness education video for employees and clients of Salesforce available on their website provides a particularly pertinent example. The video's title: "Mindfulness practices that activate your full potential."[130]

---

[127] Arthington, 94.
[128] Kim.
[129] "Announcing Salesforce Transit Center."
[130] "Mindfulness Practices That Activate Your Full Potential," feat. Tara Brach,
https://www.salesforce.com/video/183659/.

Chapter 2: Regulating the Self: Technologies of Mindfulness and Self-Care

The *idea* of transcendence can be a great escape, a high-octane fuel for delusion. This is why the Buddhist tradition, especially Zen, emphasizes coming full circle, back to the ordinary and the everyday, what they call 'being free and easy in the marketplace.'
–Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*

"Our personality is not fixed. It constantly changes, as does everything else in life."
–Headspace app notification

The prevalence of mindfulness in corporate business and wellness practices provides one example of how mindfulness-based therapeutic techniques are utilized in institutional settings to intervene in a range of behavioral issues or conditions in order to enhance overall well-being, not just maximize profit or productivity. My analysis in the previous chapter provides insight into how these techniques effect an individualization of social conditions and the symptoms of both psychic trauma and material suffering. This chapter continues to trace the individualizing effects of mindfulness in the consumer market for self-care, where mindfulness is sold as a product for self-enhancement and self-maintenance. The form of mindfulness therapeutics adopted by and through self-care is a technique of subjectification that produces a subject amenable to the project of neoliberal economization and depoliticization. Situated as a task of caring for oneself, mindfulness risks substituting therapeutics for politics by redirecting the external orientation of political action inward towards a work carried out (only) on the self. By encouraging subjects to treat themselves as projects of self-investment, mindfulness in this context functions as a site of transmission for the economization of the self, an economization increasingly inflected by the rubric of financialization. I begin by outlining some of the key aspects of mindfulness philosophy as adopted by Jon Kabat-Zinn for a Western audience in order to show how the theory of the subject undergirding mindfulness provides an accommodating site of intervention for neoliberal governance and the application of financialized norms and incentives. I then turn to consider the industry of self-care, where mindfulness is increasingly commodified as a means for self-maintenance and self-enhancement in response to deteriorating social and political conditions. I end by analyzing the particular example of mindfulness applications in order to explore the ways in which mindfulness is harnessed to produce self-enhancing and self-realizing subjects. These applications, I argue, represent all aspects of life as sites of potential investment through mindful mediation and submit these aleatory features of individual life to self-quantification, encouraging subjects to see their lives as speculative projects of investment.

The Development of the Self: Mindfulness as Self-Mediation

Jon Kabat-Zinn is often credited with introducing mindfulness into mainstream American culture.[131] After studying meditation with Buddhist teachers, he opened the Center for

---

[131] For Kabat-Zinn's own reflection on his role in what he calls the "mainstreaming of the dharma" see "Too Early to Tell: The Potential Impact and Challenges—Ethical and Otherwise—Inherent in the Mainstreaming of Dharma in

Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. There, he created "mindfulness-based stress reduction" (MBSR), a program that gave scientific credence to mindfulness as a legitimate therapeutic practice within medicine. With his colleagues, Kabat-Zinn conducted a number of uncontrolled studies of the clinical effectiveness of MBSR in the 1980s, culminating in an often-cited study on MBSR as a treatment for anxiety in 1992. In 1990, he published the popular best-seller *Full Catastrophe Living*, a synthesis of the MBSR program and his mindfulness philosophy applied to extra-clinical settings. In 1994, he published another best-seller, *Wherever You Go There You Are*, a guide for using mindfulness meditation in everyday life. MBSR has been implemented by Kabat-Zinn and his colleagues in a number of institutional settings including an inner-city clinic serving low-income residents in Worcester, Massachusetts and a joint program between the University of Massachusetts Medical Center and Department of Corrections providing mindfulness meditation to prison inmates. Additionally, he has trained judges, Catholic priests, and Olympic athletes in mindfulness, and his MBSR program has been used in the U.S. military to treat and prevent PTSD.

In *Wherever You Go There You Are*, Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally."[132] Directed attention, intention without intervention, experience of oneself in the present, and nonjudgement form the basic tenants of mindfulness practice, which he explicitly distances from Buddhism or from any belief or value system in particular. Rather than characterize mindfulness as a "spiritual practice," Kabat-Zinn prefers to refer to it as "conscious discipline": "[Mindfulness] is simply a practical way to be more in touch with the fullness of your being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action."[133] What Buddhism offers however, is the particular technique of meditation for achieving mindfulness in order to "develop our true potential as full human beings."[134] Meditation is "the vehicle for this work of inner development…it is a guide to human development, a roadmap to our radiant selves, not to the gold of a childhood innocence already past, but to that of a fully developed adult."[135] Kabat-Zinn categorizes meditation as a mediating device that actualizes the potential already present within ourselves to become "fully developed adults." Despite the emphasis on nonjudgment, the rhetoric of mature development normatively suggests that human problems and the causes of suffering are due to a kind of immaturity on our behalf because we have been stunted in our human development. Indeed, Kabat-Zinn explicitly locates "suffering and its root causes in the human mind," a mind that can be trained, through meditation, to accept and therefore overcome

---

an Increasingly Dystopian World" Mindfulness Magazine (Springer, June 2017), https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs12671-017-0758-2.pdf.
[132] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 4.
[133] Kabat-Zinn, 264, 6.
[134] Kabat-Zinn, 51.
[135] Kabat-Zinn, 81, 84-5.

the causes of suffering. Mindfulness allows one to realize the full potential of the "radiant self" through training one to experience "the fullness of [one's] being."[136]

The practicality emphasized by Kabat-Zinn proposes that the goal of meditation as mediation in this secular use is not spiritual "transcendence" of material existence, but an "ordinary" and "everyday" way of living one's life that becomes second nature: "being free and easy in the marketplace."[137] Mediation, the human capacity to transform the raw material of nature and transcend animal existence, has long been characterized as the means of realizing man's essence in Western thought, traditionally through the mediation of rational thought. Mindfulness however, is not a method of reason—the rational labor of imparting form onto matter—in any traditional philosophical sense. It does not seek to transcend contingency and existence but rather to access the self in a particular way that would allow for an unmediated experience of existence, the merging of one's essence and existence and therefore the elision of form and matter where we become what we already are. It thus shares the philosophical disposition of phenomenology—the recognition that "wherever you go there you are." This phenomenological essence however is purely speculative—it is a potentiality that remains so, for the work of mindfulness takes a lifetime to achieve, or, from the Buddhist perspective, many lifetimes. The mediation of meditation is thus one without a proper telos while aiming for the process of development. It does not seek to render the capacity for human development actual once and for all in order to arrive at a state free from contingency. Rather, its principle of actualization is an ongoing encounter with contingency, an unmediated access to the present experience of both one's body and the flow of one's thoughts.

Accordingly, Kabat-Zinn describes this method as an "effortless activity," an approach that "is simply to witness whatever comes up in the mind or the body and to recognize it without condemning it or pursuing it, knowing that our judgments are unavoidable and necessarily limiting thoughts *about* experience. What we are interested in in meditation is direct contact with the experience itself."[138] Puzzlingly, the work of mindfulness and meditation as "a profound path for developing oneself" involves a kind of "non-doing," a mediation that allows for pure, unmediated, "direct contact" with experience and the forfeiture of the self: "all colorations of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine' are just currents of thinking that are liable to carry you away from your own heart and the purity of direct experience."[139] Thus characterized, mindfulness through meditation involves three paradoxes: between activity and passivity, between the self and the non-self, and between mediated and unmediated experience. It relies on the distinction between these opposites at the same time that it elides them, through a work of "non-doing." This work is not a negation or resistance of condition but an active cultivation of noninterference with the natural unfolding of events: "Non-doing simply means letting things be and allowing them to unfold in their own way. Enormous effort can be involved, but it is a graceful, knowledgeable, effortless

---

[136] Kabat-Zinn, "Too Early to Tell," 1126.
[137] Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You* Go, 267.
[138] Kabat-Zinn, 31, 56.
[139] Kabat-Zinn, 264, 260.

effort, a 'doerless doing,' cultivated over a lifetime."[140] The philosophically laissez-faire orientation of mindfulness—"noninterference with the natural unfolding of events"—has stiking similarities to the physiocratic principle underlying both classical liberalism and neoliberalism as forms of governance. The "enormous effort" involved in non-doing, the intentionality that guides mindfulness practice, also correlates, if only metaphorically, to the emphasis on guiding principles and rules for governance in neoliberalism. This is not to say that mindfulness is intrinsically neoliberal, but that it shares a similar philosophy of human action.[141] This similarity allows for the easy cooptation or neoliberalization of mindfulness I trace in this project.

What kind of subject is "cultivated over a lifetime" through techniques of mindfulness? On the surface, as Kabat-Zinn notes, this subject is one opposed to the goal-driven subject of "the Western cultural mainstream" where "you will find precious little support for choosing such a personal path…involving effort but non-doing, energy but not tangible 'product.'"[142] I thus departs significantly from the profit-oriented subject of interest found in classical liberalism. Neither is the mindful subject a moral one, driven to "[become] a better person," since this "superficial or romantic notion won't endure for long when we face the turbulence of our lives."[143] Instead, Kabat-Zinn characterizes this subject as one that is oriented toward actualizing oneself according to one's own internal principle of being, "a vision that is truly your own—one that is deep and tenacious and that lies close to the core of who you believe yourself to be, what you value in your life, and where you see yourself going."[144] Mindfulness grants both access to this vision and a means of realizing it.

While productivity may not be the specific goal of mindfulness as a form of self-governance, my previous chapter shows how the engagement offered by mindfulness in corporate settings is often sold as a source of productivity. Kabat-Zinn acknowledges this effect while maintaining that productivity is not the primary aim of mindfulness: "Non-doing," he writes, "has nothing to do with being indolent or passive…non-doing doesn't have to be threatening to people who feel they always have to get things done. They might find they get even more 'done,' and done better, by practicing non-doing."[145] The paradox that the work of non-doing at the center of mindfulness practice leads to "even more…better" doing is one of its productive tensions or, to use a word from Buddhism Kabat-Zinn is fond of, one of its *kōan*s. A *kōan*, in the Zen tradition Kabat-Zinn trained in, is a riddle meant to induce doubt—a recognition of the limits of thought—which leads to *kensho*, often translated as to "see one's nature." To see one's nature is to recognize, or more properly "realize" the identity of opposites, the "nonduality of subject and object."[146] In this sense, the *kōan* of doing non-doing entails that the subject

---

[140] Kabat-Zinn, 44.
[141] For a deeper explication of this theory, see my Introduction.
[142] Kabat-Zinn, 75.
[143] Kabat-Zinn, 75.
[144] Kabat-Zinn, 75.
[145] Kabat-Zinn, 44.
[146] Victor Sogen Hori, "Koan and Kensho in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum" in *The Koan. Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, eds. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 200), 290.

"become one" with its work by realizing oneself in their work: "[*kensho* is] a total pouring of oneself into some particular object, event, or situation more concretely…it means to work with genuineness, without hesitation, with authority, without reifying self on one side and the work on the other side."[147]

Absent from the Western appropriation of Buddhism popularized by Kabat-Zinn is the recognition that the conditions of one's work may be fundamentally exploitative. From this perspective, we may be tempted to read mindfulness as an ideological ruse in the service of capital, a set of representations that allows for continued profit and exploitation by accommodating workers to their condition through transforming one's relationship to work. This transformation elides the distinction between the subject or laborer and their object or work, compelling one to "see" labor-for-profit as primarily a labor of self-realization. Thus, while mindfulness may certainly serve an ideological function, it also fundamentally and materially alters the very conditions of work, production, and subjective existence. It is not (only) an ideology that masks the nature of reality, it effectively produces the subjective conditions of reality.

Taken at face value, the mindfulness practices espoused by Kabat-Zinn are not aimed at increasing productivity or maximizing profit, because the core principle of non-doing is a form of self-realization rather than instrumentalization. Self-realization "refers to an absolute freedom…absent [of] any dualism of antitheses."[148] The freedom to realize oneself in the externality of existence engenders a more expansive and speculative form of valorization than the freedom to pursue one's interest without external interference. The realization of one's self is not based on an exchange of equivalences that are distinct (one's labor for profit, or one's money for a commodity), but rather on a speculative investment ("a total pouring of oneself into some particular object") that flattens the distinction between the object of investment and the value produced by speculation itself.[149] Accordingly, Kabat-Zinn situates self-realization, a "pure" or unmediated relationship to the object of labor, as a type of valorization that can only be reached without the purposive effort underlying exchange:

> The flavor and sheer joy of non-doing are difficult for Americans to grasp because our culture places so much value on doing and on progress. Even our leisure tends to be busy and mindless…the only way you can do anything of value is to have the effort come out of non-doing and to let go of caring whether it will be of use or not. Otherwise, self-involvement and greediness can sneak in and distort your relationship to the work, or the work itself, so that it is off in some way, biased, impure.[150]

The type of value espoused by Kabat-Zinn is not primarily utilitarian but experiential, the "flavor and sheer joy" of being in the moment. By "letting go" of an understanding of value based on

---

[147] Hori, 291.
[148] Hee-Jin Kim, *Dagen Kigen-Mystical Realist* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 52.
[149] In Marxist terminology, the formula of exchange, M-C-M, is replaced by a formula of speculation, M-M-M.
[150] Kabat-Zinn, 39.

utility ("caring whether it will be of use or not"), one may be more productive, but more importantly, one's relationship to work will be less alienated because the products of labor will be purer and more authentic. If done mindfully, labor can be a means of realizing oneself rather than a means of fulfilling a need. Marx would be dismayed at the idea that such "living labor"—the expression of man's concrete essence in production—could be possible under capitalism. But the realization of one's self in one's labor here occurs not through the fulfilling of material needs, but rather via a disentangling of oneself from utility-based need altogether: "To let go means to give up coercing, resisting, or struggling, in exchange for something more powerful and wholesome which comes out of allowing things to be as they are without getting caught up in your attraction to or rejection of them. In the intrinsic stickiness of wanting."[151]

The project of mindfulness is a reframing of desire so that it is in line with who we are rather than what we think we need.[152] Mindfulness does not disavow need but argues that our needs are distorted by the "stickiness of wanting." It seeks to redirect the objects of our desire from external sources to internal ones, away from the value of utility and towards the potential value found within our being. It is within this framework that mindfulness constitutes a form of self-governance complementary to the larger development of neoliberal governance in the age of financialized capitalism. The theory of a subject driven by the desire to realize oneself according to the development of one's potential for well-being doesn't explicitly attend to the social and political conditions that engender or constrict well-being. Further, ff politics is a type of work, what does a theory of human action based on non-doing mean for politics? It would be tempting to equate the non-doing involved in mindfulness with political incapacitation, but the emphasis on intentionality, the "effort" involved in mindful experience, complicates this easy assumption. Not-doing means not ascribing a pregiven purpose to human action, it does not entail abstaining from action, political or otherwise, altogether. Because the intention behind mindfulness aims at realizing who one is rather than what one wants, there is room to understand politics from the perspective of mindfulness as a realization of the self in and through interdependency. A disavowal of or disengagement from political action can stem from mindfulness practice however, when the work carried out on the self is done *only* in relation to the self, that is, when self-transformation is located in individual realization rather than intimately connected to collective realization. From this perspective, mindfulness offers a potential source of depoliticization, a form of individual deproletarianization[153] that serves to inoculate against the negative collectivizing effects of democracy.

In addition to the possibility of depoliticization through individuation, an aim that frames neoliberalism's social policy, mindfulness can also collude with the economizing effects of

---

[151] Kabat-Zinn, 53.
[152] This is a particular Westernized interpretation of mindfulness—in many Buddhist traditions desire is disavowed altogether.
[153] For a discussion of the neoliberal concern with deproletarianization, see my Introduction.

neoliberalism at the level subjectification. As many scholars have noted,[154] neoliberalism is a type of governance that transforms the non-economic domains of human life—the political, social, and familial spheres—in the image of the market. As a technique of self-governance as self-care, mindfulness offers a means for transforming the way subjects understand and act upon themselves. It thus presents an avenue for the economization of subjectivity according to the values and metrics of the market. Because the market economy today is increasingly a financialized one, the rules and values that both guide and are engendered by processes of economization are likewise increasingly those specific to finance. [155] These include the aims of enhancing credit over the maximizing profit, the means of speculative investment rather than the exchange of commodities, and the drive to fulfill self-esteem in lieu of the satisfaction of needs.[156]

Mindfulness is a technique that can be easily framed through financialized discourse, because it proposes a way of orienting subjects toward the expansion of self-esteem. As I've argued, mindfulness too departs from the schema of utilitarianism, the maximization of profit to satisfy need, and instead offers a theory of desire based on self-realization, on "who one is." The means to achieving self-realization, intentional non-doing, composes an investment in one's well-being whose value is generated from the very act of investment (non-doing) rather than its ends. I characterize this valorization as speculative because the value of a speculative asset is based on the actions of investors, not the asset's underlying purpose or utility. Thus, the process of (self-)valorization in mindfulness corresponds to the speculation at the heart of the financialized order, a speculation driven primarily by the expansion of credit or self-esteem rather than profit.[157] My argument in this chapter is that mindfulness can become a means of both "attracting investment," a form of self-investment oriented towards credit, and a means of

---

[154] See Koray Caliskan, Michael Callon, "Economization, part 1: shifting attention from economy towards processes of economization," *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (August 2009), 369-398; Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).

[155] While I do not wish to conflate financialized and neoliberal models to the subject, I understand them to be intimately linked. Scholars like Ivan Ascher note for example, how the implementation of neoliberal policy in response to the collapse of the Bretton-Woods monetary system led to a structural transformation of capitalism, "a transformation characterized by the dramatic rise of the financial sector and the concurrent emergence of the recognizably neoliberal subject." Ivan Ascher, *Portfolio Society* (New York: Zone, 2016), 87.

[156] I am especially indebted to Michel Feher for the first and third of these insights. Feher notes that finance is primarily oriented towards enhancing credit or shareholder value rather than profit: "If economic agents are now primarily intent on making themselves attractive to investors, what they pursue is arguably less the profit yielded by their professional activity that the credit necessary to exercise it." Michel Feher, *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age* (New York: Zone Books, 2018), 17. Elsewhere, he identifies the pursuit of creditworthiness as resulting from a "psychological" shift signaled by "the neoliberal condition," a "shift from the polarity of want and satisfaction to self-hatred and self-esteem." See Michel Feher, "The Age of Appreciation: Lectures on the Neoliberal Condition" (London: Goldsmiths University, 2013-2015), https://www.gold.ac.uk/architecture/projects/michel-feher/.

[157] There is one difference I'd like to highlight, however. The well-being enhanced by mindfulness is a form of self-esteem purportedly found within oneself, that is, it is founded upon one's relationship to oneself without recourse to externality. The credit-oriented enhancement of financial speculation, by contrast, depends upon the esteem generated by others, namely, by the attitudes of investors.

depoliticization, of eschewing the social conditions of political action, when it is commodified as a product of self-care.

Self-Care and Consumer Choice: The Market of Mindfulness

Generating $1.21 billion dollars in 2017 alone, mindfulness has become a full-fledged commercial industry in the United States.[158] It is commonly considered part of the emergent self-care industry, itself a subgenre of the larger "wellness economy"[159] and a growing market responding to the millennial generation's concern with "personal improvement."[160] While self-care shares similarities with the business and discourse of "self-help" popular with previous generations, it reflects a more expansive understanding of self-improvement focused on ongoing physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being and enjoyment rather than achieving certain discrete goals. While it may not promise specific areas of improvement, self-care is often framed in this commercialized setting as a response and counterweight to the economic imperatives that cause a lack of work/life balance. Self-care offers a means to realize a full and balanced life by complementing the efforts of work with the effort of working on oneself.

The big-data market analytics company IRI (Information Resources Inc.), who claims the industry is worth $400 billion, defines self-care as "a pervasive and growing consumer lifestyle, characterized by the increasingly holistic approach today's shoppers take toward optimizing their health."[161] The company's executive vice-president Robert J. Sanders elaborates for businesses looking to capitalize on the trend:

> Fueled by rising health care costs and economic uncertainty, Americans are taking health and wellness into their own hands…IRI's groundbreaking research shows self-care consumers view traditionally discrete categories, such as food, OTC drugs, vitamins, supplements and personal care, as more complementary in achieving their health goals.

---

[158] John LaRosa, "$1.2 Billion U.S. Meditation Market To Grow Strongly, Following Path of Yoga Studios," Marketdata LLC, WebWire (September 26, 2017), https://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=214152.
[159] The designator of "wellness" rather than the traditional health care sector speaks to the expansive and increasingly comprehensive definition of well-being that underlies these practices and products. Katherine Johnston, a research fellow at the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) who recently indexed the global worth of the wellness industry at $3.7 trillion dollars, explicitly links this commercial growth with a more inclusive notion of well-being: "We're not just talking about our physical health, but many other dimensions, too. So things like social and community wellness; mental, emotional, spiritual, financial…" quoted in Paulina Velasco, "The Industry of Wellness, by the Numbers" Marketplace (April 29, 2019), https://www.marketplace.org/2018/01/04/world/wellness-craze-numbers.
[160] "In 2015, according to the Pew Research Center, more millennials reported making personal improvement commitments than any generation before them. They spend twice as much as boomers on self-care essentials such as workout regimens, diet plans, life coaching, therapy and apps to improve their personal well-being. They've even created self-care Twitter bots." Christianna Silva, "The Millennial Obsession With Self-Care," NPR (June 4, 2017), https://www.npr.org/2017/06/04/531051473/the-millennial-obsession-with-self-care.https://www.npr.org/2017/06/04/531051473/the-millennial-obsession-with-self-care.
[161] "IRI Provides Actionable Insights into $400 Billion Self-Care Industry, Enabling Marketers to Unlock Personalization Opportunities" Information Resources Inc. Press Release (March 28 2017), https://www.iriworldwide.com/en-US/News/Press-Releases/IRI-Provides-Actionable-Insights-into-$400-Billion.

Blurred category lines and a larger competitive landscape present difficulties for marketers who don't have a clear picture of the motivations, values and behaviors of their customers.

Self-care is portrayed as a capitalization on the negative effects of contemporary capitalism, i.e., "rising health care costs and economic uncertainty." The more austerity and privatization constrict the role of social welfare, the more individuals are forced to "take health and wellness into their own hands." This privatization provides an opportunity for investors, but one that must be guided by an understanding of the murky "motivations, values and behaviors"—in a word, the interest(s)—of individual consumers. Implicit in this representation, is the assumption of a particular self-care consumer profile. In other words, despite the homogenization of an array of diverse behaviors and preferences under the rubric of self-care, the marketing assumes a consumer who has the means and ability, one might say the credit, to pursue self-care routines. Consequently, self-care is afforded to a particular race, gender, and class, and these racialized, gendered, and classed dimensions engender its legitimacy as a form of taking responsibility for oneself rather than a form of irresponsible indulgence. Still, the expansion of this economy, especially for millennials who are much more financially precarious and indebted than previous generations, reveals a trend towards the neoliberalization of health and wellness more broadly.

This neoliberalizing trend can be perceived in the collapse of previously discrete areas of consumption and a more comprehensive, holistic view of health and wellness central to contemporary therapeutics. It expands the neoliberal reduction of the subject to human capital, where all pursuits and actions are reducible to an investment in one's self as a portfolio of expansive capacities. Indeed, self-care is often framed as maintenance and enhancement work, though the degree to which subjects actively engage in such practices "varies considerably based on an individual's demographics, motivation for self-care, and attitude toward food, exercise, over-the-counter (OTC) medications, nutritional products, personal care/beauty products, home care products, doctor recommendations and technology."[162] Rather than see these differential individual norms as an impediment to the marketing and branding of self-care, IRI treats them as a potential source of value, "creating tremendous opportunities for marketers across multiple categories to cater to consumers' distinct self-care perspectives." Under this schema, self-care constitutes a range of both proactive and passive approaches to one's health conditioned by generational attitudes, socio-economic position, and access to technology and institutional medical care, all of which are mediated by race, class, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability. Rather than normalizing a single approach, or treating only particular actions under the rubric of self-care, the IRI findings speak to how the marketing of self-care aims to address a wide range of behaviors and environmental conditions that determine wellness approaches, regardless of the "proactive" role as self-care consumers.

Similarly, Corporate Executive Board Inc. (CEB), a "global best practice insights and technology company," defines self-care as "consumer shorthand for a host of different lifestyle activities [consumers] engage in to protect their overall health. In fact, any pursuit can become

---

[162] "IRI Provides."

an act of self-care, if the consumer engaging in it is doing so mindfully, in the interest of stress reduction."[163] Self-care takes on a broader meaning than preventative health measures or self-treatment and diagnosis, as it has previously been commonly used in healthcare—it is not a technique of prevention or treatment but rather a whole "lifestyle" aimed at "optimizing" and "protecting" overall health. The notion of a lifestyle, where "any pursuit can become an act of self-care" connects these therapeutic technics with one's subjectivity and identity. The way one lives one's life "mindfully" is transformed from a passive occurrence to an intentional optimization in service of realizing one's full potential and wellness. Importantly, the subject is characterized as a consumer and a self-investor who makes choices to promote their wellbeing in all aspects of their life: "Consumers' concept of health goes beyond a simple measure of physical health. In fact, 71% of consumers embrace the notion that mental and physical health are intertwined. Hence, they see self-care activities as a sound journey to better overall wellness."[164]

While the subject presupposed here shares similarities to the liberal subject as an entrepreneur of the self, the subject of self-care is more akin to a type of stockholder, one who, rather than driven by profit, risk, and rent-seeking behavior, is concerned primarily with managing a portfolio of capacities in response to the natural fluctuations of their embedded (market) environment in a way that will optimize the "well-being' of their human capital.[165]

> The CEB market study on self-care, "Self-Care for Serenity Now," expands on this point:

> As America's sociopolitical landscape grows increasingly complex, so too are consumers' emotional responses. They've come to understand their stress as something *that ebbs and flows rather than resolves*. With a chaotic new normal firmly established, consumers are ever more mindfully engaging in self-care activities that provide personal fulfillment and stability (emphasis mine).[166]

The emphasis on "America's sociopolitical landscape" entails a recognition that the environment in which the subject acts shapes subjective experience and elicits particular emotional and behavioral responses. This environment is made up of material and economic conditions as well as cultural and political ones. Early neoliberal theorists shared a similar understanding that subjects were governed by social and political norms, not just the conditions or laws of the market. While the social framework and *Vitalpolitik* of early neoliberalism intervened in the environmental conditions of *homo oeconomicus*, the emphasis here on the fundamental ambiguity and flexibility of norms, especially as they effect affective responses, reflects Gary Becker's particular theorization of the neoliberal subject. Becker's model of human capital also assumes and relies on the dynamism of subjects' affective capacities, their ability to change,

---

[163] Since writing this chapter, CEB has been acquired by Gartner Inc., a research and advisory company. The market study by CEB referenced here was published as "Self-Care for Serenity Now," Iconoculture Consumer Insights (Corporate Executive Board Inc., 2017).
[164] "Self-Care for Serenity."
[165] For an explication of the subject as a portfolio of human capital, see Michel Feher, "Self-Appreciation; or, the Aspirations of Human Capital," *Public Culture* 21.1 (2009), 27-28.
[166] Self-Care for Serenity."

adapt, and grow amidst the complexity and chaos of shifting environmental norms. The aim of neoliberal governance is to equip subjects to endure these changes *as individuals*, without turning to collective organizations and demands. This goal is reached not through the passive obedience of subjects but the actualization of subjects who take control of their own lives, creating their own "personal fulfillment and stability" in all circumstances.[167]

The CEB study reveals how this goal is increasingly forming the central strategy of marketing, product design, and business operations in the commercial private sector: "Consumers are eager to conquer their agitation at every opportunity. Smart brands will help pave that path by facilitating intentional detachment from the outside world and focusing their messaging on serenity, control, and happiness."[168] The facilitation of "intentional detachment" in order to relieve the anxiety that stems from one's external circumstances produces a type of distraction from the neurotic fixation on those environmental conditions. Conversely, mindfulness is often characterized as a solution to distraction, a way of "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."[169] Between this space of attention and distraction, of active attachment and passive detachment, self-care becomes a vehicle for rendering the "break from intense emotional entanglement" productive—a labor of non-doing that is a source of valorization (see fig. 1.). This labor constitutes an investment in one's emotional, physical, social, and/or psychological well-being.

Fig. 1. "Making the Wellness Connection: Product"

---

[167] Self-Care for Serenity."
[168] Self-Care for Serenity."
[169] Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 4.

In the example from the CEB study above (fig. 1.), the way in which successful brands like the language-learning app Duolingo capitalize on the consumer need for "a self-care break" amounts to a slight of hand: "Duolingo gameifies language-learning to give consumers the shift of mental focus they need while allowing them to be productive at the same time." By making a task of mental labor like learning a language into a game—typically a source of mindless entertainment and distraction—the app simultaneously provides the user a means of "self-care"—the much-needed break from the work of engaging and producing constantly demanded of subjects in contemporary capitalism—and a means of self-work, of rendering those breaks productive as sites of investment. But it would be inaccurate to say the brand ideologically tricks consumers into being productive, since users download and play with the intention of learning a language and therefore investing in their human capital. Rather, the framing of self-care (in this case the gameification that allows consumers a means of enjoyment and distraction) is a marketing tool that promises enjoyment, relaxation, and distraction at the same time that it promises a means of self-enhancement through productivity and focus. This presents a shift in the traditional liberal capitalist understanding of consumption where

> the accumulation of external consumer objects is discarded in favour of a technique that seeks to render the experiences as consumer objects themselves. In line with the fetishisation of the present moment, an activity such as going for a walk outdoors becomes recast as an opportunity for practicing the self-discipline of appreciating sights, sounds and smells from moment to moment. In a sense, the product being sold by the mindfulness industry is not a self-help book or a technique, but the promise of an improved self; a self who is more aware, who can gain more from life and who is more resilient.[170]

In short, the aim of the self-care industry is to facilitate detachment from "the state of the world" that doubles as a form of productive investment in one's well-being. As a vehicle for self-maintenance and self-enhancement, self-care products are not (only) services or goods meant to foster economic prosperity but a means of realizing emotional, social, physical, and psychological well-being. The overconsumption necessitated by capitalism itself relies on furnishing products to fulfill needs that are not purely economic or material, but the self-care industry indexes a novel disintegration of the division between work and leisure—a division that liberal capitalism, to varying degrees, has always necessitated. In the CEB diagnosis of the self-care industry, leisure time provides an opportunity for "self-care breaks" where self-care becomes the work of self-enhancement. The phenomenon of self-care is not merely an instance of consumption that is branded as wellness, nor is it reducible to the commodification of leisure time. In addition to exemplifying the dissolution of discrete aspects of life under neoliberalism—work and leisure, healthcare and lifestyle—self-care merges the distinction between its subjects, or consumers, and its objects, or products. What it sells is not a commodity to improve the self but "the promise of an improved self," the speculative potential for self-enhancement.

---

[170] Phil Arthington, "Mindfulness: A Critical Perspective" in *Community Psychology* Vol 2, Issue 1, 95.

Mindfulness is sold within this context as a disciplined and scientifically-supported mode of self-maintenance and self-enhancement. Kabat-Zinn himself takes the project of mainstreaming mindfulness for an American consumer audience to be positive, because "[the goal is] to make meditation practice as American as anything else in our society that might have value as a lifestyle choice, such as regular exercise."[171] Similarly, Yunha Kim, founder of the meditation app Simple Habit, characterizes the incorporation of mindfulness into the self-care industry as an effort to make mindfulness part of a wellness lifestyle brand: "Just 50 years ago, people didn't run, do yoga or even brush their teeth on daily basis. It was toothpaste companies like Colgate and Crest and lifestyle companies like Nike and Lululemon who made that happen. We want to do the same for mindfulness by making it an easy addition to your life that you didn't realize how much you needed."[172] The branding of mindfulness as a way of not just improving oneself but realizing one's lifestyle value perpetuates the notion that the freedom of self-growth and self-expression are rooted in personal (in this case consumer) choice. Mindfulness is offered as one of many lifestyle or self-care options that presents opportunities for self-development and self-expression through consumer preferences. The market of self-care thus not only provides a means of individual expression but necessitates the elaboration of possible choices for consumers. This amplification of ever-expanding preferences provokes the perspective that all the activities of daily life are opportunities to exercise choice and that individual behavior is itself the product of individual choice. This in turn works to responsibilize subjects, making individuals responsible for their own lives constituted by choice, and to obscure the social, cultural, economic, and economic conditions that unevenly distribute choices and opportunities for choice. This perspective contributes to the narrative that social problems are the result of poor individual life choices and that the role of governance is to aid in helping people make healthy choices.

What effects follow when mindfulness is situated as one among many lifestyle choices by the consumer market? When it becomes "Americanized" and integrated into daily forms of self-expression through individual choice? The remainder of this chapter explores the implications of branding mindfulness as a lifestyle choice, where it serves as a means of enhancing one's ability to choose and realizing oneself in one's daily life choices.

Quantifying the Variable Self: Mindfulness and Meditation Apps

Mindfulness applications offer one example of how mindfulness has been commodified as a site for individual expression and as an object of consumer choice. Constituting a large share of the mindfulness industry,[173] mindfulness apps have become an increasingly popular avenue

---

[171] Kabat-Zinn, "Too Early to Tell," fn 17.

[172] Quoted in Tomas Laurinavicius, "10 World Renowned Meditation Tech Experts Share What's Next In 2017," Forbes (November 25, 2016), http://lifevessel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/10-World-Renowned-Meditation-Tech-Experts-Share-Whats-Next-In-2017.pdf

[173] The mindfulness industry, a submarket of the self-care industry, is estimated to be worth $1.2 billion. See "The U.S. Meditation Market." Marketdata LLC (September 2017), https://www.marketdataenterprises.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Meditation-Market-2017-TOC-4.pdf.

for consumers to access meditation techniques without having to leave the comfort of their home or significantly alter their daily schedules. The apps often provide incentives for users—in the form of "badges" or virtual rewards—and can be utilized on any wireless-enabled device, making this technology more attractive and convenient for those new to meditative practice. There are over 1,200 mindfulness apps currently available for download across a variety of platforms. Headspace, which is valued at $250 million, is the most popular of these apps, claiming 12 million active users including celebrities, professional sports teams like the Seattle Seahawks, businesses like Goldman Sachs, and airlines like Virgin Atlantic among its clients.

Headspace was created by Andy Puddicombe, an ordained Buddhist monk who does the narration for the app's guided meditation sessions, and Rich Pierson, a former marketing executive for Axe deodorant. After traveling across Asia training at various monasteries for a decade, Puddicombe returned to his native England and began working as a freelance mindfulness expert leading meditation workshops for corporate clients. While working as a creative for the Bartle Bogle and Hegarty advertising agency, Pierson encountered Puddicombe at one of his guided meditation trainings and approached him about partnering in a business that would make the trainings more accessible for those who could not physically attend. They created a website with a subscription service that provided mindfulness literature and programs for paid users. In short time, the Headspace application was born following the same premium subscription model. A 10-day free trial is available to anyone who downloads the app, after which users must pay a subscription fee of $12.99 a month to access most of the app's content. Aside from individual subscriptions, Headspace offers subscriptions at a discounted rate for corporate clients including LinkedIn, Uber, and Google, allowing corporate managers to access and track data about aggregate employee use of the app. Headspace has conducted close to 50 studies on the effectiveness of the app, claiming that consistent use decreased work-related stress and increased "overall health" in a majority of clients. Despite such findings, Headspace tells its users it cannot promise specific results. According to Pierson: "We are taught that if we do X, we will get Y. Meditation is the complete opposite of that. If someone is just starting out, my biggest advice is to expect nothing."[174] The popularity of Headspace and the fact that users spend over $150 a year to access it suggests that the app's success is precisely built on a carefully curated and branded expectation that it will help users unlock their latent potential to enhance their overall well-being. The app explicitly designates itself as a guide that will aid in training one's mind the same way coaches and trainers provide physical training (see fig. 2).

---

[174] Kimberly Weisul, "Monk, Ex-Marketing Guy im for Peak Mindfulness," *Chicago Tribune*, http://digitaledition.chicagotribune.com/tribune/article_popover.aspx?guid=7ad2850d-9690-46ed-9874-11c2ff26a6c1.
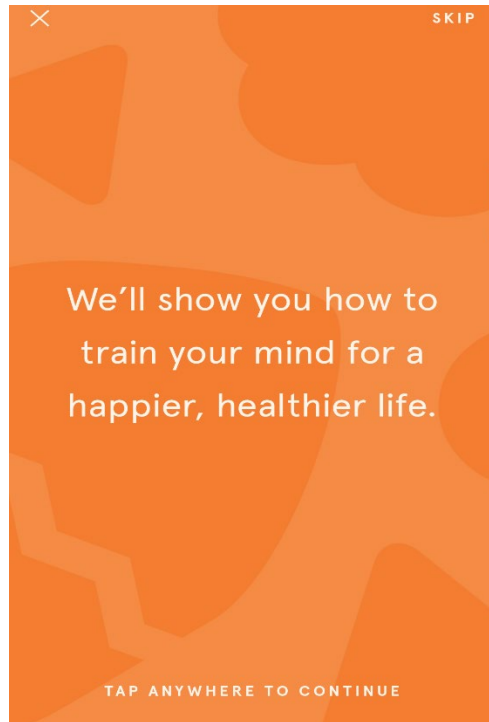
Fig. 2. Headspace screenshot (1)

The interface of Headspace mimics mobile gaming applications. After downloading, the app prompts users through a series of questions to tailor the app to the user's specific needs, constructing a personal profile based on user familiarity, goals, and resources, not unlike the construction of an avatar with specific skill sets within a game. These include: "How familiar are you with meditation?", "What do you want to practice mindfulness for," and "How much time will you dedicate to meditation daily?" It offers discrete goals for app use, including: "sleeping better," "being less stressed," "finding calm," "being more focused," and "managing anxiety." In prompting users for precise information about their knowledge, daily habits, and goals, the app requires a form of self-examination that encourages individuals to articulate their values and desires. This articulation orients subjects toward self-expression of their lifestyle values.

The app also asks users to input their preferred notification settings, which serve as reminders throughout the day to meditate or provide pithy motivational remarks in the mobile devices' notification tray in order to instill habitual mindfulness. For example, one such notification states: "It is not enough to just think about our potential. Work on discovering it, living it, making it a reality." This remark reveals the way in which the app encourages subjects to think of themselves as projects of investment in their individual potential. Investment here is characterized as a process of discovery and realization, not unlike mindfulness itself. The notification exposes the central premise of the Headspace application: that mindfulness is a means of investing in oneself through intentionally accessing one's potential. Headspace provides a particular technique for harnessing the power of mindfulness for precisely this purpose.

Headspace offers users a way to quantify, track, calculate, and speculate on not just meditative practice but its relationship to everyday life. The app situates daily habits like sleeping, eating, exercise, and work as locations that can be transformed through mindfulness to generate speculative investment in one's self. Meditation is framed as a source of accessing speculative potential that can be harnessed through the techniques of quantification offered by the application's interface. Through user input, the app provides a consistent image made up of the heterogenous aspects of individual life, a representation that renders these diverse characteristics meaningful through their quantification and tracking. This meaning provides users with a reflection of their own lives, a way of discovering their inner selves, but it also offers a means of control over this narrative, the possibility to intervene, to "author" oneself through mindful practice. As one psychologist wrote in response to the prevalence of applications like Headspace, "the apps can help people gain a greater sense of self efficacy. By that, I mean that people can feel more in control of their feelings, and by extension, their lives."[175]

The impetus to discover, monitor, assess, and cultivate oneself through the technology of the mobile application encourages subjects to view themselves as projects of investment, as a portfolio of speculative potential that can be actualized through intentional introspection and recording. This framework is echoed in neoliberal conceptions of entrepreneurial subjects and more precisely in the notion of the subject as human capital. Chicago school economist Gary Becker is most credited for elaborating this theory of the subject as an "abilities machine" in contradistinction to the liberal subject as a possessive individual with natural traits or capacities. While Becker studies this subject in the realms of work, education, criminality, and even the family, mindfulness technologies like Headspace present a new psychic arena for the realization of such a subject. The compulsive daily use of the mobile screen is harnessed by the application to instill purposive attention to one's cognitive and behavioral patterns rather than facilitate a form of disassociation.[176] The application thus assumes and constructs a particular relation to the self—a subject that understands their very cognition and patterns of behavior as a source of human capital that can be realized through the intentional choice to practice of mindfulness.

The means for constructing this subject is technological in a double sense. The external device of the mobile phone serves as a prosthetic that overcomes physical limitations—allowing one to meditate anywhere and at any time. But more profoundly, the application expands the human capacity for actualization via an internal programming, through the constant reminders of

[175] Laurie Paul, quoted in "Million-Dollar Mindfulness" Amanda Zantal-Wiener (Hubspot, December 2018), https://blog.hubspot.com/news-trends/million-dollar-mindfulness-meditation-apps
[176] This speaks to the deep irony of mindfulness apps like Headspace. In contemporary life, wireless technology has made us more distracted than ever, our days are spent constantly checking our screens, answering emails, scrolling through social media, documenting are existence through the cameras on our cellular phones. Our experience has become almost completely technologically mediated by these devices—they allow us more access to knowledge and communication than ever, increasing our productivity and ability to transcend limits of distance and time, but in doing so they further alienate us from our experience of the present. Mindfulness apps promise access to the present moment—an unmediated experience to the self through intentional practice—but they do so through the use of the very technologies that have rendered us less present.

the app's notifications to meditate and the compulsion to record these daily tasks. I say internal because the programming of human action, while directed by the application, is an effort carried out by the self on itself. In applications like Headspace, mindfulness can take the form of a programming of the human subject-as-abilities machine. This programming serves as technique of subjectivation that constructs the subject as both investor and investee, and compels subjects to constantly construct and improve upon themselves through these mediating technologies.
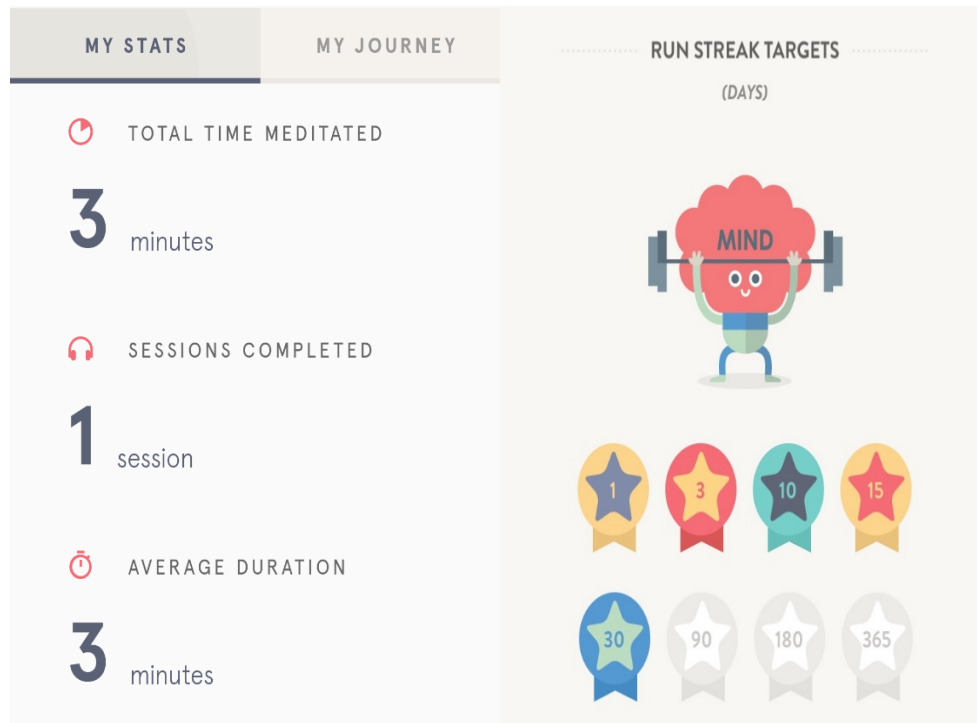
Fig. 3. Headspace screenshot (2, 3)

The behavioral programming function served by the Headspace app is also evident in its tracking features and virtual rewards system, which allows users to monitor their progress through metrics measuring total meditation time, completed sessions, average meditation duration, and how many "packs" are completed in one's "journey" (see fig. 3). Meditation "streaks" (consecutive days of meditating) are visually rewarded by the increased strength of one's avatar figure and virtual badges, and progress can be shared with friends through the application via a simplified social network. The metrics of measuring and tracking progress employed by Headspace reflect a larger trend of using technology to quantify and intervene in personal health; it mirrors the activity tracking done by wearable pedometers and biometric scanning now common in mobile devices. As methods and procedures of calculation, these technologies render intelligible and quantifiable emergent phenomenon for the purposes of control, regulation, investment, and enhancement. Techniques of calculation—quantifying phenomenon in discrete units—is central to the process of actualization promised by mindfulness therapeutics. For example, the common meditative practice of "noting" experience in the present—identifying and naming one's thoughts and emotions as they occur—is a type of

intentional discrete division of the flux of experience. The labeling and quantification features of Headspace follows this logic and materializes phenomenal experience on the screen, empowering the user with a sense of control and progress through an external representation of the self.

Another method of quantification is the way Headspace organizes sessions by "packs" designated for specific functions. The various levels of meditation session are grouped according to skill and increasing difficulty or complexity similar to a game, with designated "basic" and "pro" levels. The gameification of mindfulness is a way to encourage continued use by producing a sense of reward in having "won." In doing so it transforms meditation from a task to an experience pleasure in competition. Aside from the quantification of progressive game levels, the sessions are organized by definite topics or thematic goals (see fig. 4). For example, under "health" packs, there are sessions collated under the rubric of "managing anxiety," "stress," "sleep," "depression," "pregnancy," "coping with cancer," and "pain management." There are packs meant to help one deal with specific emotions ("grief," "regret," "anger"), packs aimed at increasing "happiness" (through "self-esteem," "relationships," and "acceptance"), packs focusing on "work and performance" (including "prioritization," "productivity," "finding focus," and "creativity"), a pack designated for students (containing guides on "leaving home," and avoiding "distractions"), and one for "sport" (featuring "motivation," "concentration," "competition," "communication"). In addition, there are a number of "single" sessions made to address specific situations—"burned out," "feeling over-whelmed," "losing your temper," "in pain"—different times like "early mornings," "end of day," "for the weekend," and various activities like "creative writing," "gardening," "housework, " "cooking," "eating," "commuting," and "vacation." The app also provides a "kids" designated section that includes exercises for young children to help them practice "appreciation," "balance," and "kindness."
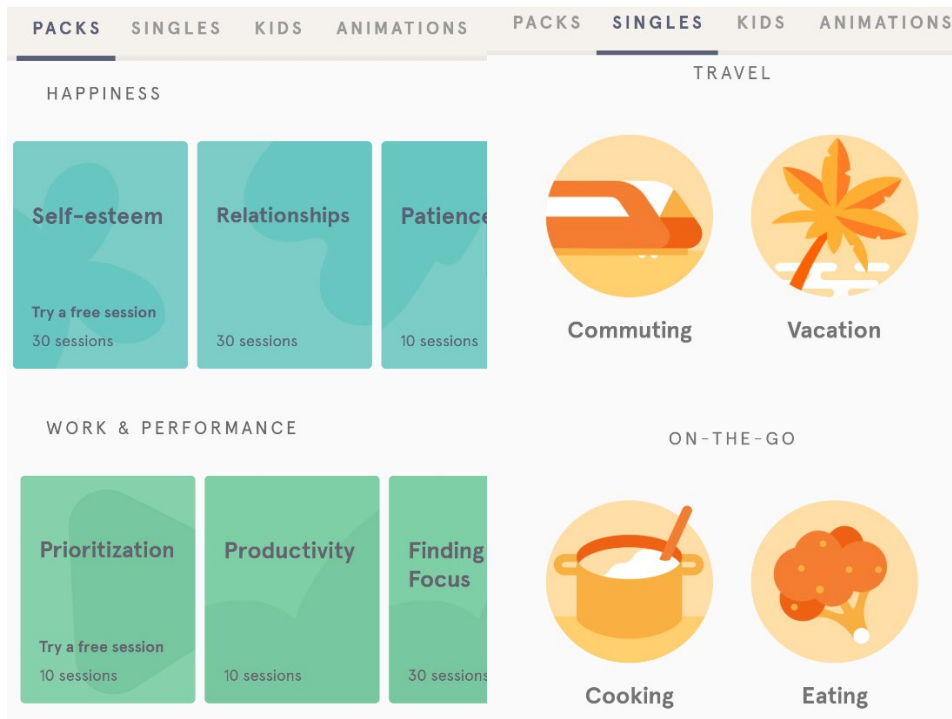
Fig. 4. Headspace screen shot (4, 5)

With the extensive selection of topics Headspace addresses, no realm of life appears outside the scope of quantification and mindful intervention—physical illness, workplace performance, interpersonal relationships, child-rearing, and even the basic functions of eating and sleeping are targeted sites of enhancement and the realization of one's potential through the app's quantifying power. The technology of the application is extensively indivuating, it atomizes all aspects of life and human behavior through a quantifying schema that captures the particularities of individual life in its heterogeneity. At the same time, every activity and endeavor is presumed to be ubiquitous and common across the population of users, subject to a homogenous mode of calculation. Consequently, the method of self-actualization reflects and generates both an individuation of the subject and its massification under the rubric of quantifiable mindful activity. This massification reflects the aggregate of individual daily choices and anchors their particularity within the larger whole of an autonomous self. In this way, the technology of quantification offered by Headspace captures the variability and consistency of subjective experience in order to render it useful for self-enhancement.

The array of circumstances that offer opportunities for meditative practice in the Headspace interface suggests that mindfulness can transform even the most negative emotions and constrictive experiences into sites of potential value. The goal of mindfulness is not to avoid suffering or even to "cure" mental, emotional, or behavioral deficiency, but to redirect one's response to these towards the alternate ends of fully realized and enhanced well-being. The functionalism that underlies cognitive-behavioral psychology, as I've argued, finds its most

66

explicit condensation in this form of mindfulness practice. The Headspace application brings this functionalism to the fore by emphasizing how the object of human transformation is not the content or raw material of experience, emotion, or behavior, but the potential to redirect, by means of mindfulness, the individual's response to externality inward. The actual guided meditation sessions in the app provide further insight on this point. The sessions follow the common Westernized meditation procedure popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn.[177] For example, the first "basic" meditation session begins with focusing on breathing and feeling bodily sensations as they occur:

> Noticing the feeling of the body, the weight of the body pressing down into the seat beneath you…noticing any sounds around you. And as you pause just noticing how the body feels...how the body is breathing. That movement of breath...some people feel it in the stomach. For others, in the chest, in the diaphragm. As you follow that movement the mind will wander away almost inevitably...as soon as you realize it's wandered just acknowledging that letting it go, just coming back again to that rising and falling sensation. Letting go of any focus on the breath. Letting the mind do what it wants, just for a few seconds. And then bring the attention back to the body, back to that feeling of contact. Hopefully you feel a little calmer, a little more relaxed...take a moment to really appreciate how it feels to pause, to get a little more headspace.

The therapeutic method utilized in this Headspace basic meditation session is two-pronged: it involves both the intentional direction of attention on the body and breath in the present and an acceptance that the act of intentional focus will inevitably go awry. As such it emphasizes both the capacity for making emergent phenomena present in thought and the recognition that this actualization is outside of one's full rational control. Paradoxically the acceptance of one's rational limits is meant to impart the freedom to discover a greater sense of self. Meditation is a process of discovery and access to one's underlying self—a self that is provisional, constructed, and mediated by externality and contingency. The recognition of contingency is the key to freedom, as it allows one to redirect ("bring the attention back") the

---

[177] Zinn gives the basic instructions for mindfulness meditation as an exercise with seven steps:
1) Assume a comfortable posture lying down or sitting.
2) Close your eyes if you feel comfortable.
3) Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the inbreath and fall or recede on the outbreath.
4) Keep the focus on your breathing, "being with" each inbreath for its full duration and with each outbreath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.
5) Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of your breath coming in and out.
6) If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times, then your "job" is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.
7) Practice this exercise for fifteen minutes at a convenient time every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to incorporate a disciplined meditation practice into your life. Be aware of how it feels to spend some time each day just being with your breath without having to do anything. Jon Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 58.

function of the thoughts and feelings that befall the subject from the outside, that is, that are necessarily environmentally determined. This redirection is an intentional process of "disentangling" oneself from externality rather than working to transform or overcome it:

> Mindfulness meditation is not a relaxation exercise; sometime its effect is quite the opposite when the object of awareness is disturbing. It is not a way to avoid difficulties in life, because it brings us closer to our difficulties before we disentangle from them. It does not bypass our personality problems; it is a slow, gentle process of coming to grips with *who we are*. Finally, mindfulness meditation is not about achieving a different state of mind; it is about settling into our current experience in a relaxed, alert, and openhearted way [emphasis mine].[178]

The transformative intentionality that mindfulness demands and engenders is both purposive and contingent. The form of actualization is not guided by a teleological or mechanistic principle, but by a purely operative one. The operative principle of mindfulness—the realization of the self ("coming to grips with who we are") through a cultivation of intentional behavioral practice—cannot be characterized as a form of teleological determinism because the self to be discovered is both provisional and emergent. The self that mindfulness aims at is a contingent construction but one that already exists in potentiality. It is the very nature of subjective contingency that allows for this self-transformation as an immanent form of determination that is environmentally constricted. This account of the subject and causality derives from Buddhist philosophy: "the Buddhist notion of rebirth has to do with the perpetual forming and re-forming of identity rather than the reemergence of a fixed entity…a person is regarded as a process of continually unfolding dynamic systems, responding to a changing environment and perpetually reshaping itself as it constructs a meaningful order out of each moment's external and internal data."[179]

The peculiar causality assumed by mindfulness depends on a distinction between form and matter that awards equal purposiveness to both. This is evident in the twofold meditative technique most utilized in Western mindfulness practices, which focuses attention on the body and sensory experience in the present on the one hand (often referred to as "body scanning") and intentionally allowing thoughts and feelings to occur as they unfold, acknowledging them without judgement (referred to as "noting") on the other. Another excerpt from a Headspace meditation session on "self-esteem" elaborates on this technique and the theory of the subject and agency that governs mindfulness:

> If it was easy replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts we would have done that a long time ago. It's actually quite exhausting trying to do that…this exercise is more about stepping back, seeing our thoughts with a little more clarity and distance…so that we no longer have that vise of 'good thought,' 'bad thought'…instead we simply see them as

---

[178] Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegal, and Paul R. Fulton, eds. *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2013), 63.
[179] Germer et al., 248.

thoughts. We recognize that we're not our thoughts, we're not our feelings; [we're not] what we look like, what we wear, what we do. We are something beyond all of that, beneath all of that…this exercise helps us really touch that place…we're going to start with a technique called noting where we simply label thinking as thinking, feeling as feeling…what it does is it starts to create a little bit of distance between ourselves and the thought, ourselves and the feeling…[interval of body scanning and breath counting]…Anytime you get distracted…note it, let it go, and return to the breath…just for a moment now, letting go of any focus…allow the mind to do whatever it wants to do. If it wants to think, let it think…and now bring the attention back to the body again…remind yourself as well that these patterns of thought, low self-esteem or whatever you want to call it, are strong and develop over a long period of time…they don't change in a day or just a few days this is a process where we let go of engaging with them the whole time. It's not that we're trying to change them but we no longer engage with them, we no longer take them so seriously. In doing so the mind feels more at rest and we experience what lies beneath those thoughts, beneath those feelings. And over time that quite sense of confidence really starts to permeate our life.

The meditation begins with a recognition that mindfulness is not about trying to change the substance or matter of thoughts, but rather about distancing oneself from the content of thoughts and recognizing thoughts without judgement. Thought is treated not as a vehicle of transformation but of a neutral encounter that allows access to the self "beyond" and "beneath" the phenomenal shapes for which we often mistake it. The forms that thought takes are neither incidental nor given or determined—they are "strong and develop over a period of time" but their function can change when we "no longer engage with them" through intentional acknowledgement and "letting go." Mindfulness is characterized as an intentional rather than purposive (which entails predetermined form) or automatic act aimed at an "experience…[of the self that] lies beneath." This experience can transform one's self esteem, "that quite sense of confidence [that] really starts to permeate our life," through habitual mindful practice. As a functional mediation it transforms one's relationship to the self and continually constructs the self through the labor of intentional practice. The recognition that "we're not our thoughts, we're not our feelings; [we're not] what we look like, what we wear, what we do" creates a flexible sense of self that is not dependent on external circumstance. This detachment affords true self-realization and provides an avenue for increased self-management and self-enhancement to better handle and respond to shifting circumstances.

Mindfulness apps like Headspace are an increasingly available technology of mindfulness mediation, but these technologies untether the self from externality in order to access a self that "lies beneath" our automatic responses to circumstance. This buried self finds purpose only in being; it "no longer engage[s]" with thoughts and feelings that arise from circumstances that structure one's life, because it understands those responses to be fallacies. The theory of the psyche that underlies mindfulness "assumes that the way we construct our private realities is mostly delusional…the antidote, mindful attention, allows us to see things more clearly. What

we see, however, is not some absolute truth; rather we see through the delusion of our conceptualizations. We learn to hold our constructions more lightly."[180] Thus, mindfulness technologies aid in the discovery and production of a more flexible, open, and provisional self. The self one discovers through mindfulness is not an essential "fixed entity," but a potential subject amenable to continual molding and self-enhancement. This mode of flexible self-actualization, forms a central technique of neoliberal governance aimed at enhancing the spontaneous order of the market. Neoliberal governance is guided by heuristic rules that "are designed to influence individual behavior and to promote 'spontaneous order'…so as to enable economic agents to form reasonably correct expectations regarding future behavior of individuals."[181] The technology of mindfulness apps also assumes a "doctrine of structural…[and] *perpetual* adjustment"[182] as a way to govern the mutable system of daily life experience that constitutes the self. The app offers a path to represent and actualize this aggregate self through a grid of self-quantification that captures the diversity of subjective experience in its individuality. This grid expands the possibility of lifestyle choices available to subjects, engendering their further responsibilization under neoliberalism.

While mindfulness promises greater freedom in self-realization, as a technique taken up by neoliberal governance, this mode of subjectification can constrict and foreclose political claims and political action. The phenomenological orientation of mindfulness—the meditative practice of embodying the present moment—can counter the sense of alienation from the body engendered by the demands of contemporary capitalism, but in doing so it can also make subjects more amenable to these very circumstances. Likewise, the meditative exercise of observing and noting experience with acceptance can provide an important means of caring for the self amid conditions of exploitation or injustice, but it can also neutralize political judgement regarding those very conditions. In teaching nonjudgment and acceptance of oneself, mindfulness risks locating the remedy to suffering caused by material structures in an individual transformation of one's relationship to the self. This is not to say that mindfulness under neoliberalism merely masks the conditions of exploitation; mindfulness requires acknowledgment of externality but also disengagement from it, a "letting go" of one's judgements and external attachments. This withdrawal is not necessarily a de-political one, but it is an individuating one—a turning inward to access and actualize the hidden potential self. This individuation, a discovery of the self beneath or before the entanglements of social life, is particularly amenable to the depoliticizing project of neoliberalism. If taken up as an end in itself, the internal mediation mindfulness offers substitutes for the external mediation of political transformation. While this displacement may be unintentional on the part of practitioners, it redirects the impetus of social struggle toward the individual enhancement of well-being.

---

[180] Germer et al., 26.
[181] E.U. Petersmann, *Constitutional Functions and Constitutional Problems in International Economic Law* (Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, 1991), 16. Quoted in Quinn Slobodia, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 255.
[182] Slobodia, *Globalists*, *262*.

In this use, the philosophy underpinning mindfulness perpetuates the neoliberal notion that true freedom is the freedom to make intentional decisions, to work on oneself, and to invest in one's well-being. The well-being encouraged and promised by mindfulness, "a comprehensive program that cultivates happiness," entails a "curious paradox": "the more fully we can embrace unhappiness, the deeper and more abiding our sense of well-being."[183] The increased individual well-being promised by mindfulness practice is possible only through "embracing unhappiness," that is, embracing the inevitable fact of suffering. Paradoxically, the source of unhappiness is framed as a matter of one's delusional response to externality, a delusion that one must let go of to realize a more fundamental well-being. In other words, suffering is at least in part caused by the subject's conditioned response to rationalize and judge the stimuli of the external world. Individuals are powerless to change the inevitability of suffering, but they can change their impulse to rationalize it by taking a position of acknowledgement and nonjudgment. Again, the suggestion that one can only change one's individual responses to external conditions contributes to the conception that freedom is a matter of personal choice. This freedom to choose, whether reflected in consumer lifestyle choices or in the intentional cultivation of mindful practice that apps like Headspace offer, works to obfuscate the conditions that delegate choices to some but not others. It also, as I've argued, produces subjects who take responsibility for their lives by regulating their individual behavior and attitudes in response to these conditions. Rather than demand structural adjustment, they adjust themselves according to reflexive choices. The quantification of self activity accessible through the Headspace app affords a means for this continual regulation and adjustment.

This regulation is tied to the maintenance and enhancement of subjective well-being, not through the satisfaction of interests, but through the expansion of possible sites of self-investment. The speculative value of these investments is not a form of immediate profit but a form of credit, a resource intrinsic to our being that exists only in potentiality as a set of capacities. As I've argued throughout this section, the method of regulation and/as investment that mindfulness offers in these technologies reflects and engenders a particularly neoliberal subject, one who is compelled to think and act as an entrepreneur, or more properly an investor, and to treat their very interiority and daily life habits as a portfolio of assets.[184] This subjectivity is the central actor constructed and governed by "a distinctly neoliberal order in which people are not simply disciplined as individuals capable of alienating their labor power in exchange for a wage, but are also constructed as individuals and populations…whose credibility or probability can similarly be measured, abstracted, and exchanged."[185] The mobile technology of meditation applications offers one means to measure and abstract subjective credibility. By presenting life as a range of measurable options, these apps compel subjects to make intentional decisions that reflect "who they are" and to be responsible for these choices. The irony is that under neoliberalism, subjects "have little choice but to fashion themselves as individuals—individuals

---

[183] Germer et al., 24.

[184] "As investors in the own human capital," Michel Feher writes, "the subjects who are presupposed and targeted by neoliberalism can thus be conceived as the managers of a portfolio of conducts pertaining to all aspects of their lives." Feher, "Self-Appreciation," 30.

[185] Ascher, 89.

whose risk profile, like their credit rating, is increasingly their responsibility to manage."[186] In the self-care industry, mindfulness becomes one means of both fashioning individuals as individuals (self-realization) and managing individual credit (self-regulation and maintenance).

One of the notifications I encountered while using Headspace provides a useful illustration: "So much effort goes into trying to be perfect. But how much more attractive are vulnerability and imperfection?" Generated by the app, this notification demonstrates how the aim of mindfulness is not a given end towards which one works—i.e., perfection—but rather an ongoing sense of flexibility found in the capability to be vulnerable and imperfect. This flexibility is more valuable according to the app because it is more "attractive." But what or who does it attract? As a way of enhancing self-esteem ("a quiet confidence"), mindfulness attracts investment, both from oneself and others. The subject of mindfulness is not a self driven by purposive utilitarian rationality, but a speculative self driven by the intentional cultivation of credit-worthiness.[187] This cultivation, aided by mindfulness apps and promised by the larger industry of self-care, is framed as (self-)care rather than instrumental labor, a form of regulation that both maintains and enhances the self.

---

[186] Ascher, 94.
[187] Feher, *Rated Agency*, 18.

Chapter 3: Instructing the Self: Evidence-Based Practices and Pedagogical Therapeutics

Knowledge is perhaps the chief good that can be had at a price.
–Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*

Your kids will meditate in school
Zen fascists will control you
–The Dead Kennedys, *California Uber Alles*

In 2004, Proposition 63, also known as the "Mental Health Services Act" or MHSA, passed in California. One of only four initiatives to have increased taxes in California legislative history, Prop 63 mandated a tax increase for "very high-income individuals," requiring about one tenth of the top one percent of income-earners in California to "pay an additional one percent of that portion of their annual income that exceeds one million dollars ($1,000,000)."[188] According to the California Department of Health Care Services, the tax is meant to

> provide increased funding, personnel and other resources to support county mental health programs and monitor progress toward statewide goals for children, transition age youth, adults, older adults and families. The [Mental Health Services] Act addresses a broad continuum of prevention, early intervention and service needs and the necessary infrastructure, technology and training elements that will effectively support this system.[189]

The MHSA allocates funds for the above through five components:

- Community Services and Supports (CSS)–provides funds for direct services to individuals with severe mental illness
- Capital Facilities and Technological Needs (CFTN)–provides funding for building projects and increasing technological capacity to improve mental illness service delivery
- Workforce, Education and Training (WET)–provides funding to improve the capacity of the mental health workforce
- Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)–provides investment of 20% of the MHSA funding for outreach programs for families, providers, and others to recognize early signs of mental illness. The overall goal is to improve early access to services and programs, to reduce stigma, and discrimination experienced by individuals with mental illness. MHSA Prevention and Early Intervention Programs serve Californians of all ages.
- Innovation (INN)–funds and evaluates new approaches increasing access to the underserved and unserved communities, promote interagency collaboration, and increase the overall quality of mental health services

---

[188] Mental Health Service Act, State of California, section 2, (g).
[189] "Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)," Department of Health Care Services, State of California, https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/MH_Prop63.aspx.

Despite an audit in 2017 that found millions raised through the MHSA remain unspent, a recent report by the Rand Corporation found that the PEI program in particular, which accounts for almost a quarter of MHSA programming, "expanded access to therapy and case management to almost 130,000 young people in Los Angeles County…many were poor and from minority communities."[190] Indeed, the PEI constituent of the MHSA is considered a successful and innovative example of a new model of public mental health services for children and youth comprised of public-private partnerships, evidence-based practices, and more holistic approaches to care like multisystemic therapy, which targets the multiple environments—familial, educational, etc.—of the client as sites of behavioral intervention.

The same year that the MHSA was voted into law, Dr. Bruce Chorpita, a professor of psychology at the University of California Los Angeles, founded PracticeWise LLC, a private for-profit consulting company that has contracted with the LA County Department of Mental Health since 2010 to provide curriculum, trainings, and technical services for behavioral health specialists and providers as part of the PEI program of the MHSA. According to the firm's website, the mission of PracticeWise is to "advance how evidence and information are used to improve the lives of children and families…through established knowledge management strategies and resources."[191] The company's "core values are that our professional activities and endeavors are grounded in science, publicly verifiable, and self-correcting." Chorpita is a cognitive behavioral therapist and a vocal proponent of "evidence-based practices" in behavioral and mental health. He is known for having led a system-wide restructuring of the Hawaii Department of Health's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD) while serving as its clinical director from 2001-2003, and was instrumental in expanding the University of Haiwaii's Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Center while holding a faculty position there from 1997-2008. At UCLA, he directs the Child FIRST program, "dedicated to improving the effectiveness of mental health services delivered to all children, through innovation in mental health treatment design, clinical decision-making and information-delivery models, and mental health system architecture and processes."[192]

The descriptions of both of Chorpita's recent endeavors utilize key terminology of corporate business administration and entrepreneurialism—"innovation," "decision-making," "information-delivery models," "core values," "knowledge management strategies," and "self-correcting" are all concepts implemented to offset bureaucratic challenges to the smooth functioning of corporations and to enhance the creative development of companies. This

---

[190] Anna Gorman, "Tax on Millionaires Boosts California Mental Health Services, Study Finds," CNN (March 14, 2018), https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/14/health/california-tax-mental-health-partner/index.html. For the Rand report see J. Scott Asherwood, Sheryl H. Kataoka, and Nicole K. Eberhart, "Evaluation of the Mental Health Services Act in Los Angeles County Implementation and Outcomes for Key Programs," Rep. Evaluation of the Mental Health Services Act in Los Angeles County Implementation and Outcomes for Key Programs, Rand Corporation (2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2327.html.
[191] "PracticeWise," PracticeWise LLC, https://www.practicewise.com/#about.
[192] "Child FIRST – Focus on Innovation and Redesign in Systems and Treatment," UCLA, https://www.childfirst.ucla.edu/.

corporate model for institutional governance in mental healthcare provides one example of how neoliberal rationality has penetrated and reshaped public life and social services according to business metrics and an entrepreneurial ethos. The discursive shift here is tied to governmental policies that have fueled the privatization of mental health care in the State of California, policies that paradoxically stem from the increased state funding for mental health services provided by the MHSA. Both the Child FIRST program and PracticeWise are two pertinent examples of the privatization of public mental health services engendered by neoliberalism. PracticeWise serves as an example of the literal outsourcing of public services to a contracted private company. Child FIRST, while based in a public educational institution, exemplifies the reshaping of public health in terms of business metrics, market values, and neoliberal discourse. Dr. Chorpita's direction of the State of Hawaii's CAMHD is another pertinent case.

An article published in the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in 2006 documents the results of Chorpita and his colleagues' restructuring of the CAMHD, their development of a novel system of care for the department, and the evidence-based services initiatives they implemented.[193] The title of the piece, "Getting Better at Getting Them Better: Health Outcomes and Evidence-Based Practice Within a System of Care," emphasizes both the optimization of therapeutic technics ("getting better at getting them better") and the central role of empiricism and scientific knowledge in regimes "of care." The goal of optimization is reached, according to this case study, through the implementation of a slew of what I argue are neoliberal reforms and a presumed model of the subject derived from cognitive behavioral psychology. The structural reforms and adjustments of public mental health services I analyze here aim, through public-private partnerships and the implementation of quantitative measurement standards, to distill public mental health into a market problem rather than a social problem. This transformation, an example of the economization or neoliberalization of social services more broadly, depends on a subject that is both quantifiable and amenable to techniques of behavioral intervention espoused in cognitive behavioral psychology.

The reforms led by Chorpita and his team are situated in response to the problem posed by "diversity" in behavioral health care: "Given this diversity, it is not surprising that multiple conflicting views emerge about how limited resources should be distributed, who should be served, and what services should be provided."[194] The obstacle to a more efficient system of care is characterized by the authors as the difficulty of creating and implementing modular "best practices" given the diversity and scope of clients, practitioners, and their "many different backgrounds and interests."[195] That is to say, what may work for one particular case involving a specific client and provider within a certain organization cannot be extrapolated to serve as a guiding best practice given the heteronomy of environmental factors. Chorpita and his team

---

[193] Alfred M. Arsensdorf, Mary Brogan, Bruce F. Chorpita et al., "Getting Better at Getting Them Better: Health Outcomes and Evidence-Based Practice Within a System of Care," *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 45 (June 2006), no. 6.
[194] Arsendorf et al., 749.
[195] Arsendorf et al., 749.

address this problem of diversity by challenging the direct service model of care, where services are delivered "by small teams at regional guidance centers," and restructuring CAMHD to a "comprehensive system of care," a "public-private collaboration with eight regional public family guidance branches providing care coordination and administrative services and approximately 35 contracted private provider agencies delivering the majority of direct care."[196] The public-private collaboration is meant to introduce the supposed efficiency of private business to public mental health care. Rather than elide the need or curb the role of state intervention in the realm of public health, CAMHD's public-private "shared ownership" model is a pertinent example of the way neoliberalism reshapes the public arena—both the distribution and function of public goods and services—according to private market-infused ends and means. The state, according to Chorpita and his team, is unequipped to handle the diversity of interests and local conditions at play in mental health care—it must be buttressed by the competition of the market via private contractors to function efficiently. This partnership transforms the state's function from providing direct social services to "coordinating" services and facilitating competition amongst private contractors.

The initiative at Hawaii's CAMHD led by Chorpita was guided by "a two-pronged strategy…building specific empirically supported programs and…pursuing incremental improvement of current care toward evidence-based ideals."[197] The former more precisely involved "evidence-based programs such as multisystemic therapy (MST; Henggele et al., 1998) and multidimensional treatment."[198] Multisystemic therapy or MST, is often referred to as an "ecological model" for approaching behavioral health issues because it begins with the premise that subjects are inseparable from their environment(s) and that treatment must recognize and be situated within the environmental conditions of individual behavior (see fig. 1). It shares in the premise of CBT-infused workplace wellness programs that "comprehensive approaches are needed to address complex realities," and advocates for therapy that works with the various environmental "systems" of clients.[199] The goal within MST is not to alter or address these conditions directly, but to recognize them as factors in the subject's behavior in order to provide a more holistic approach to treatment that takes into account the various layers of systemic embeddedness of clients.

In this sense, MST is considered part of the "third wave" of behavioral psychology treatments, insofar as this third wave attempts to reconcile both the environmental behaviorism of the first wave and the second wave emphasis on informational networks.[200] Like mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy, the MST approach recognizes the importance of

---

[196] Arsendorf et al., 749.
[197] Arsendorf et al., 750.
[198] Arsendorf et al., 750.
[199] "What is Total Worker Health?" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/totalhealth.html.
[200] For a schematic account of the developmental wave of behavioral psychology, see chapter 2. Most MST involves a mindfulness-based therapy component; MST can be considered the primary theoretical framework for therapeutic practice while mindfulness-based CBT is a primary therapeutic method.

environment without attempting to alter it directly: "the only thing you have control over is your reaction" is a common mantra of behavioral health providers and mindfulness gurus alike. The recognition of the individual's unalterable environment in MST and CBT alike has the paradoxical effect of alienating individuals from their embedded environments by compelling them to accept their immutable givenness. Instead of questioning or changing the material and social conditions that contribute to behavioral and emotional health issues, subjects are trained to manage both their expectations and responses to these conditions. This therapeutic approach responsibilizes subjects by obliging them to bear the burden of environmentally determined difficulties, and to bear it in a way that is deemed healthy. It also privatizes mental health as an individual response or adaptation problem rather than a problem that stems from socially determined factors. In doing so, it depoliticizes both the subject and object of political transformation by redirecting political demands and action directed at external conditions inward toward therapeutic modes of managing individual behavior.

MST views the youth as embedded within multiple interconnected systems
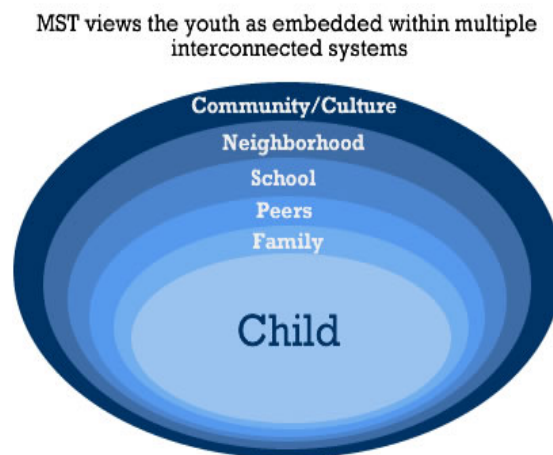
Fig. 1. MST approach

The article goes on to identify the "strategic plan" of CAMHD's restructuring through five goals: "shared ownership, accountable business practices, system of care principles, evidence-based practices, and performance evaluation."[201] While the first two targeted administrative or organizational changes, the last three led to an implementation of "a major evidence-based services initiative" about five years into the reform, when "qualitative analyses identified weaknesses in the provider array in the form of undesirable use of restrictive levels of care…and use of therapeutic approaches with uncertain efficacy."[202] The central role of evidence and objective observational data suggests an alteration in the arena of mental health from a focus on quality of life to one directed towards quantitative, functional metrics measured by scores on

---

[201] Arsendorf et al., 749.
[202] Arsendorf et al., 749.

everything from physical fitness to emotional stress, eating and sleeping habits to social skills.[203] The evidence of such rankings verifies that the problematic behavior of the client (though not the behavior's underlying causes) is functionally altered in connection with all aspects of individual well-being, and lends a level of objectivity to these practices.

While the novel model of care implemented by the restructuring of the CAMHD is justified according to "evidence-based practices," even the article admits that "it was unclear whether this expanded investment [of the reform] was associated with better child and family functioning."[204] Regardless, the rhetorical effect of deferring to objectivity made the CAMHD reforms more attractive to investors and stakeholders alike. In fact, components of the initiative are described as "consensus building about the definition of evidence…[and] efforts to increase stakeholders' awareness and enthusiasm for evidence-based services."[205] The target, again in the words of the article, was the "dissemination of MST…for externalizing problems through community providers and cognitive-behavioral therapy for internalizing disorders."[206] Here the objective evidence of MST and CBT is not in fact self-evident—evidence, the matrix of value for a given treatment or therapeutic program, is an effect of "consensus building," which is itself dependent upon a manufactured increase in "awareness and enthusiasm for evidence-based services." This paradoxical process of making evidence-based services evident occurs through "a program of large-scale training of stakeholders using a variety of models…contractual integration through performance standards and practice guidelines; and…the integration of information systems, performance measures, and feedback tools for administrative management and clinical supervision."[207] The naturalization of "facts" occurs through both the education of stakeholders and the implementation of information technologies.

The CAMHD reform led by Chorpita in Hawaii exemplifies recent shifts in governmental approaches to healthcare and therapeutics in the United States that exhibit an underlying neoliberal rationality. The recourse to scientific objectivity, at once a guiding principle and method of the reform, is artificially produced through a pedagogic programming ("training") of stakeholders, here understood as an array of public and private providers and administrators who must be taught to both perceive and render relevant information as evidence. Importantly, it is not just the subjects of therapeutic governance that are targeted here: the CAMHD reform emphasizes the role of modifying the behavior of stakeholders in this process, the managers and administrators of these evidence-based therapeutic techniques. The pedagogic function is directed at transforming providers from public servants accountable to their clients to

---

[203] The CAMHD report refers to these measurements as diagnostic "status ratings": "The child status ratings include emotional and behavioral well-being, academic learning progress, personal responsibility, safety and personal well-being, community living, caregiver functioning, and child and family satisfaction." Arsendorf et al., 752.
[204] Arsendorf et al., 749.
[205] Arsendorf et al., 750.
[206] Arsendorf et al., 751.
[207] Arsendorf et al., 751.

stakeholders who answer to the investors, both public and private, of the CAMHD.[208] The evaluation and appraisal of this transformation of public health institutions into firms operates through evidence and best practices generated by qualitative information technologies meant to convince shareholders of the "efficacy" of their investment.[209]

As we know from the environmental emphasis of both neoliberal and cognitive-behavioral accounts of causality, the technical production of norms (in this case, the so-called evidence of human behavioral modification) does not arise ex nihilo and is not without certain constraints. While the article documenting CAMHD's restructuring emphasizes the difficulty of overcoming environmental "diversity" in its programming, the therapeutic model it advocates seeks to render certain (we might venture selective) information observable and therefore subject to intervention in spite of this difficulty. Citing data from quarterly assessments at the CAMHD between 2002 and 2005, the article states that the "analytic model did not control for many potentially confounding client variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, diagnosis) and organizational level variables (e.g., geographic distribution, level of care)…nevertheless, despite these limitations, a consistent 'signal' emerged through the 'noise' across the caretaker- and professional-informant outcome measures."[210] The "signal" of evidence here emerges out of the "noise" of diversity or externalities, which the provider must be attuned to recognize, like the price mechanism of the market. Similar to how mindfulness trains the mind to sift through the noise of everyday stress and distractions in order to focus, the providers must be taught to dial into the frequency of this signal of truth amidst the noise of variable limitations, which are not incidental to the therapeutic process but the backdrop from which evidence emerges.

The evidence-based services utilized at Hawaii's CAMHD involve both a respect for quantitative knowledge and a directed manifestation of latent or speculative data in order to implement the "use of best practices" in their care model.[211] The CAMHD reform speaks to a broader transformation of public health and social services according to best practices generated from the private sector. Wendy Brown writes how the "ubiquitousness and promiscuity of best practices…simultaneously indexes and facilitates neoliberal economization of heretofore nonmarketized spheres and activities."[212] Best practices are evidence-based guidelines for

---

[208] Michel Feher argues that one of the "unintentional effects" of neoliberal policies in the late-20th century was the rise of finance as a governing norm and epistemology, which in turn engendered a transformation of government entities into firms and employees into stakeholders beholden to the interests of investors. See Michel Feher, *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age* (New York: Zone Books, 2018), 23-24, 44-48, 99, 143-144.

[209] This begs the question: if mental health providers have been transformed into stakeholders in this schema, who or what entities constitute the shareholders? The article on CAMHD emphasizes the "joint ownership" between public and private investment in mental health, but in discussing accountability, never once mentions taxpayers. Accountability is here addressed to those who, at the county, State or Federal level, decide on the allocation of funds for mental health. In the case of CAMHD, the Department of Health and Human Services in Hawaii chose to invest in Chorpita's vision of reform, which included the selection and contracting of competing private behavioral health providers.

[210] Arsendorf et al., 755.

[211] Arsendorf et al., 751.

[212] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone, 2015), 139.

decision-making and management in an organization that have proven efficacy and efficiency. Based in and justified by empirical observation and consensus, best practices replace normative hierarchical mandates, traditional values, and contestable principles with "value-free technical knowledge" aimed at enhancing the competitive advantage of firms in the marketplace.[213] As such, they both economize non-market domains like public health, transforming governmental agencies and public institutions into firms, and depoliticize the aims and means of governance by disavowing political claims and demands as partisan and inefficient compared to the authority and objectivity of empirical data. In the case the restructuring of CAMHD, the emphasis on "consensus-building," "shared ownership," and "accountability," as well as the MST approach, imparts an ethical dimension to best evidence-based practices, a neutrality generated by purportedly democratic buy-in which stands to replace and silence subjective political values. Again, Wendy Brown sheds light on how this aspect of best practices goes beyond inculcating and diffusing market neutral values in the public sphere to subsume normative political ends and concerns within an apolitical neoliberal logic:

> [best practice] also represent the opposite, namely, the absorption of public or political concerns into markets and consequently the elimination of the need for legal, political, or ethical interference…in combining ethics, fairness, legality, efficiency, and maximized outcomes in a competitive environment, best practices are once substitute for conventional government regulation, stand as a critique of it…and represent paramount concern with business outcomes.[214]

The purported neutrality, objectivity, and efficiency of best (evidence-based) practices in the reforms undertaken by Dr. Chorpita at CAMHD work to critique and supplant political interests, but they certainly do not displace the interests of private business. Thus, the recourse to objectivity in best practices obfuscates the decidedly normative values and claims of market logic. The article's conclusion provides a telling illustration:

> A variety of qualitative and quantitative evidence indicates that the Hawaii system of care for youths has improved dramatically during the past decade…The historical analysis presented here does not allow for attributing the cause of change to any specific initiative. However, these findings are consistent with the conclusion that efforts to implement evidence-based services, to develop care coordination practice, increase information feedback to stakeholders, adopt statewide performance measures, restructure quality improvement and practice-focused performance management processes, and improve utilization management are meeting with success.
>
> *Disclosure: Drs. Daleiden and Chorpita and Ms. Brogan benefit from consulting related to evidence-based services and health systems development. Dr. Daleiden is a consultant*

---

[213] Wendy Brown, 138-9.
[214] Wendy Brown, 140-141.

to Starboard Capital Inc., and Real Time Engines, LLC. Dr. Chorpita is president of PracticeWise, LLC. Ms. Brogan is a consultant to Human Systems and Outcomes, Inc.

Evidence-Based Practices: MAP Implementation in L.A. County Public School District

Subsequent the passing of the Mental Health Services Act in California, any directly-operated and contracted providers receiving public funding through the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program for behavioral health services must abide by specified evidence-based practices.[215] While not all practicing therapists or behavioral health providers are required to "be trained/certified in the EBP [evidence-based practices] in order to claim services under a PEI Plan," in order for providers to receive State funding under PEI "the following conditions must be met":

> a. The majority of services provided must be intrinsic to the EBP model.
> b. If a Rendering Provider is not trained/certified in the EBP model, he/she shall coordinate services with someone who is trained in the EBP model.
> c. EBP codes should be used for both "Core" and "Non-Core" services in accord with the aforementioned instructions.[216]

Public and private providers competing for service contracts are thus incentivized to receive training in the EBP model in order to appear attractive for potential investment from the L.A. County Department of Mental Health, which allocates the funds of PEI under the MHSA. While there are a number of EBP programs, the PracticeWise Direct Service Workshop developed by Dr. Chorpita and his colleagues with certification in the PracticeWise behavioral intervention method "Managing and Adapting Practice" or MAP, is the most comprehensive and most prevalent. According to the workshop literature, MAP "[improves] outcomes and quality of care" through "*structured collaboration*, a framework for coordinating individuals and information around key decisions. MAP provides a unifying set of concepts and resources to organize and guide activity across a diverse service array."[217] This coordination of individuals and information across diversity bears resemblance to a neoliberal definition of governance as a system of rules, what Hayek referred to as a "highway code" and the Ordoliberals called an *Ordnungspolitik*, that guides subjects in their decision-making processes. Just as neoliberal

---

[215] According to the County of Los Angeles Mental Health Services' Guide to Claiming Prevention and Early Intervention (2016), "All services for clients being claimed to a PEI Plan MUST have a PEI-approved EBP [evidence-based practice] code selected for the claim." The "EBP codes reflect services that are provided as part of an Evidence-Based Practice when the program using the EBP meets the fidelity and criteria of the EBP model. In addition, in order to use an EBP code for a service, the client must meet the criteria identified by the EBP model and ensure that the treatment approach is appropriate to the mental health needs and treatment plan of the client." A Guide to Claiming Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) & Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Services, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (September 2016), http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dmh/248958_A-Guide-to-Claiming-PEI-EBP-Services-Updated2-22-16v2.pdf.

[216] A Guide to Claiming Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) & Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Services, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (September 2016), 5.

[217] "Managing and Adapting Practice (MAP)," PracticeWise, LLC (copyright 2005-2018): https://www.practicewise.com/Community/MAP.

governance exercises power by implementing a certain rule-bound structure that best coordinates competition according to the truth of the market, the mode of behavioral intervention espoused by MAP is characterized as a type of quantification and organization of heterogeneous, contingent factors, a "system infrastructure" in order to better "coordinate care" according to "clear empirical grounding."[218]

The emphasis in both the neoliberal literature and the program of evidence-based practices increasingly constituting the national standard of public behavioral health care is on knowledge and pedagogy: working with the limitations of knowledge (the diversity of environment) through the implementation of a particular framework (what Hayek also called "general rules," Röpke a "structural policy," and what is referred to in MAP as "structured collaboration"), the goal is to render a level of consistency intelligible through training and the dissemination of "evidence" (health outcomes in the case of MAP, but more broadly the veridiction of the market for the neoliberals). As I've argued, the implementation of consensus-based and technically produced best practices in the arena of public mental health derives from a neoliberalization in both the structural policy and governing epistemology of the public sphere. MAP presents a potent example of both the structural changes (the privatization of public health) and the epistemic shift toward market governance at work in the particular site of public mental health care. The epistemic regime(s) constituted and indexed by MAP signifies both neoliberal rationality and the epistemological framework of cognitive behavioral psychology which emphasizes the environmental dependency of subjects and their therapeutic treatment or governability through framework interventions justified by scientific validity or best practices.

The PracticeWise website states that "MAP can help identify and select best fitting evidence-based treatments, but more often it operates more like a treatment design, implementation, and evaluation toolkit."[219] It does so through three primary "information resources":

- PracticeWise Evidence-Based Services (PWEBS) Database: A searchable database offering youth-specific summaries from published treatment research that meets specific standards for scientific quality.
- Practitioner Guides: A collection of practice guides representing common procedures among evidence-based practices, along with process guides, representing logic models for organizing key aspects of service delivery.
- Clinical Dashboard: A library of Microsoft Excel based tools that present a convenient visual summary of individual client profiles along with the history of clinical practices delivered.[220]

---

[218] "MAP."
[219] "MAP."
[220] "MAP."

In addition, MAP offers "workforce development"—"an organized sequence of training and consultation experiences using state-of-the-art curricular, portfolio evaluations, and credentialing systems to build expertise and competency of behavioral healthcare professions"—and "system development"—"an overall architecture for informed collaboration among different parts of the system, which can include a variety of coaching and consultation services to integrate the MAP resources throughout the service organization."[221] The workforce development program aims to cultivate "expertise" which, like best practices, supplants traditional authority with "state-of-the-art" technical metrics. Likewise, MAP's system development is meant to buttress "informed collaboration," which replaces the uninformed, that is, partisan, processes of consensus building found in politics. These developmental resources are aimed at the structural administration of service organizations, public and private, while the PWEBS database, practitioner guides, and clinical dashboards are technologies to be used for direct service by practitioners—therapists, counselors, behavioral coaches, and the like.

As the MAP workshop overview suggests, the PWEBS database is the central MAP technology insofar as "the system can suggest formal evidence-based programs or, alternatively, can provide detailed recommendations about discrete components of evidence-based treatments relevant to a specific youth's characteristics."[222] The database is maintained and updated regularly to include findings from the latest behavioral health services literature by *PracticeWise*:

> [The database is] assembled from an extensive, ongoing review of the research literature that identifies common elements of hundreds of effective interventions. The MAP system compiles, summarizes, and distributes this knowledge into the behavioral health care service array…research findings are integrated on a routine basis with local knowledge of individual clients…through an ongoing process of outcome and practice measurement and management. Thus, in addition to a clear empirical grounding for the evidence-based practices, the effectiveness of each implementation is individually monitored and managed for integrity and outcomes.[223]

The primary means of implementing evidence-based services is the observation, interpretation, and organization of knowledge, according to a common rubric of effectiveness of treatment outcomes. But more interestingly, the practitioners are themselves involved in the collection of data—when they utilize the clinical dashboard to monitor client progress, the information is added to the PWEBS database, allowing the system to integrate the "local knowledge of individual clients" in order to better address the problem of diversity. The PWEBS database is a technology that renders the "signal" of truth amongst the diverse "noise" of data meaningful. Focusing on a subset of target problematic behaviors, the system designates a likely age, ethnicity, designated therapist type, and the format and setting of treatment for each type based

---

[221] "MAP."
[222] "Direct Services Workshop Overview," PracticeWise, LLC (2011), 2.
[223] "MAP."

on aggregate data (see fig. 2).[224] The "diversity" of human factors—age, ethnicity, environmental settings, even relationships to others—are reduced to functional modular units. The database is thus meant to capture the heterogeneity of individual life in its particularity while at the same time embedding these individual factors in the larger system through "a unifying set of concepts and resources." In other words, it both individualizes subjects, behaviors, and qualities, and systematically unifies them under the rubric of its internal logic.

Target	Age	Ethnicity	Therapist	Format	Setting	LAC DMH Training Focus
Anxiety & Avoidance	3 – 19 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Other, Multiethnic	Parent, Teacher, Pre-Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Self Administered, Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Family, Multi-Family	Home, School, Community, Clinic, Day Care, Hospital	√
Inattention & Hyperactivity	2 – 13 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Multiethnic	Teacher, Pre-Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Self Administered, Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Family, Multi-Family	Home, School, Community, Clinic, Partial Hospital	
Autism Spectrum	1 – 12 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Other	Teacher, Pre-Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child	Home, School, Community, Clinic, Day Care	
Depression & Withdrawal	8 – 23 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Other, Multiethnic	Pre-Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Self Administered, Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Family	Home, School, Clinic	√
Disruptive Behavior	0 – 21 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Other, Multiethnic	Parent, Teacher, Pre-Bachelor, Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Self Administered, Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Family, Multi-Family	Home, School, Community, Clinic, Foster Home, Residential, Hospital, Corrections	√
Eating	11 – 20 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Other	Master, Doctor	Individual, Parent and Child, Family	Clinic	
Mania*	8 – 11 years	White or Caucasian	Master, Doctor	Group, Parent, Parent and Child	Clinic	
Substance Use	6 – 22 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, Other, Multiethnic	Bachelor, Master, Doctor	Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Family	School, Community, Clinic	
Suicidality	10 – 17 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Other	Unknown	Family	Home, School, Community, Hospital	
Traumatic Stress	2 – 18 years	White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Other, Multiethnic	Master, Doctor	Individual, Group, Parent, Parent and Child, Child	School, Clinic, Corrections	√

Fig. 2. PWEBS target problem areas

But the designation of a database for this technology is slightly misleading. PWEBS not only acts as an organized, searchable archive of data relevant to behavioral health services, it also automates treatment plans for specific clients. On the online PWEBS portal, practitioners are able to input criteria for specific cases—the level of evidence, problem type, age, gender, and ethnicity—and the system will spew out a ranked summary of effective treatment protocols and relevant research papers that constitute best practices (see fig. 3). The mindfulness apps analyzed

---

[224] "Direct Services Workshop," 3.

in the previous chapter speak to the automation of the specific therapeutic technique of meditation, where users can take responsibility for their own wellness and administer their own behavioral intervention treatment vis a vis a meditation application, but this is voluntarily done by the user (even if encouraged through company or other incentives).[225] The PWEBS database of MAP presents a more comprehensive sort of automation: the prescription of therapeutic techniques more broadly according to a machinic input/output interface. The example provides a halfway point between fully automated therapy (artificial intelligence that acts as a therapist, for example) and traditional therapy.[226] While therapists and behavioral health practitioners have always been expected to base their treatment decisions on both observed evidence and research, they traditionally play the role of the professional who diagnoses the underlying cause of symptoms, identifies the right therapy, and administers the appropriate treatment according to their judgment. Here the therapist has a role in identifying symptoms and administering treatment, but the diagnosis and treatment plan itself are automated according to statistical probability based on "evidence." Thus, the expertise of the practitioner is displaced by the expertise of the machine.
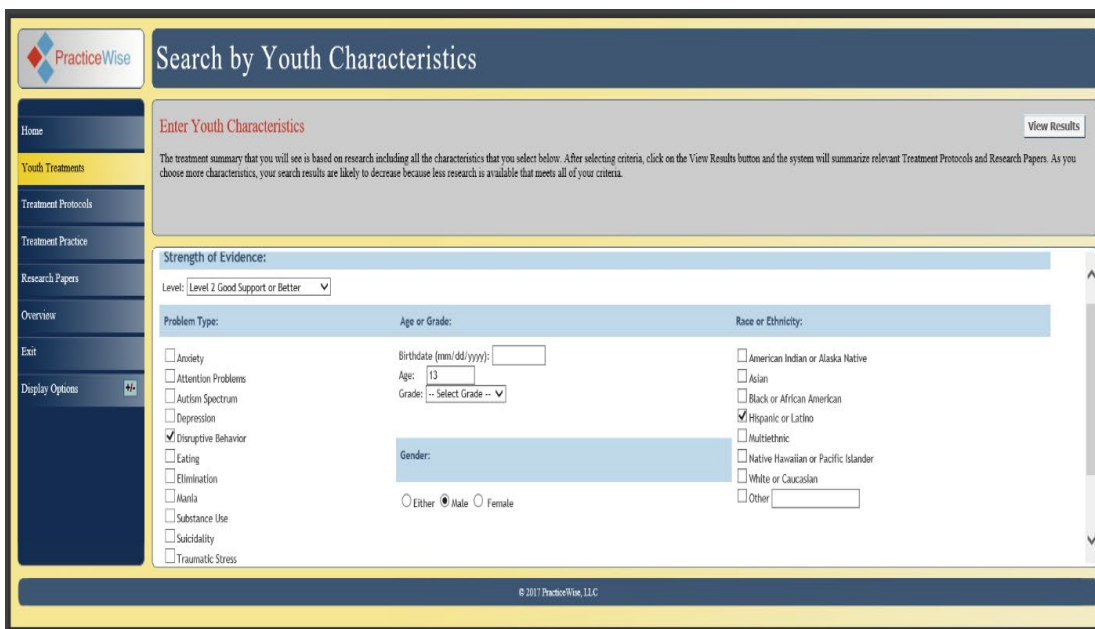
Fig. 3. PWEBS search interface

---

[225] It is also worth noting that in the context of mindfulness apps, once users are taught the proper technique, that is, once the meditative technique is automated internally, meditation can be practiced without an intermediary guide—it then truly becomes "automatic."

[226] While fully automated therapy is still in its early stage of development, there do exist a number of automated programs and applications that implement CBT techniques. The app Woebot, for example, is described as a "therapy chatbot" that "can help you 1) Think through situations with step-by-step guidance from Woebot using methods from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT); 2) Learn about yourself with intelligent mood tracking; and 3) Get over 100+ evidence-based lessons, exercises, and stories from our clinical team," according to its website. Woebot, https://woebot.io/.

The logic underlying the shift in behavioral health toward evidence-based practices betrays an affinity both with neoliberal theory and the various "waves" of behavioral psychology. It shares the physiocratic inflection of neoliberal thought in that it seeks to replace the role of originary human rationality and intentional action—for the neoliberals, the role of human planning in the economic sphere—in the therapeutic process with the nonhuman techne of market coordination, evidenced by the objectivity and neutrality of market equilibrium. The PWEBS technology arrives at best practices through an artificial selection that limits subjective human criteria—the empirically "right" treatment plan, is arrived at through a selection of specific input criteria by a human practitioner and dependent upon all the previous compiled knowledge related to the case. Further, the goal of MAP is to train the practitioner to internalize these evidence-based practices so that they become second nature, internalized as norms that guide the therapeutic process. The PWEBS system is instructional and regulatory, it not only compiles knowledge to supplement the limits of human capacities, but subsumes the human role in therapeutic practice to an extension or tool of its own normative program. Of course, this is an unintentional effect—the PWEBS database is not a conscious intelligence with a goal-oriented agenda—but it is a technology that assists in the training of therapeutic practitioners according to a certain normative schema where norms are generated not out of processes of political contestation but value-neutral best practices. For both the sciences of psychology and economics, it is because human beings are not always rational and prone to error that we should look to the unit that does not lie—the number—for constancy and efficiency even in the most human of endeavors, like the treatment of psychic distress, pain, and trauma. Rather than bemoan the loss of "the human" in these practices, my critique is more concerned with the tendency of humans to treat numbers as "evidence" and justification for behavioral intervention and treatment, without attention to the political or social effects and circumstances that constrict, engender, and affect these subjects, reducing these various diverse factors to quantitative measurements. In these practices, politics is reduced to a question of the appropriate, individualized evidence-based therapeutic treatment, rather than a means of addressing the environmental and material conditions of subjects.

Regimes of Calculation and the Decentralization of Knowledge

Evidence-based practices are norm-oriented treatments, both in the statistical and regulatory sense, but how the norm functions in programs like MAP presents a particular process of normalization that I've previously argued is constitutive of cognitive behavioral psychology practices more broadly and well-suited to the aims of neoliberal governance. Foucault lends us the most prescient description of this normative process in his lectures from 1977-8, where he analyzes the central role of statistical knowledge in biopolitical governance. In these lectures, he argues that a particular notion of "naturalness" allowed for, justified, and was both "the effect and condition" of these regimes of calculation, which we may link to the neoliberal necessity of producing the right conditions for the market to function efficiently. Foucault describes how "the naturalness identified in the fact of population is constantly accessible to agents and techniques of transformation, on condition that these agents and techniques are at once enlightened,

reflected, analytical, calculated, and calculating."[227] The evidence-based practices of third wave cognitive behavioral psychology also proceed from a similar logic, insofar as the goal of disseminating this knowledge is to train practitioners and providers to be "enlightened" or attuned to a particular signal of evidence that is assumed to be natural and thus, in this process, naturalized. Evidence-based practices like MAP speak to how a specific calculating rationality engenders normative effects insofar as it explicitly aims at altering both how public and private behavioral health is administered and organized as well as generate certain therapeutic outcomes according to a probabilistically naturalized or more accurately, normalized, representation.

Foucault's analysis speaks to this transformative power of calculation that allows governmentality to align the potentialities of the population to an equilibrium that ensures its security, that is, that aligns it to what is "natural." This naturalness is not imposed on the population or individuals as a norm to which they must concede, as in the disciplinary model of sovereignty; instead it is derived artificially through technical means from "an interplay of differential normalities":

> In the disciplines one started from a norm, and it was in relation to the training carried out with reference to the norm that the normal could be distinguished from the abnormal. Here, instead, we have a plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different curves of normality, and the operation of normalization consists in establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality and [in] acting to bring the most unfavorable in line with the more favorable. So we have here something that starts from the normal and makes use of certain distributions considered to be, if you like, more normal than the others, or at any rate more favorable than the others. These distributions will serve as the norm. The norm is an interplay of differential normalities. The normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it, or the norm is fixed and plays its operational role on the basis of this study of normalities. So, I would say that what is involved here is no longer normation, but rather normalization in the strict sense.[228]

A calculative and predictive analysis of differential normalities is the means by which governmentality, according to Foucault, distributes natural or evident phenomena in a way that will neutralize negative effects and assist in conducting the government of populations. This neutralization occurs not through a norm given in advance based on political demands or values, but through the naturalization of the facts of the population, a naturalization that occurs through objective tools of measurement. Paradoxically, to facilitate and produce this naturalness government must not prohibit through law what is abnormal, it must manufacture the conditions in which the abnormal or what is less beneficial for the maximization of life and the security of the whole population will be nullified. Foucault's account of biopolitical calculation intersects with both the heuristic rather than politically normative framework for governance in neoliberal

---

[227] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (New York: Picador, 2007), 71.
[228] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, *63*.

thought and the process of neoliberalization through the implementation of best practices. Both find their logic and justification in the market—the norms that guide governmental order and the norms that form best practices reflect, disseminate, and are generated by the value-neutral, apolitical mechanism of the market. In the case of best practices, as I've previously argued, the norms that stand as facts are naturalized through the authority of empirical data, transparency, and market consensus, which effect the depoliticization of sites of formerly political contestation.

In the case of behavioral health services provided to children and youth in L.A. county, the demarcation of norms is itself artificial and dependent upon a number of contingent circumstances, but they are normally allocated through a rating or ranking system administered by a teacher, parent, therapist, or the client themselves. The L.A. County Department of Mental Health requires all intake providers to evaluate outcome measures for every client according to a standardized "baseline" form that includes information regarding housing, family, education, employment, physical health, social support, and legal involvement.[229] Psychological testing and various assessment strategies in behavioral intervention programs is not just a means of baseline diagnosis—most evidence-based programs like MAP require their own evaluation outcomes that must be administered every six months to track client progress. Additionally, they encourage practitioners to begin and sometimes end each session with a series of questions that asks clients to rate their relative level of emotional distress as well as other "wellness" factors (lack of sleep, unhealthy eating patterns, sedentary lifestyle, drug and alcohol consumption, etc.).

For providers receiving PEI funding through MHSA, every youth above the age of 12 referred to a provider must complete a Youth Outcome Questionnaire Self Report (YOQ-SR) and any youth regardless of age must have their legal guardians complete a Youth Outcome Questionnaire (YOQ).[i] The YOQ forms and baseline outcomes measures application are the basis for evaluation of care, after which the client will be assigned a specific evidence-based program and provider (usually a private or nonprofit contractor). If the child is designated a PEI MAP contractor, the provider must designate one of four target-specific measures—anxiety, trauma, depression, and disruptive behaviors—each with its own evaluative report to be completed at least every 6 months, the first occurring within 14 days of opening the case. Again, the variegated behavioral phenomena of clients are subject to a unifying conceptual apparatus meant to provide treatment across a mass population.

The Clinical Dashboards MAP resource is then used to document and track patient progress through the input of information gathered from these forms. The outcome evaluation designations and forms, as well as the monitoring of their implementation for "quality improvement" is handled by a statewide nonprofit agency, the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (formerly California Institute for Mental Health or CIMH): "LA PEI MAP sites will be responsible for data entry and submittal (on a periodic basis) to CIMH. CIMH will

---

[229] Outcome Measures Application: Child Baseline Form, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (June 30, 2016), http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dmh/159904_MH_682_ChildBaselineForm_6_30_16rev.pdf

generate 'dashboard' reports designated to summarize key information (demographics, service characteristic, behavior change) for program monitoring and quality improvement activities."[230] Local agencies, the LA County Department of Mental Health, and *PracticeWise* have access to these reports and findings, which distill the overall effectiveness of MAP services according to the level of improvement of pre and post treatment scores, and the average strength of the relationship between these scores (see fig. 4). They also include information on demographics (age, gender, ethnicity of client), the type of therapeutic information performed, and site-specific standard deviations from the average score of all providers. Practitioners and clients are able to access this data through the *PracticeWise* Clinical Dashboards in order to monitor progress of treatment outcomes.[ii]

Fig. 4. Interpreting MAP Outcomes

The standards of measurement and progress in treatment used by CIMH for MAP services are careful to account for measurement error and diversity factors in order to provide evidence of "reliable change" through "a fairly complex formula [that] is used [to take] into account the variability of the pre-treatment group and measurement error, resulting in our ability to categorize pre/post change for each measure into three groups: Reliable Positive Change, Reliable Negative Change, and No Reliable Change."[231] Here we can perceive a clear example of the "delimitation of phenomena within acceptable limits" Foucault refers to in that the MAP therapeutic treatment "does not translate into clinically meaningful change," i.e., a clinical cure for the client, but rather indicates an "overall reflection of treatment success," based on relative deviations from the norm. Any "reliable positive change," however minute within the period of

---

[230] LA PEI MAP Outcome Evaluation Guide and Forms, 2.
http://dmhoma.pbworks.com/f/LA+PEI+MAP+Evaluation+Guide+and+Forms.pdf
[231] Mitchell, Crickett. "Understanding the CIMH Dashboard Reports for LA PEI MAP" Webinar (June 2014),
https://www.cibhs.org/webcast/understanding-cibhs-dashboard-reports-la-pei-map

treatment (on average 6-12 months), is counted as an indicator of success, regardless of contingent factors. This assumes a model of mental well-being rather than mental health, where the goal is not to cure or solve underlying causes of symptoms, but rather to optimize or adapt the client's current capacity for wellbeing.

The central role of calculation via client testing and monitoring in evidence-based practices like MAP is oriented toward and produced by the observation of positively verifiable phenomena (what Foucault refers to as "elements of reality"). The type of truth criteria these regimes of calculation employ converges with neoliberal forms of governance and self-management in that not only are they invested in the process of normalization according to a regulatory schema aimed at wellbeing, but the self-administering nature of tests like the YOQ displace (at least partial) responsibility of care onto the client, parent, or both through self-evaluation. The MAP program boasts that this participation of clients and their families, teachers, etc., in a multisystemic therapy model of care speaks to the freedom clients have over their own wellness, and refers to this multisystemic feature of its program as "collaborative design": "providers, youth, and families can select, build, organize, and implement treatment based on the most up-to-date research evidence and can personalize care by incorporating real-time evidence of practice history and youth outcomes."[232] This self-monitoring has the effect of training subjects to be vigilant in their behavior, internalizing the normative role of governmental regulation as a government of the self. It also displaces the responsibility for the behavioral health of children and youth onto not just the clients themselves, but their teachers and parents. It is telling that the one required form for any youth receiving services through PEI, regardless of diagnosis, age, or other various factors, is the YOQ, to be filled out by the parent or legal guardian (see appendix i). If the target measure is "disruptive behavior"—which make up 43% of MAP referred clients—then a teacher or other school employee such as the principle is required to fill out a similar form called the SESBI (Sutter-Eyberg Student Behavior Inventory). The collaborative design model of care has two effects in this regard: 1) it decentralizes both the collection of knowledge and the regulation of behavior, displacing the former institutional role of monitoring onto adults involved in the daily care of the child, and 2) it furthers the neoliberal doctrine of relegating social and collective responsibility to the individual and the family (and further, in this case, the educator as well).[233]

Of particular interest for this chapter is the way this careful cultivation, calculation, and distribution of knowledge in evidence-based practices is decentralized, both in terms of how it expands sources of knowledge and what "counts" as knowledge. This decentralization constitutes the means by which the knowledge of best practices is arrived at and verified through consensus and transparency, the form that I argue the particular epistemic calculating regime of neoliberalism takes. Dr. Chorpita and his colleagues describe the importance of diversifying both

---

[232] "MAP."

[233] For more on the allocation of familial responsibility in neoliberalism see Melinda Cooper, *Family Values* (New York: Zone, 2017).

the foundations and forms of knowledge in mental health services in an article titled, "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Youth Mental Health Prevention" published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine.[234] The authors define knowledge as "meaningful information that is derived from evidence—be that collected by research, individual experiences, history, or otherwise—and can thus be useful in evidence-based decision making."[235] Knowledge is here explicitly linked to evidence that can be generated from various sources. The link to observable truth (or evidence) and the extension of sites for generating knowledge is what designates the use of knowledge in decision making processes. However, because "knowledge is vast, ever growing, and variable across sources…rather than merely adding to the growing body of existing knowledge, progress in primary prevention may now also be a matter of more efficient application of knowledge. To this end, evidence-based decision making should be championed as part of the scientific approach, along with evidence-based production and discovery."[236] The utility of knowledge is subject to both the careful curation of not only the conditions of its "production and discovery," but its "efficient application." In other words, it is not enough to simply discover knowledge, it must be made useful and this use-value is not given, but generated according to the principle of evidence-based decision making. The use of knowledge is found in the value of its "efficiency" rather than in subjective or humanistic value, and thus the application of this knowledge in decision-making is "scientific" rather than political.

According to the article, the decision making process of evidence-based practices includes five rules: 1) "capitalizing on knowledge and resources," 2) "aggregating relevant information" for evaluation, 3) mining knowledge from "multiple sources (such as program outcomes, researches, program facilitators, youth themselves, administrators, parents of youth, teachers, and others)," 4) utilizing this knowledge to "direct goals and actions with more certainty," and 5) the continual "revisiting and updating" of knowledge to "adjust action and decisions accordingly."[237] The emphasis on the decentralization and cultivation of knowledge both in its generation and implementation, the necessity of diversifying sources of knowledge, and the characterization of this process as continual, ongoing, and never finished, are characteristics of how many neoliberal theorists understood the problem of knowledge and human action as contingent upon both the "discovery" of knowledge (Hayek) and its application in practice (what Mises called praxeology). Importantly, they also underscored economics as a type of *nomos* that would ensure the best use of necessarily limited individual knowledge without unduly tampering with it. These "general rules" were to provide the guiding rubric for both the governance of others and the governance of the self insofar as they aided subjects in their decision-making processes by utilizing relevant knowledge and placing them in a relation of dependency to heteronomy or "everything that eludes the individual calculation" of *homo oeconomicus*. Hence the need for continual adjustment and for the entrepreneurial ethos that the

[234] Bruce F. Chorpita, Eric L. Daleiden, Leslie R. Rith-Najarian, "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Youth Mental Health Prevention," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 51 no. 4S2 (2016).
[235] Chorpita et al., 132.
[236] Chorpita et al., 132.
[237] Chorpita et al., 132.

early neoliberals championed. For neoliberal theorists, the market was the only natural (in the physiocratic sense) device for the production and distribution of relevant knowledge. Though it placed actors in relations of contingency in a fundamentally unknowable or uncontrollable environment, it generated truth in the form of price—signals that distilled the diverse and unwieldy information of the whole into discrete units of measurement.

However, there is fundamental ambiguity in the neoliberal literature towards knowledge when one considers the tension between the Hayekian schema of limited rationality and the Chicago school treatment of sufficient knowledge. While Hayek understood competition as a process of discovery based on governmental norms, he also underscored that the coordination of the market *depends* on the ignorance of human actors. Similar to the signal function of prices in the market, the aim of norms or rules of governance for Hayek is to provide a consistent signal to individuals in order to guide prediction and efficient coordination given this ignorance:

> The state should confine itself to establishing rules applying to general types of situations and should allow the individuals freedom in everything which depends on the circumstances of time and place, because only the individuals concerned in each instance can fully know these circumstances and adapt their actions to them. If the individuals are to be able to use their knowledge effectively in making plans, they must be able to predict actions of the state which may affect these plans. But if the actions of the state are to be predictable, they must be determined by rules fixed independently of the concrete circumstances which can be *neither foreseen nor taken into account beforehand*: and the particular effects of such actions will be *unpredictable* [emphasis mine].[238]

In order to aid in the coordination of the market, Hayek's rules which engender norms of behavior have to remain outside a quantifying and predictive analysis that respects the ignorance upon which the whole process depends. He was thus skeptical of the use of mathematics to forecast economic outcomes through a quantifying rationality. By contrast, the Chicago school, especially the work of Milton Friedman and Gary Becker, saw mathematics as an important supplement to the problem of limited rationality. While knowledge is necessarily limited for individual actors, the practical implementation of knowledge could be statistically measured via the price mechanism and harnessed via a quantifying rationality to aid in this natural coordination. Becker argued that the reason economic actions can be subject to quantitative methods is that economists could assume the universal and therefore rational constant that individuals seek to satisfy their own desires, however irrational their desires or the means to achieve them might appear. Thus, individuals are driven by a utilitarian principle of maximization, even if unconscious, costly, or based on incomplete knowledge: "The economic approach does not assume that all participants in any market necessarily have complete information or engage in costless transactions. Incomplete information or costly transactions should not however, be confused with irrational or volatile behavior."[239] The ignorance of

[238] Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 70.
[239] Gary Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 6.

individual actors is thus incidental to the larger rational consistency of market coordination based on utility maximization.

The position of the Chicago school is condensed in the efficient market hypothesis—the notion that share prices reflect all relevant information pertaining to a given asset. This concept is often cited as the operating principle of financial speculation. But finance introduces a further complication. While speculation presupposes the efficient market hypothesis in generating share value since it speculates on the present share value and a future one, it also relies on the insufficiency or variability of knowledge that engenders risk in order to the generate the speculative value of an asset. Thus, financial speculation relies on both the predictability of outcomes made possible by regimes of calculation (the array of complicated statistical measurements that make up financial decisions like FICO scores and the like) and their fundamental unpredictability. While calculation plays a necessary role in financial speculation, the aims are perceivably different than the nullification of uncertainty Foucault maintains is the goal of biopolitical regimes of calculation. Rather than see uncertainty as a stumbling block to market efficiency that must be curbed through normalization, financial regimes of speculation are contingent upon uncertainty and risk as the motive principle of valorization. Finance thus presents a hybridization of both the Hayekian principle that market coordination depends upon ignorance and the Chicago school argument that economic decision can be measured and forecasted. What does this entail in the realm of neoliberal governance? As the significance of best practices indicates, the calculative schema of scientific evidence and the process of normalization is still central in contemporary neoliberal governance, but these are directed at enhancing the competitiveness of firms and stakeholders in order to generate credit rather than to simply maximize profit or security. Because credit has displaced profit as the end that must be maximized, competitiveness is measured by efficiency but also by flexibility, creativity, social responsibility, and other sites of potential credit enhancement.

The generation and implementation of evidence-based practices in public health by Chorpita and his colleagues reflects the Chicago school emphasis on calculation as a normative governmental schema, but it also attests to the redirection of calculative rationality toward the end of speculative enhancement and competition rather than just profit maximization or market efficiency. I also maintain that it provides a further departure from both the strictly neoliberal and finance-oriented neoliberal regimes in that evidence-based practices look to information sciences and technology rather than economic science to solve what the authors of the article refer to as the problem of "complexity in the selection process": "Because choosing among individual programs or research contributions is an increasingly complex and unwieldy task, systems can be—and have been—created to aggregate knowledge in a standardized way. Building such systems can be undertaken by individuals, as done with meta-analyses, or by organizations, as is the case with intervention databases or registries."[240] The neoliberals based much of their argument that the market was the only efficient means of ordering society by emphasizing how it resolved (in the case of the Chicago school) or utilized (in the Austrian school) the problem of diversity or contingency. Different parts of the neoliberal thought

---

[240] Chorpita et al., 133.

collective came to this conclusion by one of two routes: either man was too ignorant as Hayek argued, necessarily limited in the scope of his knowledge to properly account for "complexity in the selection process," or conversely, as Friedman maintained, it was the utility-driven nature of man's rationality that made up the essentially fair and true deliberating price mechanism of the market. Neither the Austrian nor Chicago approach to the problem of knowledge accounted for the role technology might play—the rise of cybernetics, information processing, and big data—in replacing the quasi-theological deliberating/coordinating function of the market, of which evidence-based practices bear witness. While an analysis of the technological supplement of data sciences to the financialized neoliberal project is outside the scope of this project, their utilization in the service of neoliberal governance tied to speculative value and enhancement speaks to the way neoliberalism has flexibly incorporated alternate techniques of knowledge production to justify and further the comprehensive project of economization and depoliticization. Cognitive behavioral psychology and its integration in behavioral economics provides another cogent example of an additive epistemological framework at work in the neoliberalization of mental health, one that borrows heavily from early theories in cybernetics and information sciences.

Cybernetic Knowledge: Behavioral Economics and Cognitive Behavioral Psychology

As Nikolas Rose argues, psychology, like neoliberalism, functions as an important means for diffusing a particular representation of the human subject and objectively inscribing it in reality through various techniques of measurement and regimes of expertise.[241] While neoliberal thinkers, from Mises to Becker, saw economics as the science of general human behavior, they characterized it as an explanatory science, not a prescriptive one. Due to their suspicion of any kind of central planning or coordination, they were careful not to make normative claims or prediction about subjects' specific behaviors or interests, at least in theory. They did however aim to direct behavior according to its natural propensity to maximize utility by providing the environmental conditions in which subjects could make free choices. The agency of *homo oeconomicus*, the basis of freedom in neoliberalism, is thus paradoxically a freedom that needs to be "produced" as Foucault states, through external governmental intervention. Thus the control and modification of human behavior need not be at odds with individual autonomy, in fact systems of power and regimes of conduct depend upon freedom—they produce it in a particular way and effectively inscribe it in reality. This is why Foucault describes neoliberal governmentality as the "strategic programming of individuals' activity."[242] The integration of cognitive psychology within a behavioral method in CBT provides a unique psychological rationale for neoliberal regimes to govern not in spite of human freedom and autonomy but in the name of individual freedom by providing the functional means of constructing it. The prevailing schools of economic thought of the latter half of the 20th century, with the obvious exception of neoclassical economics, reflect to varying degrees these assumptions about the subject that

---

[241] Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[242] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 229.

supplant classically liberal suppositions (and can hence be categorized, at least in theory, as forms of neo-liberalism). The most striking example is found in the school of behavioral economics inaugurated by Herbert Simon.

Herbert Simon explicitly drew from cognitive behavioral psychology in his formulation of economic behavior. His central insight is the notion of "bounded rationality"—a critique of classical and neoclassical economic assumptions about the utility-maximizing rationality at the heart of *homo oeconomicus* based upon "the reality of human behavior as it is observed in economic life."[243] This critique stemmed from the fundamental insight taken from cognitive psychology that reason, as a cognitive function of information processing, was dependent upon some level of arbitrariness, whether in the input of information "induced from empirical observations or more simply posited" or in the output of the selected action, constricted by various heuristic or "factual," that is, environmental, constraints:

> This ineradicable element of arbitrariness—this Original Sin that corrupts the reasoning process, and therefore also its products—has two important consequences for our topic here. First, it puts forever beyond reach an unassailable principle of induction that would allow us to infer infallible general laws...further, the foundations of these inductions—the facts—rest on a complex and sometimes unsteady base of observation, perception, and inference.[244]

The dual problem of chance and uncertainty fundamental to and necessary for human action presents an insurmountable obstacle to classical models of the rational, intentional, and autonomous subject of interest. Simon identifies various types of uncertainty: "uncertainty about the future," "our computational limits," "the uncertainty associated with innovation," and "the peculiar uncertainty of oligopoly" revealed by game theory.[245] The first two are discussed in even the neoclassical literature and can be offset by means of probabilistic prediction and, increasingly in the case of the second, technological advancement. The uncertainty of innovation, a paradox that liberalism could not adequately account for, was explicated in Schumpeter's account of entrepreneurial man, distinct from the rational liberal subject, and the productive—and also destructive—effects of capitalizing on chance, but there were still certain general inferences that could be made about innovation (its rate, for example). Game theory introduced the problem of what Simon calls "strategic uncertainty" in that it enabled the possibility of an outcome where multiple players could make competing "rational" decisions: "Strategic uncertainty—uncertainty about what the other players were going to do—proved to be something quite different from uncertainty about the external environment. The latter could be

[243] Herbert Simon, *Economics, Bounded Rationality, and the Cognitive Revolution* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1992), 2.
[244] Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 6.
[245] Simon, *Economics*, 15.

dealt with (conceptually at least, if not in the real world) by probabilities and expected values; the former could not."[246]

It is on the basis of the limits posed by strategic uncertainty that Simon argues for the role of institutions, rather than the market, in organizing human action: "organizations play a particular role in strategic games, because they provide a mechanism that is not provided by markets for establishing rules of the road…organizations provide a way of dealing with that set of games where there is common interest, but strategic uncertainty—incomplete information—about what the other players are going to do."[247] Simon maintains that the traditional market mechanism is unequipped to handle situations of common interest with strategic uncertainty. He explicitly acknowledges what he sees as the provisional commonalities between his bounded rationality and Austrian neoliberal thought; at the same time, he distances himself somewhat emphatically from the Austrian model, at least from what he terms their "neoclassical side":

> One could think of the Austrian viewpoint, particularly von Hayek's version of it, as a form of bounded rationality. Among other things, the Austrians put a tremendous emphasis on tacit and personal knowledge, and hence had been very antagonistic to the development of quantitative and abstract formal economics. But this very same emphasis ultimately divided them from the notion of bounded rationality. In particular, it led von Mises to an extreme a prioristic position in which…the Truth was neoclassical economics done non-quantitatively. That led him away from the notion of bounded rationality and back to utility maximization. My own beliefs have been that knowledge is something we produce by processes that can be studied and researched and explained…we rapidly diverge when it comes to attitudes about empiricism.[248]

The issue Simon takes with the Austrian viewpoint is the assumption of the truth inherent to the market. This truth, as he states, is an understanding of the subject driven by utility maximization. He categorizes the utilitarian schema that underwrites the neoliberal theory as an unempirical account of human action insofar as this utility cannot be quantified or studied empirically, except by some reverent, a priori faith in the invisible hand of the market. Simon reserves respect for Hayek insofar as his defense of markets stems from the recognition of "the computational limits of human beings."[249] Hayek, Simon writes, "argues that the real importance of the market mechanism is not that it produces Pareto optimum (if it does), but that it conserves information for all of the economic actors, and allows them to behave rationally with relatively simple computations on the basis of relatively little information."[250] What he takes issue with is the price mechanism in the Hayekian account: "Hayek undoubtedly exaggerates the role of prices as the only or chief coordinating device in markets."[251] Instead, Simon argues for what he calls a

---

[246] Simon, *Economics*, 25.
[247] Simon, *Economics*, 25.
[248] Simon, *Economics*, 26.
[249] Simon, *Sciences of the Artificial* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 34.
[250] Simon, *Economics*, 27.
[251] Simon, *Economics*, 27.

behavioral or evolutionary account of human action that emphasizes specialization over competition,[252] adaptation rather than optimization,[253] positive or relative profits instead of maximum profits,[254] and environmental or social dependency in the process of decision-making:

> Markets do not operate in a social vacuum; they are part of a wider framework of social institutions. And they operate with many externalities: that is to say, many consequences of the actions taken in market economies are not fully incorporated in market prices...in every society, and particularly in an urban society, many of the ways our actions affect other people's lives and values cannot be easily mediated by adjusting market prices.[255]

Simon's suspicion of unadulterated market rationality and his argument that markets function within a social framework align his brand of behavioral economics with neoliberalism, particularly the Ordoliberal emphasis on a social and vital order of governance and the Hayekian premise of legal rules for governance. But his reliance on the cognitive behavioral explanation of cognition as a mediating device modeled on the selective information processing of a computer, allowed him to understand subjects as both externally and internally programmable: "A species that can change its culture is 'programmable'...programmability is also conducive to social existence and most effectively exploited in a social environment rather than an isolated one…Flexibility...is the main route to fitness in a programmable species."[256] Paradoxically, it is the very flexibility or freedom of subjects in a social milieu that makes them amenable to behavioral modification.

> We can, then, without contradicting the doctrine of the 'selfish gene,' introduce mechanisms for the evolutionary change of an entire society that impose social criteria on the selection process. What is required is that reward become linked to a generalized set of docile or 'obeying' behaviors rather than to specific behaviors. All that is required of these mechanisms is that they contribute *on balance* to individual fitness.[257]

Behavioral economics can be characterized as an extension or reframing of the neoliberal project given the insights of cognitive psychology. The neoliberal critique of the unknowability of economic processes, the limited rationality of the economic actor, and the necessity of rules for governing the environment in which the subject acts, are all given legitimacy by the scientific "discovery" of information processing as the definitive cognitive function. Behavioral economics

---

[252] "There are two ways in which a creature can seek to survive in a jungle environment. One way is to compete fiercely and successfully for an existing niche with other creature that are trying to occupy it. The other way is to find a wholly unoccupied niche, or to alter and specialize itself in order to be able to occupy efficiently (fitly) a niche that is not now occupied effectively by anyone else." Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 44.

[253] "From time to time, new practices are devised, which then must prove themselves in the marketplace in competition with the old...there is no guarantee that the system will ever arrive at, or approach, a position of optimality. It is adaptive, but not necessarily optimizing." Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 41.

[254] "The survival conditions—positive profits rather than maximum profits…" Simon, "Rational Decision-making in Business Organizations" Nobel Prize Memorial Lecture in Economic Sciences (December 8, 1978), 356.

[255] Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 76.

[256] Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 56.

[257] Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 65-66.

provides an empirical model of neoliberalism's idiosyncratic account of agency as action based on available knowledge. But importantly, it critiques the utility-maximizing internal orientation that neoliberalism, especially in its Chicago school instantiation, preserved from classical liberalism and supplants it with an external environmental model of choice and "decision-making" taken from cognitive behavioral psychology and information sciences. In Simon's work, cybernetics—systems of command and control via input/output interfaces—supplant the normative and naturalizing function of the market as a process of coordination.

Perhaps most importantly within the context of neoliberal governance, Simon's work on administrative behavior for which he won a Nobel prize argued for the central role of decision-making in any administrative theory of action and that of administrative institutions rather than economic markets for providing the "rules of the road" that are necessary for subjects to make rational choices. The "rationality" of choice is not derived from an inherent utility-maximizing drive, but rather from a computational process derived from arbitrary externalities and subject to cognitive and perceptual limits in the constantly shifting dynamic environment in which the subject acts. Hence the behavioral model of economics defines causality as a process of functionalism rather than mechanism or purposive teleology. But despite Simon's disavowal of aprioristic ends for which he critiques the Austrians, he is unable to exorcise assumed objectives from bounded rational choice. Even if the purported ends of behavioral economics are purely functional, they are still ends reached at through human instrumentalization. Indeed, it is upon this technical basis, justified not by some pre-given truth but by empirical observation, that Simon can make normative claims like the following, despite his emphasis on arbitrariness and environment: "a general theory of administration must include principles of organization that will insure correct decision-making, just as it must include principles that will insure effective action."[258]

These norms of conduct or best practices would form the central project of behavioral economics and later, behavioral finance, in the 20th and 21st centuries; one that both extended and departed from the neoliberal vision of *homo oeconomicus*.[259] The aspects that distinguish the behavioral economic subject from a strictly neoliberal subject-as-entrepreneur—specialization, constant adaptation, relative profits, and programmability—are also aspects that make this behavioral subject particularly well-suited to a world governed by a financialized economy. The centrality of market rationality is not lost with the rise of finance, but the market itself is transformed from a market based on commodity exchange to a market based on the speculation and appreciation of assets. Competition is still the hinge point of the finance economy but what makes firms competitive is their wholesale attractiveness to investors rather than just their ability to maximize profits. In this financialized order, the cybernetic principles of cognitive behavioral psychology that underly behavioral economics provide a more expansive and flexible theory of knowledge production and human action than classical market rationality, a mode of calculation

---

[258] Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 1.
[259] For a more in-depth look at the relationship between behavioral economics and neoliberalism see McMahon, J. "Behavioral economics as neoliberalism: Producing and governing homo economicus." *Contemporary Political Theory* (2015) 14: 137. https://doi.org/10.1057/cpt.2014.14

that can extend the neoliberal project of governance in the institutional programming of behavior aimed at speculative investment. As Simon wrote, "if we want an invisible hand to bring everything into some kind of social consonance, we should be sure, first, that our social institutions are framed to bring out our better selves."[260]

Institutional Rationality and Administrative Governance

The MAP program implementation in the Los Angeles County public education system speaks to a nascent shift in approaches to not just behavioral public health but institutional governance. This shift, I argue, reflects neoliberal and financialized models of the subject, coupled with cognitive-behavioral explanations for human behavior and rationality. In particular, it replaces political justifications for assistance programs with empirical evidence-based ones, and reorients public services around the enhancement of both individual and territorial credit. The MAP curriculum outlines ten "principles" that guide and structure its program that speak to these changes:

> 1. Outcome-Centered: Progress and practices are measured and systematically monitored at the indicated level, whether that activity involves youth outcomes, workforce development outcomes, or system-wide outcomes.

The truth value of MAP is generated by outcomes that correlate to correcting or rather negating the undesirable effects of disruptive behavior. Importantly, the therapeutic intervention is administered via environmental and internal means (parents, teachers, and clients themselves) and correction is measured through aggregate data compiled from ratings-based evaluations.

> 2. Information-Oriented: MAP emphasizes the common roles that information serves in decision-making, rather than dictating a specific set of instruments or procedures. For example, in the direct service context, a MAP decision guide identifies where indicators of client progress commonly inform expert decision-making in evidence-based practices rather than require that a particular measure be used with a particular benchmark at particular intervals.

The therapeutic model of MAP is not prescriptive per se—it presents itself as a tool of information processing that aids in the decision-making process. In deferring to empirical outcomes while emphasizing the flexibility and contingency of individual cases, any normative assumptions are masked as evidence. The emphasis is on information and knowledge; rather than ordering or "planning" specific interventions aimed at specific goals, MAP distills relevant information so that practitioners can make informed decisions.

> 3. Supports a Common Language: By identifying common elements of interventions with scientific evidence of effectiveness across the behavioral health service domain, the MAP

---

[260] Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, 105.

system provides a unifying language to which the terminology of specific programs and disciplines is readily translated.

The function of a common language is to reduce the problem of diversity in behavioral intervention and render specific elements meaningful to different providers across a wide-range of behavior and environments. All phenomena is reducible to MAP's particular signifying system centered on evidence.

> 4. Integrates Multiple Evidence Bases: The MAP system highlights four sources of evidence that are regularly referenced during decision-making: case-specific information (e.g., youth outcomes), case aggregate information (e.g., practice-based evidence), treatment outcome research (e.g., evidence-based treatments), and research on causal mechanisms (e.g., clinical or behavior change theory). MAP explicitly labels information from these four sources, brings them into the decision-making situation, and provides guidance for determining their relative priority with respect to key decisions.

Rather than utilizing evidence from a single source, MAP encourages the diversification of sources of information that could be relevant to treatment. This information is distilled according to a common language and adapted to a particular therapeutic situation in order to provide guidance in decision-making. While decision-making is the target of intervention, that aim is to guide the decision-making process, not to coerce a particular outcome.

> 5. Coordinates Observed and Expected Values: As a strategy to guide decision making, MAP facilitates comparison of observed values (e.g., client response, provider expertise) with the expected outcomes (e.g., research-informed benchmarks, professional development milestones).

The coordination between specific or individual observations and expectations based on aggregate information suggests a process of normalization. Here the "observed values" must align with "expected outcomes" otherwise these values must be reassessed.

> 6. Self-Correcting: Implicit in its routine functioning, MAP generates new data, promotes reflection and analysis, and supports adaptive responding, whether in direct service delivery, professional development, or system change contexts. Even the core MAP resources are routinely updated based upon ongoing review of the scientific literature. As new evidence and practices appear in the scientific literature, these innovations are delivered directly to service providers, supervisors, and trainers through the existing infrastructure.

MAP is characterized here as a type of intelligence that continually gathers and assess information, adapting to the changing conditions of its environment. The automated self-correcting nature of the MAP system mirrors the neoliberal rhetoric regarding the equilibrium generated by the market. MAP functions as a kind of market mechanism, but one that is technically and scientifically produced.

7. Developmental: Whether in the context of direct service, professional training, or organizational change, MAP is designed to "meet people where they are," to build on current strengths and capacities, and to offer only those components needed to achieve collaboratively established goals.

Again, the interventional approach favored by MAP is not one of planning or directing according to given ends, but to assist decision-making according to the specific constraints and capacities of individual environments. The aim is to enhance latent "strengths and capacities," i.e., to aid in one's human capital development, through collaboration with clients rather than authoritative direction.

8. Dynamic: MAP anticipates regular surprises, roadblocks, and exceptional circumstances, offering structured solutions to resolve the interference and to transition efficiently back to the pursuit of the original, overarching goals.

The dynamic nature of the system allows MAP to anticipate environmental disruptions and allow for a flexible response that best incorporates these externalities into "overarching goals."

9. Promotes Public Visibility: MAP offers multiple strategies to promote transparency and public scrutiny of (a) the underlying evidence used to inform decisions and (b) the underlying logic used to reach a final decision and course of action.

Transparency is a key feature of evidence-based practices like MAP, because the evidence must be rendered visible and subject to consensus in order to count as evidence. However, this purported transparency also has the effect of obfuscating a set of behavioral norms subjects are compelled to abide by and internalize based on their empirical evidence; that is to say, the recourse to transparency solidifies both the logic and evidence underlying MAP's therapeutic practices as scientifically supported, factual, and objective, even though it is guided by normative behavioral goals and diagnostic standards.

10. Process Management: MAP adopts a continuous quality improvement strategy for managing the process of change. Common steps include setting goals, assembling supports, implementing procedures, testing results, and adapting the course of action as needed.

Instead of trying to control contingency or negate it, the MAP strategy seeks to manage the inevitable process of change in order to direct the inherent instability and risk of decision-making process towards the most desirable outcome. Again, the emphasis here is on flexibility or dynamic adaptation aimed at continual enhancement rather than an optimal end goal.

The ten MAP principles all share a high degree of coordination with logics generated from cognitive behavioral psychology and behavioral economics. They also reflect how neoliberal rationality has penetrated public health and governance more broadly. Couched primarily in a rhetoric of empirical, data-based justifications, the program claims effectiveness and scientific objectivity. Similarly, the status of both economics and psychology as sciences of

human behavior functions to separate their empirical prescriptions from the subjective concerns of social and political life. The MAP program is aimed at correcting perceived negative behavioral issues of students (usually behavior that interrupts the disciplinary space of the classroom) and justified by reference to "care" and the well-being of the individual undergoing treatment. However, these corrective interventions do little to address or remedy the underlying causes of behavioral issues which cannot be removed from social, political, and economic contexts and structures. Instead they target the individual behavior of students and seek to responsibilize them, their parents, and their teachers for their behavior and their larger well-being. This responsibilization reflects and engenders a particularly neoliberal mode of subjectification by compelling subjects to assess and invest in their human capital through evaluative protocols and corrective strategies. One of the effects of such an approach is to obscure the politics that mediate one's relationship to one's own body and health. Health is reframed to mean the constant management of one's life and body using flexible and adaptive techniques to enhance one's well-being. This well-being is determined by constant and continual ratings that allow one to adapt accordingly to externality and contingency. Importantly, MAP also presupposes the involvement of parents and teachers who are likewise made responsible for the continual assessment and regulation of individual student behavior. Responsibilization also functions through a neoliberal governmental rationality that outsources or down-sources decision-making and resource allocation to private entities or smaller individual units—what Wendy Brown calls neoliberalism's devolution of authority.[261] The MAP program implementation through PEI is one clear example of devolution, where formerly public health programs are privatized, decision-making is localized to contracted entities like PracticeWise, and the burden of care is displaced onto individuals, families, and teachers.

The regime of normalization evident in therapeutic evidence-based practices brings together utilitarian metrics of value with speculative or more adaptive ones. On the one hand, it aims to curb inefficiency and unproductive behavior, on the other to enhance the well-being of clients according to a ratings system of both self and peer evaluation. Importantly, the therapeutic technique is pedagogical and regulatory not one of control and discipline. It seeks to produce and collate knowledge in order to teach subjects how to make better decisions—it doesn't proceed by coercing a specific set of outcomes. As such, it reproduces the neoliberal modality of governance in providing the conditions in which subjects can and must help themselves, or in the words of Dr. Chorpita, "get better." In MAP, these conditions derive from the insight, accentuated in cognitive-behavioral psychology, that it is the production of a particular environment "that makes…rationality possible."

"Take a Breath": Mindfulness as Pedagogy and Behavioral Modification

One particular evidence-based treatment, mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy, is increasingly utilized in education settings as both an intervention and enhancement technique for students and teachers alike. There are over a dozen nonprofit mindfulness

---

[261] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone, 2015), 131-134.

programs in the U.S. that provide trainings, workshops, and curriculum aimed at implementing mindfulness education—meditation, yoga, breathing techniques, body scanning, etc.—in public and private schools. Mindful Schools, one of the largest nonprofits seeking to "integrate mindfulness in the everyday learning environment of K-12 classrooms" claims to have "trained over 25,000 educators, parents, and mental health professionals who…have reached over 2 million children worldwide."[262] The company says its curriculum is aimed at treating the "toxic stress" that plagues students and teachers, especially at "under-resourced public schools facing high turnover rates," offering "skills for self-care, facilitation, and connecting with youth, providing simple, effective mindfulness practices that can be integrated into the school day and adapted for diverse environments."[263] The adaptability of mindfulness techniques makes it particularly useful for evidence-based practices that emphasize flexibility and the co-embeddedness of environments. These techniques utilize adaptability rather than strict optimization to enhance the speculative value of subjects. Importantly, they depart from a therapeutics of control aimed at productivity and offer instead a pedagogical therapeutics that teaches subjects how to realize their latent best selves. Argos Gonzalez, a high school English teacher in the Bronx who completed Mindful Schools' year-long certification program and utilizes its curriculum in the classroom, describes the value of mindfulness in these speculative rather than utilitarian terms: "My intention as a mindfulness instructor is to give students some very simple and basic tools so they can learn to self-regulate. That's the beginning and end of it."[264] The goal of this self-regulation is not to "cure" problematic behavior but more fundamentally, to develop the necessary skills to invest in one's larger well-being. Mindfulness-based behavioral intervention does so through targeting the adaptability of human behavior and neuroplasticity of the human mind. The Mindful Schools website sums up this speculative intentionality poignantly: "In discussing how mindfulness practice addresses stress and other problems in education, we don't want to lose sight of the fact that mindfulness can take us beyond the terrain of *managing symptoms* to a place where we are developing the *deepest capacities* of the human mind."

One might wonder if programs like Mindful Schools blur the line between educators and therapists, but as one psychologist working in education put it, "teachers teach many things that are therapeutic. They are managing children's behavior all day long, but that doesn't make them therapists, that makes them good teachers. Some of the same ideas we teach in therapy are also applicable to all people."[265] Increasingly, therapeutics are less the purview of therapists and psychologists and more often characterized as a general technique for managing behavior, one's own and the behavior of others. The popularity of non-medical forms of counseling, life

[262] "Our Organization," Mindful Schools (April 2019), https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/our-organization/.

[263] "Why Mindfulness is Needed in Education," Mindful Schools (April 2019), https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/mindfulness-in-education/.

[264] Quoted in Lauren Cassani Davis, "What Happens When Mindfulness Enters Schools," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, August 2015), https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/08/mindfulness-education-schools-meditation/402469/.

[265] Mark Greenburg, quoted in "What Happens When Mindfulness Enters Schools."

coaching, and even the recent increased interested in astrology, speak to the dissemination of therapeutic techniques outside the medical institution. Likewise, the role of pedagogy in therapeutics, the emphasis on equipping clients with knowledge so they can self-regulate, has altered the function and character of clinical therapy. More and more, the impetus to undergo therapy is not to treat a specific issue or symptom but because it will enhance one's general well-being and provide an avenue of knowing oneself and therefore modifying one's self esteem. This comingling between therapeutics and pedagogy allows for a dissemination of these therapeutic techniques in all domains of life.

To end this chapter, I'd like to examine what some of the depoliticizing effects of these therapeutic pedagogies might be by considering an example of the application of mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy in the classroom. A friend of mine works as a clinical supervisor for a team of behavioral therapists at a for-profit mental health services company called Starview, which holds a contract with the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health to handle children and youth with behavioral health problems in the L.A. County School District. Like all behavioral health providers receiving public funding through PEI, Starview practitioners are required to be trained in evidence-based practices. Their specific site uses MAP, a multisystemic approach, and CBT techniques to treat students who are referred to services because of their interruptive or violent behavior in the classroom and they also to provide trainings to school administrators and teachers in evidence-based practices. My friend and her colleague were recently invited by the new principle of an elementary school in Inglewood, CA, to give a "trauma-informed" training for teachers at the school. According to the white principle new to the district, the teachers—most of them people of color from nearby communities—had a limited understanding of the causes of inappropriate behavior and would label the behaviors of students as "good" or "bad" while utilizing punitive measures for the latter. Coming from a background in mental health, the principle wanted the training to focus on the environmental determinants of behavior, including PTSD and trauma, in order to equip the teachers to intervene more effectively.

According to my friend's account, the workshop was met with skepticism and even anger by the teachers who were clearly frustrated by the lack of support and resources at their school and were generally distrustful of the principle. They expressed how none of the workshop materials were helpful for addressing the structural issues that made effective behavioral intervention difficult or impossible at their school. For example, one teacher mentioned that there is one school counselor for all of their students, and their rotation between different schools only allows them to be on their campus two days a week. The PEI program has made it possible to outsource school-based behavioral health services to private companies like Starview and cut funding to on-site public health workers. Public school teachers, already over-taxed and under-compensated, are now expected to be trained in behavioral intervention and cognitive behavioral therapeutic techniques. The privatization of public health and education is a result of neoliberal policy implementations and structural reforms that leave questions of funding, programming, and decision-making to local authorities and responsibilizes subjects for these gaps in resources. The

104

specific implementation of therapeutic discourse and practice in the classroom that is meant to replace ineffective or bureaucratic public behavioral health management functions to mask these structural deprivations at the individual level and make collective welfare an individual matter. Rather than using PEI funds to expand the resources of public school teachers and counseling programs, they are diverted to private non and for-profit companies like Starview because of their purported evidence-based outcomes.

Even further, the specific therapeutic techniques proffered by these programs function in a similar way. The training included effective evidence-based responses to behavior commonly exhibited by children who experience trauma:

- Be aware of your own triggers and experiences—trauma is common.
- Understand—It isn't always intentional or a bad attitude.
- Remain Calm—check your own physiological responses to stress/disruption
- Utilize de-escalation strategies. Volume of voice/Tone of voice. Non-verbals (non-threatening), eye contact, breathing, height, distance, empathy—The student isn't bad, the behavior is bad.
- Develop a classroom practice: Butterfly Tapping, PMR, Deep Breathing, age appropriate Mindfulness Techniques.

The emphasis on the response of the teacher here is particularly telling. It confirms the common mindfulness-based recognition that individuals only have control over their own behaviors and when possible, to limit the reactive nature of these behaviors, by pausing, taking a breath, being "in the moment," etc. When my friend's colleague leading the training asked for examples of students acting out as a basis for teaching effective behavioral intervention strategies, one teacher responded that they recently had a problem with a student stabbing another with a pencil. The trainer gave two examples of "evidence-based" CBT techniques for dealing with such violent behavior. The first was a method for teaching children deep breathing exercises (the specific exercise involved handing out a piece of paper shaped like a pizza and asking students to take deep breaths and blow on it to cool it down; see appendix iii).[iii] The second was a bilateral stimulation technique known as the "butterfly hug" of "butterfly tapping" that is meant to calm stress and has been proven in scientific studies to lower cortisone levels. According to my friend's account, these evidence-based practices were met with a roomful of dismissive laughter: "You think me telling this student to take a breath is seriously going to help?" the teacher replied incredulously. My friend's colleague responded that these techniques were meant to be integrated into daily practice as a way to train students to regulate their behavior. The teachers, unsurprisingly, remained unconvinced—they were vocal about their opinion that the resources spent on these trainings could go to better use. The therapist agreed, but conceded that they had to "work with what they had," referring to the unrealistic expectation of having a well-resourced and staffed public school.

I end with this anecdote not to argue against mindfulness-based CBT nor its integration in education, but rather to show how these techniques render political and social determinants—the

structural inadequacies of the school in this case—as a problem of individual therapeutic behavioral intervention. Moreover, these therapeutic techniques work to both make subjects more amenable to these depoliticizing conditions ("we have to work with what we have") and conduct their behavior toward the goal of enhancing their own individual well-being through the instruction and instillation of best practices rather than toward the possibility of collective transformation. The governmental instruction and modification of conduct is construed through best practices when the devolution of authority, coupled with the privatization and austerity measures that engender a lack of structural resources, responsibilize individuals for their own well-being and the well-being of the institution.

Appendix

i Youth Outcome Questionnaire Form for PEI intakes.

Youth Outcome Questionnaire (Y-OQ®2.01)

| Child's Name | | ID# | | Today's Date |
| Child's Date of Birth | | Child's Sex: Male ___ Female ___ | Parent/Guardian | |

PURPOSE: The Y-OQ®2.01 is designed to describe a wide range of troublesome situations, behaviors, and moods that are common in children and adolescents. You may discover that some of the items do not apply to your child's current situation. If so, please do not leave these items blank but check the "Never or almost never" category. When you begin to complete the Y-OQ®2.01 you will see that you can easily make your child look as healthy or unhealthy as you wish. Please do not do that. If you are as accurate as possible it is more likely that you will be able to receive the help that you are seeking for your child.

DIRECTIONS:
- Read each statement carefully.
- Decide how true this statement is for your child during the past 7 days.
- Check the box that most accurately describes your child during the past week.
- Check only one answer for each statement and erase unwanted marks clearly.

PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES

My Child:

1. Wants to be alone more than other children of the same age
2. Complains of dizziness or headaches
3. Doesn't participate in activities that were previously enjoyable
4. Argues or is verbally disrespectful
5. Is more fearful than other children of the same age
6. Cuts school or is truant
7. Cooperates with rules and expectations
8. Has difficulty completing assignments, or completes them carelessly
9. Complains or whines about things being unfair
10. Experiences trouble with her/his bowels, such as constipation or diarrhea
11. Gets into physical fights with peers or family members
12. Worries and can't get certain ideas off his/her mind
13. Steals or lies
14. Is fidgety, restless, or hyperactive
15. Seems anxious or nervous
16. Communicates in a pleasant and appropriate manner
17. Seems tense, easily startled
18. Soils or wets self
19. Is aggressive toward adults
20. Sees, hears, or believes things that are not real
21. Has participated in self-harm (e.g. cutting or scratching self, attempting suicide)
22. Uses alcohol or drugs
23. Seems unable to get organized
24. Enjoys relationships with family and friends
25. Appears sad or unhappy
26. Experiences pain or weakness in muscles or joints
27. Has a negative, distrustful attitude toward friends, family members, or other adults
28. Believes that others are trying to hurt him/her even when they are not
29. Threatens to, or has run away from home
30. Experiences rapidly changing and strong emotions

SUBTOTALS

Gary M. Burlingame Ph.D. and Michael J. Lambert, Ph.D.
OQ Measures LLC © 2005. All rights reserved. Licensure required for all uses.
Call Toll Free: 1-888-MH SCORE (1-888-647-2673) E-Mail: INFO@OQFAMILY.COM

My Child:

31. Deliberately breaks rules, laws, or expectations
32. Appears happy with her/himself
33. Sulks, pouts, or cries more than other children of the same age
34. Pulls away from family or friends
35. Complains of stomach pain or feeling sick more than other children of the same age
36. Doesn't have or keep friends
37. Has friends of whom I don't approve
38. Believes that others can hear her/his thoughts, or that s/he can hear the thoughts of others
39. Engages in inappropriate sexual behavior (e.g. sexually active, exhibits self, sexual abuse towards family members or others)
40. Has difficulty waiting his/her turn in activities or conversations
41. Thinks about suicide, says s/he would be better off if s/he were dead
42. Complains of nightmares, difficulty getting to sleep, oversleeping, or waking up from sleep too early
43. Complains about or challenges rules, expectations, or responsibilities
44. Has times of unusual happiness or excessive energy
45. Handles frustration or boredom appropriately
46. Has fears of going crazy
47. Feels appropriate guilt for wrongdoing
48. Is unusually demanding
49. Is irritable
50. Vomits or is nauseous more than other children of the same age
51. Becomes angry enough to be threatening to others
52. Seems to stir up trouble when bored
53. Is appropriately hopeful and optimistic
54. Experiences twitching muscles or jerking movement in face, arms, or body
55. Has deliberately destroyed property
56. Has difficulty concentrating, thinking clearly, or attending to tasks
57. Talks negatively, as though bad things are all his/her fault
58. Has lost significant amounts of weight without medical reason
59. Acts impulsively, without thinking of the consequences
60. Is usually calm
61. Will not forgive her/himself for past mistakes
62. Lacks energy
63. Feels that he/she doesn't have any friends, or that no one likes him/her
64. Gets frustrated and gives up, or gets upset easily

This Page Subtotals...
Side 1 Subtotals
SUBSCALE TOTALS (Sum of Subtotals)

TOTAL =

Gary M. Burlingame Ph.D. and Michael J. Lambert, Ph.D.
OQ Measures LLC © 2005. All rights reserved. Licensure required for all uses.
Call Toll Free: 1-888-MH SCORE (1-888-647-2673) E-Mail: INFO@OQFAMILY.COM

PracticeWise dashboards, clinical outcomes tracking example.

[iii] Mindfulness CBT exercise for school children.
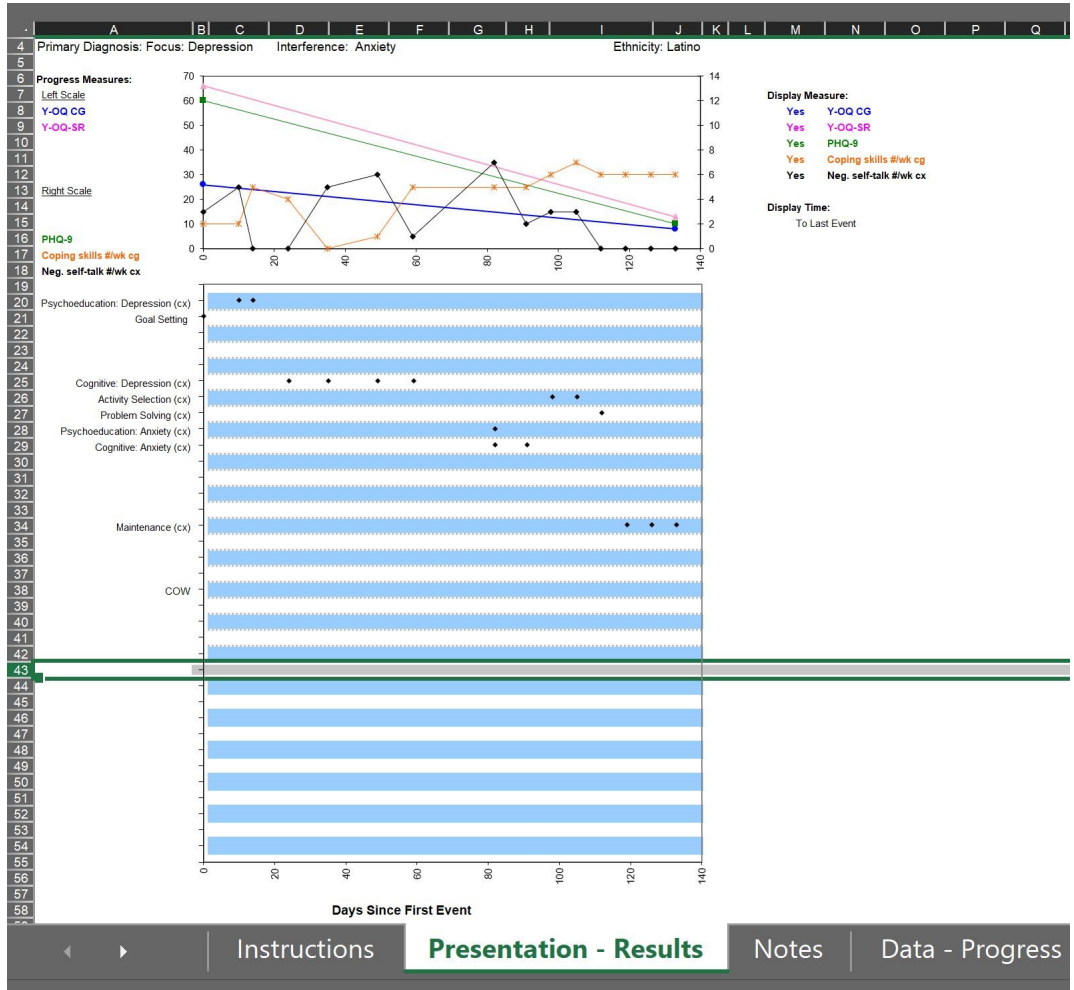
Name: _____   Date: _____

Cool Off the Pizza

Let's practice your breathing by cooling off some pizza! Have you ever eaten a piece of pizza and it's too hot? That's no fun! You have to cool it down first. Let's make your pizza to get started!

1. Color your pizza and toppings if you want.

2. Cut out your personal sized pizza.

3. Cut out your toppings.

4. Glue the toppings you want onto your pizza.

5. Let them dry!

6. Pick up your pizza.

7. Imagine you are smelling your pizza and breathe in!

8. Imagine you are cooling down your pizza and breathe out!

How will you remember this "cool off the pizza" breathing?

109

Chapter 4: Liberating the Self: The Politics of Mindfulness

[The] capacity to act upon the hidden realities of a situation in spite of appearances is the essence of statesmanship. It consists in giving the people not what they want but what they will learn to want.
–Walter Lippman, *A Preface to Morals*

The new techniques of environmental technology or environmental psychology which I think are linked to neo-liberalism in the United States…
–Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*

Thus far, this project has analyzed how therapeutic wellness techniques like mindfulness—generated from an admixture of psychological and neurological science as well as a secularization of eastern religious practices and new age spirituality—have become central technologies of neoliberal governance in realms as diverse as business management, marketing, education, and both personal and institutional healthcare. My central argument that mindfulness is a particularly effective therapeutic technique of/for neoliberal governance focuses on two guiding themes generated from these investigations into the use of mindfulness across varying sites and institutions: 1) a concern with the construction of subjectivity, that is, how mindfulness might function as a regime of subjectification, operating at the intersection of technologies of government and technologies of the self, and 2) an investigation of the political effects of mindfulness, which I have hitherto described as a result of the individualization of collective or structural political claims and positions. It is in these two realms—subjectivity and politics—that I see a particular alignment with the project of neoliberalism. With regards to the former, because the subject of mindfulness is one that is compelled to relate to their own subjectivity and interiority as an object of transformation—a site of human capital valorization and investment; with the latter, because this speculative therapeutic relation to the self supplants social or political action directed outwards at material conditions. I maintain that this reduction of social and systemic problems to a therapeutic technique is linked to and part and parcel of the general neoliberal tendency toward depoliticization through an economization of formerly nonmarket spheres of life, public and private.

This is not to say that mindfulness and its role in cognitive-behavioral psychology arise from neoliberalism whether theoretically or actually existing, nor is it to claim that they are somehow inherently and isomorphically linked. Rather, I contend that the psychological account of the subject of mindfulness and its therapeutics as a mode of self-realization and self-management are optimally seized on by neoliberal governance because these therapeutics produce a subject particularly amenable to "environmental" governmental interventions that aim at the "optimization of systems of difference."[266] This is also why, as I've maintained throughout this dissertation, mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral techniques present a potent investment in one's human capital. As a technology of the self meant to realize one's dormant potential, mindfulness is a form of self-activation that creates ever more potential for investment in and

---

[266] Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 260.

maximization of one's abilities. As a form of therapeutic self-care, mindfulness also offers an avenue for self-maintenance, a way to adjust subjects to conditions of stress, anxiety, depression, and failure. As a technique of knowledge vis a vis the opening up of one's awareness to both internal and external stimuli, it engenders more informed "rational," or more accurately, intentional, decisions. These features present the potential to overcome the limits of the neoliberal subject as one constrained by knowledge and bounded rationality[267], and as human capital whose "abilities" are inseparable from itself[268] and therefore necessarily restricted by biology and material circumstance. In this sense, mindfulness, I argue, is an important avenue through which human capital is able to continually overcome its own limits, namely the limits of knowledge through mindful awareness and the limits of human capital as a subject constituted by innate capabilities by turning one's self into an object of transformation.[269] For this reason, mindfulness is particularly amenable to being directed towards and complicit in the neoliberal aim of depoliticization through an economization of the psyche or subject itself. Again, this does not mean there is anything inherently neoliberal about mindfulness, nor do I want to suggest that "neoliberal" is a kind of floating signifier, a catch-all descriptor standing opposed to "good" progressive revolutionary thought and politics. Rather mindfulness provides one particularly fruitful mode, from the perspective of neoliberal governance and processes of economization, of producing human capital and administering a neoliberal conception of environmental governance-at-a-distance. This type of governance affects a devolution of authority, making the smallest individual unit of the firm (which now stands in for all manner of institutions, government agencies, and groups) responsible for their own success and failures.[270] As a technology of the self, mindfulness expands the devolution and responsibilization of neoliberal governance to the minutest element in society—the individual psyche.

This chapter continues my investigation into both the subjectivity and politics involved in mindfulness therapeutics by taking up mindfulness as an object that circulates in the realm of American culture in order to show how mindfulness is co-opted by, participates in, engenders, or simply reflects neoliberal governance and common sense. Accordingly, I look to two particular representations of mindfulness deployed in American cultural discourse and media: 1) mindfulness as a lifestyle or brand, and 2) mindfulness as a cure for the body politic. These representational elements of mindfulness in popular culture, I argue, both further and complicate the political terrain of neoliberal governance in important ways and shed light on how mindfulness therapeutics form an integral part of that terrain.

---

[267] The work of Friedrich Hayek and Herbert Simon are the most pertinent examples. See my comparison of their approaches in chapter 3.

[268] Theodore W. Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital," *The American Economic Review* 51, No. 1 (March, 1961), 8.

[269] This process of self-valorization shares in and departs from Marx's account of capital's movement of self-valorization. See *Capital* vol 1, chapter 4: "value is here the subject of a process in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original value, and thus valorizes itself independently. For the movement in the course of which it adds surplus-value is its own movement, its valorization is therefore self-valorization [*Selbstverwertung*]." Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*. trans. Ben Fowkes (*Penguin Books*: London, UK, 1990), 255.

[270] On neoliberalism and devolution see Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone, 2015) 131-134.

The Mindful Subject: "It's Who You Are"/ It's Who You Can Be

  In 2014, *Time* magazine's January issue on "The Mindful Revolution" generated some controversy for its cover image depicting a "young, fertile white girl" meditating (see fig. 1).[271] The image served as a flash point for critics frustrated with the way mindfulness has been secularized and commodified in the U.S. according to a homogenous model of race, class, and gender. Aside from expressing concern at how traditional Eastern religious and cultural practices have been appropriated by a secular Western audience, these critiques also take issue with the representation and marketing of meditation, yoga, and other holistic techniques of self-improvement belonging to the purview of a particular class that has both the time and financial security to access and integrate such practices in their daily lives. The growing popularity of mindfulness in the private sector and fields as diverse as healthcare, business, education, and criminal justice has brought these discussions to the fore in recent years.

Fig. 1. "The Mindful Revolution," *Time Magazine*

  A 62-page study titled "The U.S. Meditation Market" by independent market research publisher Marketdata Enterprises Inc. found that the U.S. meditation market in 2017 was valued at $1.21 billion dollars, with an estimated yearly projected growth of 11.4 percent.[272] The same study found that the majority of the approximately 9.3 million U.S. adults who reported using

---

[271] Joanna Piacenza, web manager of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, quoted in Carolyn Gregoire, "Actually TIME, This Is What The 'Mindful Revolution' Really Looks Like," The Huffington Post (December 07, 2017), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/this-is-proof-that-mindfu_n_4697734.

[272] John LaRosa, "$1.2 Billion U.S. Meditation Market To Grow Strongly, Following Path of Yoga Studios," WebWire (September 26, 2017), https://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=214152.

meditation in the past year are "middle-aged female, highly educated (college or higher education degree), non-Hispanic White, and residing in a Western state of the U.S.—very similar to the profile of a self-improvement consumer." Similarly, a study published by the Pew Research Center found that among U.S. practitioners who meditate at least once a week, 60 percent are white and 73 percent are at least third-generation Americans. Many in the mindfulness industry have advocated to widen access to mindfulness practices by targeting and educating those populations that have fallen outside of its purview. The answer to the classed, raced, and gendered segregation of mindfulness is often an egalitarian position that seeks to both make these techniques and resources available to all and to make subjects amenable to these techniques.

If these studies are taken at face value, the 2014 *Time* cover is indeed an accurate profile of mindfulness practitioners in the U.S. "The science of finding focus," as the issue's subtitle suggests, is afforded to a narrow demographic, one newly vulnerable to and uniquely unequipped to handle "a stressed-out, multitasking culture" that makes up the well-trodden terrain of daily life for minoritized classes, many of whom are well-acquainted with the "stressed-out" "multitasking" required of precarious subjects under liberal capitalism. The image conjures an adjectival phrase often circulated on social media meant to poke fun at the double standards of behavior and expectations between white women and women of color: that of the "carefree white girl."[273] The cover photograph markets mindfulness as an avenue to attain or retain the lifestyle of the carefree white girl, not through avoidance but through nonjudgment. Like the popular characterization of secular mindfulness, to be "carefree" paradoxically means being intentional, not care*less* but more caring, especially with regards to one's self-care. Scott Mitchell comments on this gendered[274] and racialized representational trope, calling it "The Tranquil Meditator": "The Tranquil Meditator represents a particular kind of this-worldly nirvana. She represents a practical way for individuals to attain a relaxed and healthful state of mind as a way to alleviate

---

[273] A term popularized by Collier Meyerson on her blog, Carefree White Girl, https://carefreewhitegirl.tumblr.com/. Meyerson notes the project is meant to draw attention to the comparative normative conceptions of white and black womanhood. See Mollie Reid, "Collier Meyerson Talks "Carefree White Girl," Race and Gender with Conn Students," The College Voice (March 04, 2013), https://thecollegevoice.org/2013/03/04/collier-meyerson-talks-carefree-white-girl-race-and-gender-with-conn-students/.

[274] An analysis of the associative images of white femininity in American visual depictions of mindfulness is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will briefly note how it has been both praised and critiqued in popular mindfulness literature. In *The Mindful Woman* (2008) Sue Patton comments, "Even though the practice of mindfulness is deeply rooted in ancient, monastic traditions, I believe women are uniquely suited to its practice because we are naturally blessed with qualities such as sensitivity and diffuse awareness" (21). As a point of comparison, Kozo Hattori laments the lack of men and masculinity both in representations of mindfulness and its practice. In "Five Ways to Make Mindfulness More Manly" (2013), he argues that "we" (presumably the mindful community) need to "make mindfulness and compassion training more attractive to men" and gives the example of "a male version" of an "active self-soothing technique": "While [the female instructor] gently puts her hands over her heart as an example of self-soothing, [the male instructor] adapts the hip-hop gesture of thumping a fist on one's chest over the heart." These two examples both fetishize essentialist gender norms—in the former, an essentialized "sensitive" femininity and in the latter, an essentialized masculine toughness, with its lack of compassion and vulnerability. See Kozo Hattori, "Five Ways to Make Mindfulness More Manly" in *Greater Good Magainze*. Greater Good Center, U.C. Berkeley: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_make_mindfulness_more_manly.

the stresses caused by the modern world...in this way, meditation becomes...safe for cultural consumption, nothing more harmless than a trip to a spa or a vacation."[275]

The *Time* cover image signals a variety of cultural connotations—a young, white, conventionally attractive, normatively and able-bodied feminine woman in a state of seemingly (perhaps suggestively, post-orgasmic) bliss suggests sexual empowerment. Here mindfulness promises not only peace and fulfillment—respite from the stress of being a white, upper-class woman in American society with all the gendered expectations and obstacles that come with that subject position—but the promise of realizing your best self, embodied in the image of the woman you would like to be, or, depending on one's gender and sexual preference, have. More pointedly, these visual cues link mindfulness to a caricatured carefree self-care lifestyle— associated in the American cultural imagination variously with images of yoga moms, farmer's markets, holistic wellness, Silicone Valley tech gurus, Buddhist monks, new age spirituality, and other fair trade, organic, liberal values. In other words, this image sells well-being as that which, by way of association, entails a whole array of consumer wellness lifestyle choices, subjecting every aspect of one's life to mindfulness. As the *Time* article accompanying the cover image states, the "strength [of mindfulness] lies in its universality. Though meditation is considered an essential means to achieving mindfulness, the ultimate goal is simply to give your attention fully to what you're doing. One can work mindfully, parent mindfully and learn mindfully. One can exercise and even eat mindfully. The banking giant Chase now advises customers on how to spend mindfully."[276]

But in its racialized, gendered, and normative morphological presentation, the image has a paradoxically neutralizing effect when it comes to the question of social difference. As an expression of normative white femininity, it conceals its own racialized and gendered constitution in a self-evidently posited universalism. This universalism, more than in just its applicability to all realms of life as the *Time* article suggests, is meant to be radically democratic. One of the oft-repeated slogans by mindfulness proselytizers like Jon Kabat-Zinn is that anyone—regardless of religious, political, ethnic, etc., affiliation—can practice and access the benefits of mindfulness. In this case, "anyone" is the universal "someone" of white womanhood. There is a flattening of difference insofar as mindfulness as a lifestyle choice presumes the absolute autonomy and equality of subjects who are all equally free to choose it. As Neil Maycroft argues, lifestyle branding like the example from *Time* "acts to efface and erase important social differences of wealth, opportunity, class, gender and ethnicity, as well as obscuring global and historical inequalities."[277] While it could be said that the image disavows difference in its ostensibly universal appeal, and therefore holds out the allure of conformity ("you too can realize the empowered, serene, white woman within yourself!"), it also implicitly promises uniqueness, a refusal to go along with the "stressed-out, multitasking culture" that effects most Americans, a rebellion against being "on auto-pilot," in the words of the article. Here the product offered by the lifestyle branding of mindfulness is not conformity per se, but

[275] Scott Mitchell, The tranquil meditator: Representing Buddhism and Buddhists in U.S. popular media, *Religion Compass* 8, no. 3 (2014), 86.
[276] Kate Pickert, "The Mindful Revolution" in *Time Magazine* (February 3 2014), 2.
[277] Neil Maycroft, "Cultural Consumption and the Myth of Life-Style." *Capital & Class* 28, no. 3 (November 2004), 61.

improvement—a better, happier, healthier you. As Nikolas Rose argues in his discussion of the self-help literature that mindfulness is regularly entangled with:

> [self-help] signifies that the regulation of personal existence is not a question of politicians seeking to impose norms of conduct through an intrusive state bureaucracy backed with legal powers. Nor is it a matter of the imposition of moral standards under a religious mandate. Self-help, today, entails an alliance between professionals claiming to provide an objective, rational answer to the question of how one should conduct a life to ensure normality, contentment, and success, and individuals seeking to shape a 'life-style', not in order to conform to social conventions but in the hope of personal happiness and 'an improved quality of life'.[278]

Representations of mindfulness as a lifestyle choice are not just the commodification and subsequent branding of mindfulness, but part of a governing apparatus that targets "the regulation of personal existence" backed by the objectivity of expert scientific knowledge (hence the equation of mindfulness with "the *science* of finding focus" above).[279] I would add to Rose's analysis that popular, governmental, and medical rhetoric linking mindfulness to a healthy lifestyle is not (just) the traditional commodification of a product for consumption. What mindfulness offers as a lifestyle is not (primarily) a good in itself or a form of adornment that signifies cultural capital, but a technique that renders one's inner self accessible, knowable, and amenable to regulation and improvement—that is, through this lifestyle, one can realize and optimize their speculative self, not a self that is on "auto-pilot," but a self that is intentional, expansive, and malleable.

Mindfulness as a lifestyle perpetuates the image of the self as a targeted site of inner— which will lead to outer—transformation. As sociologist Anthony Giddens argues, the understanding of the self as an object of transformation and the construction and expression of self-identity in a chosen lifestyle is endemic and particular to what he calls "the post-traditional order of modernity."[280] He posits that the failure of Enlightenment rationality and the loss of structural authority in late 20th and early 21st century Western society has led subjects to turn inwards, constituting themselves by way of autobiographical self-fashioning narratives rather than in relation to some external code or injunction:

> The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options…because

---

[278] Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 156-157.

[279] Interestingly, meditation itself cannot easily be commodified—but mindful knowledge, expertise, methods, procedures, and assistive technologies can be, in the form of books, meditation apps, biometric devices, traditional artifacts like Tibetan singing bowls, meditation retreats and classes, etc. Additionally, the signifying value of mindfulness is often used to market objects for consumption, from organic food to vaguely eastern garb.

[280] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 5.

of the 'openness' of social life today, the pluralization of contexts of action and the diversity of 'authorities', lifestyle choice is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity and daily activity.[281]

Giddens argues that under these conditions of subjectification, one's life is subject to a rubric of lifestyle choices in order to generate meaning in a late-modern landscape where meaning is in deficit. In addition to the production of existential norms, the negotiation of lifestyle choices becomes the means of self-actualization and self-mastery, which Giddens sees as the internalization of modernity's regimes of control. While my understanding departs from Giddens' historical periodization that locates the conditions for the reflexive project of the self in an ideological and technological shift, his theorization of the centrality of lifestyle choices to modern self-fashioning intersects with my project in important ways. In Gidden's descriptive account of how lifestyle forms the basis of subjective identity and action, freedom is confined to an expression of one's individual lifestyle, without reference to an external political goal or collective will.

Mindfulness supplements the behavioral formulation of freedom of choice with one of holistic self-realization. Mindfulness therapeutics hails and integrates its subjects as individuals who are both singular insofar as mindfulness practice unlocks an individual capacity unique to the practitioner, and equal insofar as mindfulness is a "universal human quality." The emphasis on the individual and the universal aspects vary in mindfulness literature, often within the same text. A similar oscillation occurs in the alternating emphasis placed on negative and positive notions of freedom. Mindfulness presents freedom as tied both to a moralizing authenticity, that is, to a realization of one's "best" or authentic self—and is therefore a technology of access—and to a freedom from compulsion, that is, from reacting automatically to internal or external stimuli—a technology of resistance or self-control. Put another way, mindfulness discourse urges its subjects: one must be authentically oneself, but one must also resist the self that acts on impulse, that lacks the knowledge of awareness or doesn't act intentionally. It is thus a radically constructivist project. Though mindfulness emphasizes both self-knowledge and self-mastery to imbue the self with intentionality, this intentional self that one must become is speculative, it exists only in potentiality.

These conflicting accents recall Foucault's somewhat tangled account of the juro-disciplinary regimes of control and the biopolitical regimes of normalization, along with their distinct relations to freedom, across his work. The disciplines seem to inversely mirror the technology of resistance, insofar as freedom is located in an act of refusal, while the regimes of normalization that seek to produce freedom in the inner truth of subjects are starkly similar to the way mindfulness is posited as a technology of accessing one's authentic self. But in positing freedom as the expression of an individual choice, mindfulness elides this ambiguity through a sleight of hand: freedom is a choice that leads to the discovery of your true and best self, which was there all along. An advertisement seventeen pages into the inaugural issue of *Mindful* magazine sums it up pithily: "*Mindful*: It's who you are…you know the simple practice of being in the moment brings out the best in who you are."[282] One is already (potentially) mindful—this

[281] Giddens, 5.
[282] *Mindful* magazine. Foundation for a Mindful Society, 1:1 (April 2013): 17.

"best" self need only be realized and brought to the surface through the techniques that mindfulness offers. Accessing the self is an intentional act of becoming. Thus the promise of lifestyle representations of the mindful subject is both who one already is and who one can and should potentially be.

Mindfulness and Technocratic Humanism

Mindful, a publication by the non-profit Foundation for a Mindful Society popular in mindfulness circles, is a bi-monthly magazine committed to "inspiring, guiding, and connecting anyone who wants to explore mindfulness—to enjoy better health, more caring relationships, and a compassionate society."[283] In addition to their print publication, the non-profit offers Mindful.org—a correlative website that draws 575,000 monthly users—, a *Mindful* mobile app and video service, as well as a weekly electronic newsletter with 130,000 plus subscribers.[284] In contrast to the representation of mindfulness in *Time*, a cursory perusal of *Mindful* reveals a handful of white men, women of color, and, it at least two instances, men of color featured on its cover pages. The number of white women featured on issue covers are still disproportionately high (about 50%), but the inclusion of various celebrities, politicians, a number of scientific experts (including Jon Kabat-Zinn), and an array of "average Americans" (a police officer, farmer, veteran, nurse, and a middle-aged mother holding her infant child, to name a few), suggests that the publication is committed to diverse and everyday representations of mindfulness practitioners.[285]

Their website describes in detail the egalitarian nature of mindfulness, as well as its potential as a vehicle for "social innovation":

> *We all* have the innate ability to be present, composed, and to pause before we overreact to the challenges of our busy lives—and that's the ground of mindfulness. With some guidance and training, mindfulness can develop into a way of living that brings greater focus and effectiveness as well as kindness and caring into everything we do. Both science and experience demonstrate how being mindful brings positive benefits for our health, happiness, work, and relationships…We see mindfulness as a unique and profound approach to social change, and our work as a social innovation initiative. Mindfulness is entering the mainstream and it presents an historic opportunity to transform society. *It is accessible and everyone can benefit* from its potential for promoting individual wellness, healthy relationships, and a more mindful and caring world [emphasis mine].[286]

Mindfulness is posed here as an "innate ability," a naturally existing potential within everyone that need only be activated through (presumably expert) "guidance and training." This

---

[283] "About Mindful," Mindful Magazine, https://www.mindful.org/about-mindful/.
[284] "Mindful Media Kit 2018," The Foundation for a Mindful Society (New York, June 21 2018), https://www.mindful.org/content/uploads/Mindful-Media-Kit-2018-MASTER-web-June21.pdf
[285] Similarly, a search on Mindful.org using the term "diversity" generates over 115 queries. A sampling of titles: "How to Stop the Racist in You", "How Good People Can Fight Bias", "Four Ways People of Color Can Foster Mental Health and Practice Restorative Healing", and troublingly, "Mindful Policing: The Future of Force." Alongside these racially conscious search results are articles on mindful eating, mindful exercise, mindful shopping, mindful dating, and even "mindful zoning-out," though it's unclear why these articles were tagged as diverse.
[286] "About Mindful."

117

categorization reflects both a neoliberal understanding of subjects defined by virtue of their capacities—both latent and manifest—as human capital, and cognitive-behavioral treatment focused on reprogramming negative cognitive and behavioral patterns. But mindfulness isn't just a theory of a universal human faculty and/or a tool for behavioral adjustment: it is "a way of living" promising individual utilitarian value ("focus and effectiveness"), a social/relational good ("kindness"), and an affect of care that holds limitless potential for individual and social transformation. In light of a general contemporary social psychological malaise in the U.S. (often diagnosed in scientific and popular literature through unprecedented rates of depression, anxiety, and apathy, or a generalized attention deficit problem), the focused interest and desire for care (of the self and the "world") inculcated by mindfulness is an invaluable therapeutic "outcome" for both individuals and society.[287] If these results seem too far-fetched, mindfulness, the organization goes on to say, is backed by both objective science and subjective experience. Indeed, it presents the opportunity to go beyond the subject/object dichotomy altogether by making one's self the very object of transformation (paradoxically through being more subjectively "present" and intentional), thereby bettering every aspect of human life—"health, happiness, work, and relationships." But the most grandiose and perhaps telling claim made by *Mindful* in the description cited above is that mindfulness presents the capacity to "transform society." This all-encompassing cure is the answer to not only individual ills, like inattention and apathy, or even interpersonal ones, but to the larger societal problems that have hitherto eluded social scientists, governments, and activists alike. Indeed, the portrayal suggests that all our social problems are really the result of individual ones, which themselves stem from a lack of attention, desire, or care.

We see these themes echoed and further explicated in *Mindful*'s 2018 media kit, which explains to potential advertisers and investors why mindfulness is no longer a fringe market segment, but "the fastest growing health care practice in the country" that is "hitting the mainstream":

- **Anyone can do it.** It's a practice and a way of living. It cultivates universal human qualities, and so it doesn't conflict with anyone's religion, beliefs, or lifestyle.
- **It helps.** It has proven results for our health, works, and relationships. It benefits our families, organizations, schools, and communities.
- **It's evidence-based.** Its positive effects for individuals, institutions, and society are documented by both science and experience.
- **It's a way of living.** It's also about bringing awareness, caring, and joy to everything we do. Whatever life we choose, mindfulness enhances it.

---

[287] Increasingly in medical literature concerning not just MBCBT but psychological treatment plans in general, the language of "curing," "healing," or even the "completion" of treatment has given way to "health outcomes," which are associated with a measurable change in the patient's "health status." The term has gained widespread use through "evidence-based" healthcare practice, especially in the "shared decision making" model. See G. Elwyn, D. Frosch, R. Thomson et al., "Shared decision making: a model for clinical practice," *Journal of general internal medicine 27*, no. 10 (2012), 1361–1367. For the relevance of "evidence-based" practices to mindfulness therapeutics, see chapter 3.

- **It offers hope for the future.** When people live mindfully we develop calm, clarity, and effectiveness as we deal with the increasing complexity and uncertainty of today's world.[288]

Mindfulness is identified concurrently as a practice directed towards certain ends—a *techné*—and a way of (enhanced) living through awareness—what we might characterize as a type of *phronesis* or embodied wisdom. Importantly, this dual techné/phronesis "cultivates universal human qualities," regardless of individual difference with regards to belief system or lifestyle. The familiar distancing of mindfulness from its Buddhist roots is evident, but so too is a disassociation from any contamination of social or political difference—presumably including gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability. In the tense identitarian political climate of the contemporary U.S. landscape, and the "uncertainty of today's world," mindfulness is presented as a great social equalizer: whether gay or straight, black or white, Republican or Democrat, it awards social sameness.

While mindfulness here flattens and neutralizes the threat of difference, harkening back to or gesturing towards a utopic time of social harmony, it does so through obscuring its racialized, classed, and gendered roots in Buddhist history and religious tradition and claiming a universally privileged form of humanity. This humanity is defined not through rationality in the Western philosophical sense—that is, it is not the Hegelian techné of the labor of the concept that circumscribes the human—but through a phronesis-embedded lifestyle that both invokes and displaces technical ends, since the goal is not "health" per se but well-being—a dynamic and perpetually speculative state. In contrast to both neoliberal and behavioral approaches to human behavior, which often eschew, if only rhetorically, humanist concerns in favor of technocratic positivism, the underlying humanism of mindfulness is a theme that reverberates throughout mindfulness discourse. Again, this speaks to the problem of freedom defined as either against outside constriction or as purposeful action, since freedom comes from realizing the universal potential lying dormant within your self—through a purposeful action (awareness) that resists the constriction engendered by modern life (categorized as a problem of attention and apathy). The freedom mindfulness promises is emphasized here as both the positive freedom of personal choice and the freedom from any kind of set program: "whatever life we choose, mindfulness enhances it." Mindfulness doesn't tell you what to choose, it enhances your choices. It makes it so that you make better choices according to your "own" set of preferences, preferences that are discovered through mindful awareness. As such, it is a particularly useful therapeutic technique for a worldview that reduces all human behavior to individual choice, like that of neoliberalism, while filling the gap left by cold, calculated behavioral economics with a humanism linked to enhancing individual, and therefore societal, worth. It is both exceedingly individualizing and universalizing.

The last bolded point in the *Mindful* media kit makes clear that mindfulness is a tool that can uniquely equip practitioners to navigate the "increasing complexity and uncertainty of today's world." The twin problems of complexity and uncertainty were a favorite topic of the early neoliberal theorists, especially Hayek who formulation of how the market both solved and depended on the limitations of human knowledge, and Friedman, who's famous (and plagiarized)

---

[288] "Mindful Media Kit."

example of the humble pencil sought to illustrate the powerful mechanism of the invisible hand of markets that simplify complex phenomenon. Despite their differences, both Hayek and Friedman saw individual human concerns—like the "particular ethical position[s] or normative judgments" of political demands—as not only secondary to the superior empirical form of market rationality, but detrimental to the "spontaneous order" of the market.[289] This is why they wished to substitute the technics of the market, modeled on the "natural" objective order of competition and exchange, for the necessarily limited and relative technics of politics:

> I venture the judgment, however, that currently in the Western world, and especially in the United States, differences about economic policy among disinterested citizens derive predominant from different predictions about the economic consequences of taking action - differences that in principle can be eliminated by the progress of positive economics - rather than from fundamental differences in basic values, differences about which men can ultimately only fight.[290]

The truth produced by the market could solve policy problems that stem from a difference in subjective perspective—that is, could substitute for the subjective values of politics—according to Friedman. But this attempt to govern in spite of individual human perspective could not quite circumvent the simple fact that humans, and their "basic values," are still involved in every level of governance and thus present a stumbling block to the smooth functioning of the market. To address this issue, an account of the human subject is needed, one that provides the basis of governmental rule over subjects that takes into account and limits the subjective values that impede market coordination.

The theory of human capital is able to provide an important supplement in this regard insofar as it presents a market-based governing principle that accounts for the perspective of the individual, even if their behavior is irrational. According to Becker, while individuals differ in their desires and their choices, they don't differ in their fundamental interest: they all strive to "maximize their well-being," and in this way act as "economic" agents in all aspects of their life—that is, as human capital.[291] Thus to govern in accordance with the market means proceeding from an understanding that all human behavior, not just taken in aggregate but also from the perspective of individuals, is subject to the utilitarian calculus of economic rationality, even those "things about which men can ultimately only fight"—utilitarian in the broad sense of enhancing, or more properly, appreciating one's capacity for well-being. [292]

Understood through the schema of human capital, politics is not just subservient to the market or "eliminated by the progress of positive economics." Rather, politics is transformed

---

[289] Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 2.
[290] Friedman, 3.
[291] Gary Becker, *Human Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 9.
[292] The theory of public choice, inaugurated by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock at the University of Virginia roughly at the same time as Schultz and Becker's analysis of human capital, similarly provided an explicit governmental program along these lines, though it differed in its emphasis on contractarianism and rational choice. Still Buchanan's language is useful in this context—he labeled his project "an economic theory of politics" and "politics without romance." James M. Buchanan, "Politics Without Romance: A Sketch of Positive Public Choice Theory and Its Normative Implications," in *The Theory of Public Choice*, eds. James Buchanan and Robert D. Tollison (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 11.

into a site of individual investment. Thus, the account of the subject in/as human capital actually maintains "the human" perspective as central to economics, even if this perspective is, admittedly, positivist or reducible to a utilitarian schema. This is why any critique of neoliberalism based upon nostalgia for a lost humanism is ultimately impotent. See, for example, Stephen Metcalf's article in the *Guardian*, where he gives a compelling historical account of neoliberal thought, only to reduce it to a kind of anti-humanism:

> Supersizing Hayek's idea and radically upgrading the price system into a kind of social omniscience means radically downgrading the importance of our individual capacity to reason – our ability to provide and evaluate justifications for our actions and beliefs…We fashion our selves and identities on the basis of this capacity for reflection. The use of one's individual reflective powers is reason; the collective use of these reflective powers is public reason; the use of public reason to make law and policy is democracy. When we provide reasons for our actions and beliefs, we bring ourselves into being: individually and collectively, we decide who and what we are. [293]

What is dangerous about neoliberalism for Metcalf is that it is devoid of human rationality, which is what awards us our freedom, "individually and collectively…[to] decide who and what we are." From this perspective, it is easy to see why the scathing critique of humanism—"the death of Man"—in post-war thought, sometimes traveling under the guise of "postmodernism," is blamed for the ascendency of neoliberalism.[294] But this critique misses the point that neoliberalism *is* animated by a kind of humanism or at least a vision of the human—however much neoliberals disavow the human in their arguments for positive market-based governance. The humanism underlying what can appear to be the crude behaviorism and utilitarianism in neoliberal accounts of the subject however, is a paradoxically technocratic humanism. In presenting itself as a neutral description of the world and human behavior "as it really is," neoliberalism supplants normative humanist political ideals with its empirical rationale for governance. The form of government that is thus most purely neoliberal is technocratic rather than democratic—a point which Friedman and Hayek both more or less made.[295] But technocratic rule still relies on a justification for what is best for human society—even if that justification is taken to be scientific rather than moral or political. In this sense, as Foucault states, "the technocrats, now, are humanists, technocracy is a form of humanism. They in fact consider that they are the only ones in possession of the card game which would allow a

---

[293] "Neoliberalism: the idea that swallowed the world" in the *Guardian*, August 2017: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world

[294] David Harvey makes this suggestion in his work *The Condition of Postmodernity*: "But postmodernism, with its emphasis upon the ephemerality of *jouissance*, its insistence upon the impenetrability of the other, its concentration on the text rather than the work, its penchant for deconstruction bordering on nihilism, its preference for aesthetics over ethics, takes matters too far. It takes them beyond the point where any coherent politics are left, while that wing of it that seeks a shameless accommodation with the market puts it firmly in the tracks of an entrepreneurial culture that is the hallmark of reactionary neoconservatism." David Harvey, *The Condition Of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins Of Cultural Change.* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 116.

[295] "…it is possible for a dictator to govern in a liberal way. And it is also possible for a democracy to govern with a total lack of liberalism. Personally I prefer a liberal dictator to democratic government lacking liberalism." Hayek, interview in *El Mercurio* 1981. See also Milton Friedman's letter to Pinochet on the 21st of April, 1975, which lays out an eight step "shock program" to end inflation in Chile.

121

definition of what the 'happiness of man' is and its realization."[296] The world-making project of neoliberalism is one aimed at the most effective conditions for the individual pursuit of happiness, or, in Becker's words, well-being. If individuals fail to take advantage of such conditions then their failure is their own, not that of the government.

As a "positive science," it is the claim to objectivity that allows the economic model of human behavior to colonize all domains of life. Becker's account of the subject as human capital whose choices in all areas are motivated by self-investment, reduces all human action not readily perceived as motivated by the satisfaction of physical needs "as calculated strategies for the maximization of private psychological gain."[297] The governmental project of neoliberalism thus aims to transform the realms of the culture and politics—once defined as necessarily distinct from the economy in the classical liberal tradition—in the image of the market, in order to provide an environment in which subjects can be free to realize their human capital. But as neoliberal governance increasingly privatizes public goods, eschews political demands, and pursues policies that submits all phenomenon to the rationality of the market, and likewise as subjects are compelled to act as entrepreneurs of themselves, treating every aspect of themselves as sites of investment and approaching social life through the exhaustive lens of competition, what neoliberalism engenders in actuality is on the one hand, increasing wealth concentration and economic precarity,[298] and on the other, a general psychological malaise, often referenced to by increasing levels of negative psychosomatic effects like anxiety, depression, and attention-deficit in unprecedented clinical diagnoses.[299] It is with regards to this latter effect that psychology and therapeutics become necessary and important supplements to neoliberal governance.

I've already traced the history of behavioral psychology and its overlap with behavioral economics and neoliberalism more broadly in previous chapters, but the behavioral model, while useful in providing a theory of human action and decision-making that could bolster neoliberal governmental reason, also shares the same blind spot—namely a mechanistic account of human psychology. There was one marginal tradition in psychology, originally theorized in the mid-20th century in response to the limitations of behaviorism and psychoanalysis that could fill this gap: the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Karen Horney. Humanistic psychology wasn't quite a renunciation of behaviorism as much as an important amendment: the

---

[296] Foucault, "Who Are You Professor Foucault?" in *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 199), 100-101.
[297] Becker, 151.
[298] See Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the 21st Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[299] There are numerous studies comparing the rate of symptoms of depression or anxiety reported between the 1980's and mid 2000s, and more pertinently, there are a number of often-cited studies that trace increased psychopathology from the late 1930s to the present. Some examples: S. Cohen, D. Janicki-Deverts, "Who's stressed? Distributions of psychological stress in the United States in probability samples from 1983, 2006, and 2009," Journal of Applied Social Psychology 42 (2012), 1320-1334; G. L. Klerman, M. M. Weissman, "Increasing rates of depression," Journal of the American Medical Association 261 (1989), 2229–2235; M. Olfson, B.G. Druss, S. C. Marcus, "Trends in mental health care among children and adolescents," New England Journal of Medicine 372 (2015), 2029-2038; J. M. Twenge, "Time period and birth cohort differences in depressive symptoms in the U.S., 1982-2013," Social Indicators Research 121 (2015), 437-454; J. M. Twenge, B. Gentile et al., "Birth cohort increases in psychopathology among young Americans, 1938-2007: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of the MMPI," Clinical Psychology Review 30 (2010), 145-154.

crude behaviorism of Watson and Skinner disavowed any notion of human freedom in its assumption that all human action, like non-human action, was essentially reducible to a response to external stimuli. While cognitive psychology made an argument for the decisive role of human thought in this framework, humanistic psychology interrogated the simplified utilitarian calculus underlying behaviorism by arguing that human action was motivated by a more complicated drive to "self-actualize." Thus, humanistic psychology offers the positive theory of human freedom that both behaviorism and neoliberalism lacked, while at the same time, it does not disavow the basic utilitarian premise that subjects are driven by the satisfaction of needs. Rather, it supplements this paradigm with a "hierarchy of needs" that included, even centered, the immaterial social and psychic needs of subjects. Maslow's account of human motivation, with its various teleological stages of needs—physiological, safety, belonging and love, social needs and esteem, and self-actualization—provide a holistic and integrated version of the subject of interest.

Like human capital, the subject of humanistic psychology is motivated by investment in one's well-being, but a well-being modeled less on the income stream model and more on a model of self-growth and self-realization, that is, a self-anchored striving aimed at the human subject's limitless potential. Further, rather than see culture and its humanist pursuits as an impediment to the satisfaction of desire (whether in Freudian theory, which treats culture as a civilizing agent, or the economic model which sees it as, at best, secondary to the pursuit of economic security), humanistic psychologists like Karen Horney argued that culture, as part of an individual's environment, was in fact necessary to human flourishing even if it was often the source of neuroses. The goal of therapy is thus to "restore the individual to himself, to help him regain his spontaneity and find his center of gravity in himself."[300] This "self" in the humanistic literature is defined almost identically to the self of human capital: as a set of "potentialities" that need a particular "atmosphere of warmth"—a specific environment that will cultivate self-esteem—in order to flourish. But the modern environment, Horney argues, is "a competitive, individualistic culture" one she explicitly links to economic rationality: "Whether the enormous economic and technical achievements of our culture were and are possible only on the basis of the competitive principle is a question for the economist or sociologist to decide. The psychologist, however, can evaluate the personal price we have paid for it."[301]

It would seem that on this point neoliberalism and humanistic psychology are bound to conflict, since the centrality of competition is necessary to the smooth functioning of the market in neoliberalism. But humanistic psychology today more commonly treks under the signifier of positive psychology, "dedicated to the programmatic 'unlearning' of helplessness," increasingly through mindfulness-based CBT techniques.[302] Contemporary third-wave cognitive behavioral therapy incorporates the insights of the behavioral, cognitive, and humanistic schools as the basis of its therapeutic approach, but it primarily focuses on rewiring short term negative thought patterns and behavior that present an impediment to individual flourishing. The therapeutics of this "positive psychology" understands the interpretation of events—not events themselves—as

---

[300] Karen Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1939), 11.
[301] Horney, "Culture and Neurosis" *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 2 (1936), 227.
[302] William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London: Verso, 2015), 165.

sources of psychic distress—an insight generated from humanistic psychological theory and also reflected in mindfulness-based psychology. Mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy thus does not seek to alleviate symptoms by targeting root causes, rather it attempts, in the words of the *Time* magazine article, to "[train] patients [to] refocus their attention so they can *change their response* to pain and thereby reduce their overall suffering" (emphasis mine). The goal here is still "to restore the individual to himself," to bolster self-esteem and an orientation towards one's self-realization, but only within a specified framework: often, ad interim therapeutic intervention guided by specific health-outcomes that manage symptoms by targeting individual response rather than curing underlying causes. The humanistic psychologists' recognition of the temporary nature of self-actualization is at play here. As Maslow described it, patients experiencing what he called "peak experiences"—"a [sic] episode, or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way"—are glimpses into ones true "Being": "He becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being."[303] What the incorporation of humanistic psychology in the CBT and MBCBT framework awards is a certain language of care, a recognition of greater human needs and motivations, even if these needs are addressed only provisionally.

The contemporary therapeutics of mindfulness-based cognitive behavioral therapy provides an important supplement to neoliberal governance—not only does it afford a psychological account of human behavior and engender "mindful subjects" invested in their own self-investment and self-esteem, that is, subjects with the psychology of human capital, it also contributes the missing piece of an explicit humanism, "an atmosphere of warmth" in Horney's words, to the cold rationality of the market, enabling those things that are most "human" about us—our affects, thoughts, creativity, curiosity, etc.—to become sites of self-valorization and human capital investment. In other words, our sense of self, our very interiority becomes subject to economization, and importantly, in targeting our response to pain rather than the source of it, it perpetuates the individualization and internalization of political action, reframing it within the private terrain of the psyche.

Lifestyle Therapeutics: Consuming Care

In the examples from the beginning of this chapter garnered from popular mindfulness resources, mindfulness serves a number of both potentially conflicting and overlapping functions: 1) it is an egalitarian democratizing realization of universal humanity, 2) it is an individual practice of freedom and exercise of personal choice, 3) it is a scientific and evidence-based form of therapy, 4) it enhances already existing potential by turning purposeful action into daily second-hand nature, 5) it enacts positive outcomes for individuals, institutions, and society as a whole, 6) it recognizes the integral and holistic nature of human existence and serves as a holistic response to wellness, and 7) it offsets contemporary cultural malaise and social insecurity. Mindfulness is presented as a cure for everything—from individual stress and trauma to the large-scale political problems that plague society—and it is this categorization as broad spectrum practice that makes it so marketable.

---

[303] Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968), 97.

As a product for consumption, mindfulness belongs to what marketers call Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability, or LOHAS, which is made up of five categories: sustainable economy, healthy living, alternative healthcare, personal development, and ecological lifestyles. Formerly a niche target market of consumers the sociologist Paul Ray termed "Cultural Creatives" in the 1990s, LOHAS has grown to define an estimated 1 in 4 American consumers and presents at least a $300 billion dollar a year market.[304] According to the LOHAS Journal published by Natural Business Communications, LOHAS is

> a marketplace for goods and services that appeal to consumers who value health, the environment, social justice, personal development, and sustainable living….The holistic world view of the LOHAS consumer is a belief in the interconnectedness of global economies, cultures, environments, and political systems, as well as the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit within individuals in order to achieve full human potential. Personal development is of utmost concern to LOHAS consumers. Spirituality is no longer relegated to the New Age periphery but has immigrated to the center.[305]

Glenn Rudberg, a marketing and advertising specialist who's worked with LOHAS brands such as Tom's of Maine and Whole Foods, characterizes these consumers as "intuitive people who see themselves as individuals, and who seek brands that align with their values…who actively seeks out a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle. They do this in all that they do – from who they build relationships with to the products and services they buy. They also tend to be early adopters and therefore predictors of upcoming trends."[306]

We can perceive some recurring themes in these descriptions with reference to the marketing of mindfulness. As a LOHAS product, it performs a therapeutic function aimed at wellbeing—hence why, as stated in a previous chapter, it makes up part of the growing wellness economy—but it also signals consumers who see the products they buy as an extension of their very selves, i.e., it is a lifestyle product (see fig. 2). As a reflection of one's identity and values, engendered by the "holistic worldview" espoused by LOHAS, mindfulness-as-lifestyle pertains not only to health/wellness and personal expression (and its correlating social/cultural capital), it extends into "all that they [LOHAS consumers] do," including "relationships" and consumer choices, but also, presumably, the realm of politics. The mindful lifestyle serves as an expression of a particular personal politic. In a social context where collective political organization and public demands are increasingly rarified, lifestyle products present an avenue for political performance rather than action—that is, lifestyle products take the form of politics, but not its content. Lifestyle branding is yet another example of the privatization and economization of the once public realm of politics to individual choice. It similarly supplies an avenue for personal religious expression, as Mara Einstein compellingly describes:

---

[304] "LOHAS Market-Size Data Released: A $290 Billion Opportunity," Natural Marketing Institute (June 14, 2017), https://www.newhope.com/trends/lohas-market-size-data-released-290-billion-opportunity.

[305] "About LOHAS," GRI Equity - Integral Investment Management, http://www.griequity.com/resources/integraltech/GRIMarket/aboutlohas.html.

[306] Glen Rudberg, "The Era of Ethical Consumerism is Here: How to Market to LOHAS consumers" *Ethos* blog (2017), https://blog.ethos-marketing.com/blog/how-to-market-to-lohas.

For some Mind/Body/Spirit seekers, products themselves become the conduit for expressing their spiritual beliefs...[LOHAS] is a defining example of the marriage between belief system and the market. Called Cultural Creatives or Lohasians, consumers of LOHAS products claim that it is through their product choices—responsible investing, organic products, eco-tourism, green products, and so on—that they can change the world and themselves. Building on the work and spirituality movement of the 1990s, the purveyors of LOHAS products believe that business and spirituality can work in tandem, that being socially and environmentally responsible is not mutually exclusive from business practices.

LOHAS products target consumers for whom the avenue for social and political change is assumed to be individual choice rather than for example, collective bargaining. The model of human capital as a subject motivated by the prospect of an income stream can only account for this phenomenon through the concept of psychic income[307]—that is, that the consumer chooses to purchase the more expensive sustainable product because of the affective satisfaction it will bring. As the marketing information resource Think with Google puts it, "when consumers buy sustainable products, they feel good about their decisions."[308] But this answer seems unsatisfactory as an explanation for why "two-thirds of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands"[309]—is the fleeting moment of affective psychic income here really the driving force behind this phenomena? Buying environmentally friendly and "socially conscious" brands seems rather counterintuitive from a positivist utilitarian perspective based on the satisfaction of needs via instrumental reason.[310] But what need, exactly, is being satisfied here? One could read the behavior as driven by status—that is the investment in one's social capital. According to this interpretation, purchasing sustainable or mindful products enhances one's self-esteem, and one's social status amongst peers like any luxury product. While this certainly seems plausible, there's an alternative or at least supplemental interpretation from the perspective of the context of economization: if politics has increasingly become indistinguishable from economics, and if the realm of public and collective political action has, as a result, become practically non-existent, the desire for social and political engagement is redirected, shaped and channeled into the avenue of individualized choice, an affect that neutralizes any radical or transformative political potential. LOHAS consumerism thus exemplifies the individualizing and depoliticizing effects of neoliberalism, where sustainability itself is reframed as an individual choice rather than

---

[307] Becker specifically delineates psychic income as the result of consumption: "Some [activities] affect money income and others psychic income, that is, consumption." Becker, *Human Capital*, 9.

[308] Nicole Fall and Martin Roll, "Consumer Trends Shaping the Future Today: Mindful Impact," Think with Google (August 2018), https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/trends-and-insights/consumer-trends-shaping-future-today-mindful-impact/.

[309] "Report Shows a Third of Consumers Prefer Sustainable Brands," Unilever Global (May 1, 2017), https://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2017/report-shows-a-third-of-consumers-prefer-sustainable-brands.html.

[310] Becker himself is a bit vague on this point, as he notes: "If investment decisions responded only to earning prospects, adjusted for risk and liquidity, the adjusted marginal rate of return would be the same on all investments. The rate of return on education, training, migrations, health, and other human capital is supposed to be higher than on nonhuman capital, however, because of financing difficulties and inadequate knowledge of opportunities," the former because "such capital cannot be offered as collateral." Becker, *Human Capital* 78, 9.

a social-political practice rooted in collective responses and demands. In the realm of consumer choice, this preoccupation with individualized responses to sustainability is known as "mindful impact."

Fig. 2. Defining Lifestyle Products

Consider this image (fig. 2) taken from a LOHAS marketing firm. It presents the potential of lifestyle branding because it is able to encapsulate the enigmatic nature of consumer choice "across a range of categories" through its focus on values, which are reliable due to their entrenched nature, and worldview—a "frame of reference" that offers the opportunity to turn practically anything into part of one's lifestyle, where "how to live" dictates "what to buy." We can see this strategy at work in the seemingly endless array of objects and services that are marketed as "mindful"—from organic food to eco-cleaning products, cognitive-enhancing nootropics to stress-relieving adult coloring books, meditative birth coaching to intentional dating services.[311] This could not be further from the apparent neoliberal disavowal of subjective values and partisan perspectives, and yet, these relative and fleeting humanistic concerns are harnessed as sources of economic value subject to market logic, and perhaps more importantly, they satisfy the psycho-social desire for political action by channeling it into consumer choice.

The LOHAS market and the phenomena of mindful impact are not adequately accounted for from the standpoint of the commodification of everyday life or the lenses of cultural or social capital. The language of commodification suggests that alienation and ideological obfuscation are the culprits for the increased branding of mindfulness as a lifestyle—that underneath this representation of the world as market is the "real" world and that we need only recover the authentic human subject underneath this abilities machine. I'd like to propose instead that it is the result of the economization of public and political life, a process that has transformed politics

---

[311]A non-exhaustive list of examples: "Mindful Meats," http://www.mindfulmeats.com/; "4 eco cleanings brands to add to your arsenal," Mindful Momma blog," https://mindfulmomma.com/4-eco-indie-cleaning-brands-to-add-to-your-arsenal/; "Calm your Mind and Boost your Creativity with Adult Coloring Books," Mindful magazine, https://www.mindful.org/calm-your-mind-and-boost-your-creativity-with-adult-coloring-books/; "Nootropics and Meditation for Cognitive Enhancement," A Modern Monk, Medium, https://medium.com/@AModernMonk/nootropics-and-meditation-for-cognitive-enhancement-7b513b5b50a2; "Finally Mindful Living Meets Online Dating," Meetmindful, https://www.meetmindful.com/; "The Mindfulness-Based Childbirth and Parenting Program," Mindful Birthing, http://www.mindfulbirthing.org/classes-training/parents/.

into individual choice and expression.[312] While alienation and ideology are no doubt involved, the process of economization central to neoliberal governance is more profoundly a productive enterprise—it creates rather than obfuscates or negates previously non-economic environments as markets and subjects as human capital who see all their abilities, attitudes, experiences and choices as possible sites of investment in their well-being.

Healing the Nation: Personal Responsibility and the Collective Interest

The formulation of mindfulness as a way of life that finds its practice in self-realization and self-expression circulates in realms outside of consumer culture as well. As a therapeutic practice that aims at transforming personal behavioral and/or cognitive responses to stressful environmental stimuli rather than transforming the material conditions of psychic dysfunction, it can have the effect of individualizing and depoliticizing material claims, as I've previously argued. It can also neutralize the desire for political transformation by redirecting it inwards towards the realm of individual experience, affect, and identity. But mindfulness—even if we understand this to mean an American secularization or commodification of Buddhist meditation practice—is itself devoid of any political content. The particular (de-)political effects I've analyzed in this project are the result of a substitution or conflation of mindfulness with political action, often through the invocation of lifestyle choices. Mindfulness lends itself to the individualizing and responsibilizing task of neoliberalism because it is an individual therapeutic practice, like most forms of psychotherapy, but one that directs subjects, at least in many forms of its American appropriation, toward self-enhancement through self-realization. This chapter ends by looking at two examples of the explicit integration of mindfulness in the realm of politics, one from the perspective of establishment politics and the other in social justice activism, to shed further light on how mindfulness can stand in for political action.

Tim Ryan, a Democratic congressman from Ohio and 2020 presidential candidate, is one of the most vocal advocates for the implementation of mindfulness practice in institutions and governmental policy in the U.S. After attending a meditation retreat in the Catskills led by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 2008, Ryan made it his mission to "advocate in Congress and on the Appropriations Committee for integrating mindfulness into key aspects of our society."[313] Since then, he has introduced bills to fund holistic and mindfulness-based treatments for veterans, founded initiatives for mindfulness and emotional learning programs in public schools, and organized an ongoing weekly meditation for members of Congress and staff on Capitol Hill. In 2012 he published *A Mindful Nation*, a national bestseller espousing the benefits of and potential for mindfulness to transform the realms of healthcare, education, state, and economy. The book is notable for the way it explicitly posits the political potential of mindfulness, arguing that it can help American citizens realize the dream of the pursuit of happiness "enshrined in the Declaration of Independence" and recover "the courageous spirit of America, [the] faith in our cherished values of self-reliance and stick-to-itiveness."[314] Ryan categorizes the personal pursuit of happiness as the realization of national values, namely, self-reliance and dedication, that make

---

[312] For more on the distinction between commodification and economization see Pierre Dardot and Christian Larval, *The New Way of The World: On Neoliberal Society*, (New York: Verso, 2014).

[313] Tim Ryan, *A Mindful Nation* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2012), 34.

[314] Ryan, 11, xix.

up what he terms the American spirit. "Cultivating mindfulness," he writes, "can help revive this kind of spirit, so we can pursue our aims with renewed vigor…it can amount to real societal change."[315] Mindfulness in this text is the means of reactivating a nationalistic bond among a plurality of citizens who differ in the individual political ideologies, needs, and pursuits. Ryan refers to mindfulness as a "performance enhancing" supplement for the body politic plagued by the political malaise of apathy and divisiveness.[316]

In his preface to the book, Jon Kabat-Zinn comments that mindfulness can "catalyze a renewed and authentic civility in public discourse. It proffers, in small but not insignificant ways, the possibility for our nation to wholeheartedly and authentically embody its deepest democratic principles and longings."[317] A lack of civility and "personal responsibility" are blamed by Kabat-Zinn and Ryan respectively for the citizenry's disconnection from these democratic principles, which have engendered "a literal and metaphorical impoverishment and sense of disengagement, disempowerment, bewilderment, and profound loss regarding the state of our country." Mindfulness, as a therapeutic treatment that enables individual focus and attention with a wide variety of physiological and psychological benefits, concurrently serves as a remedy for the ills that plague the social body. This is because, according to Kabat-Zinn and Ryan, mindfulness is about realizing our human nature, aligned with a particular vision of liberal universality:

> Mindfulness is not a matter of left or right, Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative. It is not a matter of race or class, or gender, although societal differences and inequalities matter and need to be recognized and addressed. Ultimately, it is about being human, pure and simple…It is about doing the right thing for the right reasons because our own well-being and the health of our nation hang in the balance…cultivating mindfulness is akin to boosting the immune system of the country from the inside. And since there is no one right way to cultivate and deepen our capacity for mindfulness, each one of us could influence the world by taking a degree of personal responsibility for developing our own unique ways to embody mindful awareness.[318]

Again, mindfulness here has the effect of neutralizing political and social difference by recourse to a kind of universal humanism that transcends the diversity of circumstance, social positioning, history, opinion, and social difference—though, Kabat-Zinn is careful to note, these "matter and need to be recognized and addressed." Underneath the plurality of competing interests and the distribution of social and economic access is the Edenic "human, pure and simple"—a subject whose mainspring of action, "doing the right thing," is situated in a recognition of the interdependence of individual well-being and "the health of our nation." Mindfulness is the activation of an internal immunological agent, a way of enhancing the dormant capacity of the

---

[315] Ryan, 11.
[316] "Mindfulness is about finding ways to slow down and pay attention to the present moment—which improves performance an reduces stress…it's about a natural quality each of us possesses, and which we can further develop…it helps you harness more of your energy. It increases your focus and allows you to relax and pay better attention…it's the kind of performance enhancer any athlete would be eager to have. And it's definitely all natural." Ryan, xvii-iii.
[317] Jon Kabat-Zinn in Ryan, xi.
[318] Kabat-Zinn in Ryan, xiv.

body politic to stem off the threat of disease and disfunction, here categorized by division and apathy. But this panacea in no way limits the autonomy of subjects—i.e., the organs of the body politic—because there is no singular program administered by a central authority for mindfulness practice. Mindfulness is a cure that is self-administered; individuals are responsible for their "own unique ways to embody mindful awareness," a pursuit that ensures the healthy functioning of the national social organism.

Ryan begins his book as a political treatise: "A quiet revolution is happening in America. It's not a revolution fueled by anger lurking on the fringes of our democracy. It's a peaceful revolution, being led by ordinary citizens."[319] Opposed to material revolutionary struggles categorized as fringe movements driven by anger, the spread of mindfulness is a peaceful revolution of the mind that aims at changing "*how* we pay attention, and not just *what* we pay attention to."[320] Again, the transformative potential of mindfulness lies in its cognitive-behavioral psychological presuppositions: it intervenes at the level of function rather than form and thereby preserves and even enhances, ostensibly, the self-determination of subjects. Quoting Reverend Jim Wallis, Ryan emphasizes the lack of specific (political) content in mindfulness practice, and the neutral goal instead of self-development: "'We don't need to go further to the left of further to the right. We all need to go deeper.' We need everyone committed to growing and developing themselves to their full potential."[321] While the congressman recognizes that "Americans will always have our political differences," mindfulness presents the opportunity "to transcend our differences and helps us to negotiate them."[322] The transcendence of difference without negating individual autonomy has long been the dream of liberalism. Neoliberalism understands the market as the mechanism by which governance can realize this dream, but it needs a supplementary theory that accounts for the "human" of human capital to make it palatable. Mindfulness fills this gap, as I've argued, by identifying the locus of the human in the capacity for awareness, both of one's self and one's holistic relation to the world, or in this case, the nation. In contrast to the Congressman's account, this "going deeper" isn't without normative political effects. Aligned with the animating principle of neoliberal subjectivity, the commitment to realizing one's full potential elides material social difference, economizes all domains life according to a principle of transcendent value, and engenders the elision of properly political claims.

Ryan approaches his argument by narrativizing an idyllic scene of the post-war period, characterized by capitalist economic growth and Keynesian orthodoxy. He juxtaposes his neighborhood of Brier Hill in the 1940s, where Americans worked hard toward the common prosperity of the nation, to a contemporary America mediated by "materialism, marketing, the media, [and] technology," lacking "stick-to-itiveness," civility, and above all, personal responsibility.[323] Mindfulness is a key element to "recaptur[ing] the kind of good life people had in a neighborhood like Brier Hill," Ryan argues, because it activates the human potential for self-

---

[319] Ryan, xvii.
[320] Ryan, ix.
[321] Ryan, 13.
[322] Ryan, 20.
[323] Ryan, 12.

responsibility and embeds individual action in the well-being of the nation through an investment in national prosperity. Further, freedom in this representation is defined as a matter of individual choice and an actualization of personal responsibility that will realize the collective well-being of the nation:

> We need to shake our doubt and reclaim the freedom that is our highest American value, our birthright. For a worker who has lost a job, this may mean going back to school, getting retrained, or starting a business; and I do believe the government has some role in helping that working and supporting his or her family by ensuring access to health care and good education. America has a great opportunity to once more create a world-class skilled workforce, and to develop high-end products and ship them to huge, growing markets in Asia. But we cannot do this if our workers doubt their own abilities to get retrained or succeed in school.[324]

We can locate the use of mindfulness here in that it both compels the individual pursuit of interest by means of personal responsibility and produces the collective interest according to a particularly neoliberal model: "a world-class skilled workforce" that depends upon the responsibilization and flexibility of its workers. Further, mindfulness "can help draw out of us those good old-fashioned American values that we need to carry us through these trying times" because it unlocks an "innate human ability…the essence of composure and the source of high performance."[325] Again, mindfulness is connected to human nature, which awards "composure" and "performance" in the face of difficulty, failure, stress, and material loss. This image of mindfulness holds the potential to therapeutically treat the response of individual workers to economic precarity and displacement, thereby bolstering the national economy, and to inoculate against social and political challenges by reanimating American values.

While Ryan recognizes that mindfulness can't change the material circumstances that engender the problems he invokes, "it can arm us with a way of being that allows us to deal with them more effectively."[326] In short, the target of mindful politics is to change the individual response to material conditions, not these conditions themselves. The onus is placed on the individual citizen to take responsibility for themselves in spite of external circumstance. "Imagine what our economy would look like," Ryan states, "if our citizens had more faith in their ability to educate themselves on a lifelong basis, approaching getting an advanced degree or new training with eagerness rather than dread. Imagine how many problems we could solve if we tapped into the natural creativity we have inside us."[327] As a technology of access, mindfulness is what allows one to uncover the natural human "capacity to transform our own lives, to innovate with our own mind and body" that "will change the world."[328] It instills this sense of personal responsibility for not just one's own life, but the life of the nation. This "taking responsibility is a core American value," and mindfulness affords an "intimate understanding" of

---

[324] Ryan, 13.
[325] Ryan, 16-17.
[326] Ryan, 34.
[327] Ryan, 22.
[328] Ryan, 41.

the founding American principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."[329] But, as Ryan goes on to say, his own personal encounter with mindfulness and its transformative potential led to the realization that "happiness cannot be pursued. It can only be revealed." Mindfulness is thus a technique of uncovering potential happiness even within material circumstances plagued by violence, debt, precarity, and illness.[330]

The Body Politic: Mindfulness and Freedom

 What is at stake, then, is this: How can the growth of capabilities [*capacités*] be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?...I continue to think that this task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty.
—Michel Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*

One perhaps surprising place to find the integration of mindfulness and politics is in activist organizing culture, where mindfulness has been embraced as a tool for social justice. While the incorporation of mindfulness and meditation in the 2011 Occupy protests provides perhaps the most well-known example, many activist groups and demonstrations have similarly taken to mindfulness as a way to be intentional and present in collective organizing spaces. I take seriously the notion that mindfulness—even in its secular American instantiation—is a practice that is devoid of any essential positive or negative value. That being said, given the scope of its use as a central and increasingly normative therapeutic technique of and for neoliberal governance, I am suspicious of the way it has come to stand in for a cure to social ills by way of attending to individual ones. The remainder of this chapter analyzes how mindfulness discourse perpetuates a therapeutic politics that aims at the "management" of individual symptoms rather than collective or material transformation. At the same time, I interrogate the possibility of an alternative use of this care of the self, one that might bolster rather than negate collective political transformation.

On January 15, 2015, the East Bay Meditation Center—a popular community meditation space in Oakland, CA that "offer[s] meditation training and spiritual teachings from Buddhist and other wisdom traditions, with attention to social action, multiculturalism, and the diverse populations of the East Bay and beyond"[331]—hosted a fundraising event featuring scholar and activist Angela Davis in conversation with mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn. The dialogue, titled "Mindfulness and the Possibility of Freedom" focused on, as Kabat-Zinn put it, "the relationship between individual transformation and collective liberation."[332]

---

[329] Ryan, 35.
[330] As the congressman recognizes, "I felt that this simple practice could help my constituents face the many stressful challenges of daily life. The pain of war. Economic insecurity. The frustrations of being sick or taking care of sick relatives in a broken health-care system. The challenge of teaching children…" Ryan, xviii.
[331] "Mission & History," East Bay Meditation Center, https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/mission-history/.
[332] Angela Davis, Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness and the Possibility of Freedom: Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn in Dialogue" East Bay Meditation Center, Oakland, CA (January 15, 2015), https://www.eventbrite.com/e/video-of-angela-davis-jon-kabat-zinn-east-bay-meditation-center-benefit-tickets-50134682184/.

Davis begins the recorded conversation by stating that her approach to the evening's topic comes from her work as an activist, "as someone who has developed an awareness of how important it is in particular for the long-term sustainability of our social justice movements to incorporate self-care practices based on mindfulness." Davis sees the value of mindfulness in social activism is its provision of self-care as a therapeutic agent for social justice organizers doing the difficult and often painful work of movement-building that ensures the movement's sustainability. Likewise, in his opening remarks, Kabat-Zinn perceives

> …an enormous potential and promise when these streams of social justice activism come together with the streams of what I would call dharma wisdom in a universal framework so that it really is for everybody, not for '-isms' of one sort or the other or '-ists'...we need something that speaks to all humanity in as many different ways as possible...ways of how to actually sustain yourself in the face of very challenging circumstances that can sometimes be very depressing.

This invocation of Buddhist wisdom as "universal" and therefore not properly "Buddhist" is a favorite trope of Zinn's, and contributes to the humanist appeal of his "universal framework." While Kabat-Zinn characterizes mindfulness as a form of sustenance like Davis, he emphasizes the universal quality of this procedure for "all humanity" and all "challenging circumstances," not just politically-oriented work. In the video recording of the event, he proceeds to guide the room in a short meditation exercise, during which he comments on the "very radical act [of] taking a stand in this timeless moment we call now," and concludes by reminding the audience that "this silence inside the heart [is] made available 24/7." During this exercise, he likens mindfulness to the "radical" political act of "taking a stand." The seated position of the meditators notwithstanding, it is unclear what or for whom they are taking a stand for in this metaphor. The political notion of "taking a stand" suggests an action oriented around a demand, or at least directed at some claim outside of oneself. In Kabat-Zinn's use, any perceivable claims are internal—that is, they are claims made on one's own self, demands for attention to the present, embodied moment. This ability to "take a stand" is available not only to anyone, as Kabat-Zinn emphasizes, but at any time because the resource resides inside the individual. Again, this description aligns mindfulness with a universal—both in its framework and its availability—technology of access.[333]

After the meditation, Davis goes on to address the topic of conversation in a pointed question addressed to Kabat-Zinn:

> Mindfulness and the possibility of freedom in a racially unjust world: what good is mindfulness? What is the relationship between individual transformation and collective

---

[333] It is unclear how Kabat-Zinn's recent trademarking of "MBSR" fits in to the model of universal access that he evokes, especially given his early conviction that mindfulness is a universal human quality and cannot be commodified. In a profile in *Mindful* magazine, he reportedly told one group of trainees "You can go back and teach and call your program Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. I don't want to trademark this. I want people to take it, innovate with it, make it your own practice, so you can teach what you know." Barry Boyce, "The Many Who Prescribes the Medicine of the Moment" *Mindful* (August 2010), https://www.mindful.org/the-man-who-prescribes-the-medicine-of-the-moment/.

liberation? In this era during which individualism is emphasized so much I think it is important to distinguish between individuality and individualism. Sometimes we are afraid to explore our individuality precisely because we think we might be contributing to the very negative emphasis on individualism, on neoliberal individualism. So I would like us to talk about what good is mindfulness if we are inhabiting a world that is so unjust. We are so conscious of the presence of racism...given the most recent events involving Ferguson, and Michael Brown, and Eric Garner in New York...I have an intuitive sense of how important mindfulness is that dates back to the period I was in jail...I'd like to know what you think of the possibilities of imbuing struggles for justice against racism, for gender and sexual justice—how does that actually work?

Davis here raises the possibility of a relationship to the self, an "individuality," that is not an expression of "neoliberal individualism." The implicit critique is that individualism is inadequate, even complicit in an unjust world, a world in which black people can be killed with impunity by representatives of the state. It is inadequate both because individualism obscures the structural conditions of state violence as a matter of individual behavior rather than the result of the systemic racism that forms the very foundation of the state and the exercise of its power, and because any individual response to such violence will necessarily be insufficient to address those structural forces. Neoliberalism privatizes any political concerns that would address the racist and heteropatriarchal structures that form society.[334] Racism, misogyny, heterosexism, cissexism, etc., are reducible to individual behavior, choice, and perspectives, "about which men can only argue," to use Friedman's words. Indeed, we've seen how these sources of injustice and violence have been reduced to individual behavior and "differences about which men can only argue" in the popular discourse of identity politics—and argue they do, especially in the identity discourse that circulates in virtual environments like social media. Davis thus wishes to understand how mindfulness could potentially be useful not as an individualizing technique, however much it necessitates a form of individuality, but as an "imbuing" technique for "struggles for justice."

Following some foray into the question of defining mindfulness, Kabat-Zinn responds to Davis' query:

I see mindfulness and meditative practices in general—and I include yoga in that—as kind of transformative practices that are capable of moving the bell curve of the entire society towards a new way of understanding what it means to be human and in wise relationship with everything, including the planet...it really requires exercising a kind of attending...if we can tune in to a certain quality of attention...that's what's called awareness, and that awareness is a kind of hidden gold mine inside of each one of us. So, it's not like we have to attain anything, we've already got it and we've been ignoring it. So I see these practices as profoundly liberative in the sense that we can transform how we are in relationship to everything including all of the ills of society and the domains of disregard, harming, injustice, lack of care that is [sic] so rampant.

---

[334] Consider for example, Margaret Thatcher's oft-quoted formula that disavows the social: "There's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families."

What mindfulness affords, according to Kabat-Zinn, is an ideological shift that begins with individual transformation and which, in aggregate, is capable of producing a collective vision of humanity. It is aimed at transforming knowledge—at how we "[understand] what it means to be human and in wise relationship with everything." This humanist epistemology, generated from cultivating awareness—a certain way of paying attention—isn't navel-gazing or solipsistic: it transforms the relationship between mindful subjects and "everything" outside of them, "including all the ills of society." How exactly it transforms this relationship is left unexplained. Presumably, Kabat-Zinn is drawing from the Buddhist insight that awareness leads to compassion because it dissolves the ego and imparts awareness of the deep continuity and interconnectedness of all life; we are thus able to empathize with others by better understanding ourselves. But both here and in his writings, he fails to account for what some Buddhist schools refer to as "wrong mindfulness" or "wrong attention" (*miccha sati*)—the possibility that mindfulness can be directed towards actions that are lacking compassion, that are unjust or even harmful.[335] Instead, following a Zen-inspired understanding of mindfulness, he assumes that if practiced correctly, awareness leads to right mindfulness, which automatically engenders the other folds along the path to Enlightenment—right action, but also right view, right intention, right speech, right livelihood, and right effort. This in turn suggests that awareness, or the lack of it, is the motor of all human action.

What form does this new holistic awareness take and what actions does it engender in the realm of politics? Kabat-Zinn describes the awareness that mindfulness supplies as a "hidden gold mind inside each one of us," a natural, untapped psychic resource that allows one to (re)direct attention and harness its potential in material ways. Mindfulness is the technique that allows us access, the tool that excavates the gold mine of awareness. Awareness is the mediation of the "raw" potentiality of attention, the valorization of attention as psychic or cognitive capital. The value here is immaterial, purely speculative, but it does have utility insofar as it is a way of "understanding" or knowing that aids in "healthy" decision-making. Explicating this point in one of his books, Kabat-Zinn writes:

> How we choose from moment to moment to live and act influences the world in small ways that may be disproportionately beneficial, especially if the motivation our choices come out of it wholesome, i.e., healthy, and the actions themselves wise and compassionate. In this way, the healing of the body politic can evolve without rigid control or direction, through the independent and interdependent agency and efforts of many different people and institutions, with many different and rich perspectives, aims, and interests, and with a

---

[335] There are interpretative differences in Buddhist circles regarding whether right mindfulness or *samma sati* automatically leads to right action or *samma kammanta*. The Zen/Chan school (by far the most popular in the U.S.) centers the achievement of *samadhi* or transcendental consciousness through zen (*dhyana* in Sanskrit) or meditative awareness, while other schools place only a modest emphasis on meditation practices. Depending on the tradition, views on Enlightenment—how and when it occurs—differ in Zen Buddhism, but the suggestion that mindful thought precipitates mindful action is common. This is why American Buddhist and neurologist James Austin writes that "if one were to act always within this perspective, one could do no wrong. Only ignorance and the insinuation of self-centered motives are the root cause of wrong actions." Elsewhere he states that wrong actions are precluded "when a brain continues truly to express the self-nature intrinsic to its [transcendent] experiences." James H. Austin, *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 539.

common and potentially unifying interest as well, that of greater well-being of the world...at its best this is what politics both furthers and protects.[336]

This description would be right at home in any neoliberal economic treatise. It expressly mirrors Hayek's conception of the "spontaneous order" of social life, where individual freedom is the condition of order which in turn secures individual freedom. Hayek writes, "once decentralisation [sic] is necessary, the problem of co-ordination arises, a co-ordination which leaves the separate agencies free to adjust their activities to the facts which only they can know, and yet brings about a mutual adjustment of their respective plans."[337] The coordination of the market is both the effect and wellspring of individual freedom: "it is because freedom means the renunciation of direct control of individual efforts that a free society can make use of so much more knowledge than the mind of the wisest ruler could comprehend."[338]

Kabat-Zinn correspondingly reduces all of human life to an infinitesimal number of individual choices. These choices in turn are more likely to be "beneficial" to the individual and the whole "body politic" if their motivation is "wholesome, i.e., healthy," that is, invested in one's well-being. The author has merely swapped the axis of rationality or knowledge "which only they [individuals] can know" in economic decision making for a more fundamental and regulatory utilitarian schema: what matters is not the rationality of *homo oeconomicus*—a formulation that runs into a number of problems once we consider the subjective and often irrational substratum of individual motivation—but the level at which these choices reflect a "healthy" motivation. Unlike the binary values of rationality/irrationality, the value of health here is defined as well-being, as a continuum that one continually works towards. The individual motivation towards well-being that Becker describes as the foundation of the behavior of human capital, is one that mindfulness enhances; as a therapeutic technique it regulates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (re)actions, targeting the "interpretation" of events and adjusting them according to an investment in one's well-being.

The hermeneutic goal of altering individual interpretation through a mindful epistemological frame is certainly a point of departure from neoliberal economic governance, but this is precisely also why the therapeutics of mindfulness is particularly useful as a means of addressing this gap in neoliberal thinking and instilling an internal self-regulating regime oriented around investing in and enhancing well-being. This "common and potentially unifying interest" thus can "evolve without rigid control or direction," without the centralization of the State "program" that the neoliberals detest. Further, it functions analogously to the market, where the plurality of competing interests produces the collective interest. Following Foucault, this "phenomenal republic of interests" produces "truth" through the amplification rather than reduction of difference necessitated by the mechanism of personal choice. For both the neoliberals and in Kabat-Zinn's mindful account, politics is the furthering and protection of "well-being" or the general interest secured by individual freedom of competition. The content of well-being will differ individually, but the well-being that is produced as a result of individual

---

[336] Kabat-Zinn, *Coming to Our Senses* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 511.
[337] Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 51.
[338] Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 82.

healthy choices is "common," universal—and therefore objective in the positivist sense, devoid of partisan political concerns.

For Kabat-Zinn and the American instantiation of mindfulness he characterizes, the political potential of mindfulness lies in its ability to provide the means of aligning subjective psychic and even physiological well-being with "the well-being of the world." This is why he is able to link personal transformation—the work of improving one self—with collective liberation—the work of improving the world. The site of collective human transformation, "the last and most important and most urgent frontier" of human self-actualization, is "the human mind…it is knowing ourselves, and most importantly, from the inside!"[339] Subjects who know themselves can "change the narrative" as Kabat-Zinn says in his opening dialogue; they can shift their interpretation of events and can manage their emotions accordingly, making mindfully-informed decisions that in turn make subjects resilient under the current economic regime demanding ever more attention and investment and producing ever more precarity.

In addition to acting as a source of speculative value, mindfulness acts as an immunological vaccine for a social autoimmune disease in Kabat-Zinn's account, checking "the dissipative pressures continually threatening democracy itself" by ensuring that "all the cells of the body politic can benefit from an equal blood supply."[340] Here mindfulness is characterized as a form of insurance against the threat of social dissolution and as a force for social equality. As Kabat-Zinn states, it is "the exact opposite of burying our heads in the sand and preoccupying ourselves with our own narrowly defined self-interest and with maximizing our own safety or happiness or gain" because it recognizes the interdependency of all things in its holistic view of the well-being of the world. Realizing our well-being through mindfulness necessarily means realizing the well-being of the world. Instead of maximizing self-interest for its own sake, Kabat-Zinn argues that mindfulness allows us to "maximize our capacity for mobilizing and embodying wisdom and compassion in the choices we make from moment to moment about how we need to be living, and what we might be doing with our creative energies to heal the body politic."

But what is the specific content of this well-being of the body politic? And how is it justified? If we look to the metrics used in cognitive-behavioral therapy, infused with market logics via the guidance of best practices and positive health outcomes, well-being is defined as a self-referential continuum of symptom management. We can perceive this definition as animating the logic of the mindfulness therapeutics advocated by Kabat-Zinn. Notice for example, how he is careful not to characterize mindfulness as a "cure," but rather as a form of "healing." This is purposeful, as he states in his book *Full Catastrophe Living*:

> Healing, as we are using the word here, does not mean "curing," although the two words are often used interchangeably. As we shall see in the next chapter, there are few if any outright cures for chronic diseases or for stress-related disorders. While it may not be possible for us to cure ourselves or to find someone who can, it is possible for us to heal ourselves. Healing implies the possibility for us to relate differently to illness, disability, even death as we learn to see with eyes of wholeness. As we have seen, this comes from

---

[339] Kabat-Zinn. *Mindfulness for All: The Wisdom to Transform the World* (New York: Hachett, 2019).
[340] Davis and Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness and the Possibility of Freedom."

practicing such basic skills as going into and dwelling in states of deep physiological relaxation and seeing and transcending our fears and our boundaries of body and mind. In moments of stillness you come to realize that you are already whole, already complete in your being, even if your body has cancer or heart disease or AIDS or pain.[341]

Mindfulness is a holistic approach to the problem of pain and suffering—physiological, psychic, and even material/political. It "heals" our bodies and minds—individual and collective—by instantiating a different relation to illness, one that understands the self as "whole, already complete in your being" regardless of biological, psychological, or social affliction. This wholeness and healing is found internally, inside oneself, not in external circumstances or collective life. But it is also the source of healing for the body politic, because as we take care of ourselves through mindful practice, we will affect the positive outcome of well-being for the whole social organism.[342] Analogous to the neoliberal and psychological behavioral theories of the subject, this political well-being is defined functionally. Mindfulness-based therapeutics are animated by the following question: can the negative symptoms that plague the social and political body be managed in accordance with a basic productive functioning of the social organism? This positivist and functionalist mode of calculation both reflects and is justified by the truth of market coordination, which claims to reflect the true nature of society. Here politics is reduced to therapeutic outcomes that are embedded in and shored up by economic rationality. But importantly, this is not a mechanistic account, a "crude behaviorism"; instead, it betrays a thoroughly organismic account of individual behavior, and substitutes organismic behaviorism as for political action.

Does this mean mindfulness can only be used in service of a neoliberal order? In order to explore this question, I'd like to return to the conversation between Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn, specifically to the question that Davis raises with regards to individualism and structural transformation. At one point in the dialogue, Kabat-Zinn reflects on how his introduction of mindfulness within a clinical context was meant to "pivot the whole institution [of healthcare]…to provide a new way of seeing and a new way of being" that is applicable to "social justice…the police…the military…[and] congress." In response, Davis clarifies, "but are you talking about individuals within those institutions?" and follows by expressing her disagreement with applying mindfulness to policing. Kabat-Zinn replies:

I'm talking about communities of police within the institution of policing...I know it doesn't sound popular but they're suffering from greed, hatred, and delusion too...so can we find allies in the various institutions that we are presently dealing with including

---

[341] Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, 173.

[342] Interestingly, this characterization of mindfulness as a wellness technique for functional disorders—whether of the individual or social body—is nowhere to be found in the canon of early Buddhist Pali scripture. Instead, "the majority of benefits received from practicing mindfulness...were magical powers...the Buddha speaks of such mindfulness-based powers with approval, but ultimately such powers are framed as ancillary to the main goal of detachment and nirvana...In the suttas and monastic commentaries such as Janakabhivamsa's [on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*], mindfulness is clearly associated with traditional transcendent monastic concerns (nirvana). But when translated into English and not given any particularly commentarial framing...[it] is ambiguous enough that it can be re-read to suggest application to improve and enhance ordinary lay life." Wilson, 106-109.

prisons, including the law—and develop new models. And this is the problem with mindfulness that it's all of a sudden become so popular that people are criticizing it or caricaturing it as 'McMindfulness'...I am talking about the liberative power of the dharma in its most universal expression coming out of Buddhism—but let's keep in mind the Buddha was not a Buddhist, okay?...It's saying that maybe there is something here we are all starving for, some kind of new way of being in relationship with ourselves and we've already got the potential for it and we're trying to incubate it in any and every way we can...the question is: are there strategic and tactical ways that we can develop models for flowing around the obstacles in Ferguson, with the police, with the courts, whatever, and develop alternative orthogonal models that actually work better, that are demonstrated to work better and where people are more satisfied with outcomes?

The individualization of politics is quite clear in his response, but it differs from the conventional narrative in its emphasis. Liberal rhetoric tends to blame individuals for their bad behavior, rather than seeing such behavior as embedded in larger systems of oppression. Kabat-Zinn sees these individuals, in this case policemen, as victims—"suffering from greed, hatred, and delusion" like the rest of us—but, he argues, if we can make them more mindful, we can transform them into allies. Mindful policemen will act with compassion and wisdom, with awareness in their altercations with citizens—that is to say, mindfulness will "cure" their racism, an affliction from which they suffer as individuals. Here the systemic violence of racism, enshrined within the institution of policing, is actually a matter of an individual lack of mindfulness. Notice that he does not articulate a desire to see the institutions of policing or the prison abolished, he wishes to make allies "and develop new models." Where these mindful models have been adopted—in police forces, prisons, the military, and schools, as my third chapter attends to—they've served as a form of therapeutic management that is evidence-based, "proven" to enhance the well-being of all participants and therefore ensure the institution's smooth functioning. This is a typical reformist position, but one that incorporates a therapeutic model of well-being as its metric and regulatory means aimed at short-term "symptom management."

Kabat-Zinn goes on to express frustration that this application of mindfulness in various institutional settings is caricatured as "McMindfulness." For him, these applications are not a commodification of mindfulness as a source of productivity, but a "strategic" use of "the liberative power of the dharma." One of his favorite refrains, he makes sure to state the caveat that "the Buddha was not a Buddhist" in order to affirm the universal appeal and use of mindfulness here, but what is this "tactical" use of mindfulness for? Kabat-Zinn provides two answers. These tactics are useful for 1) "flowing around obstacles" and 2) "[developing] alternative orthogonal models that work better." He doesn't expand on this notion of "flowing around obstacles" either here or in his writing (that I could find), but one can extrapolate how mindfulness might be useful in deescalating conflicts in certain scenarios—though this use would suggest going directly through obstacles rather than around them. "Flowing around" suggests an avoidance or at best, a "soft" encounter with an obstacle that leaves it intact, which may be precisely what Kabat-Zinn has in mind in his approach to say, the "obstacle" of policing. The second use of mindfulness in the development of "orthogonal models"—by which he means transcending the limits of two-dimensional thinking "into a third special dimension, at right

angles (orthogonal) to the other to"[343]—is rationalized by demonstrable empirical evidence and reported individual satisfaction.

Unsatisfied with this answer, Davis continues to "press," as she says, Kabat-Zinn on the "question of structural transformation." I will quote their back-and-forth at length before commenting:

> AD: I totally understand how it might be possible to encourage say, individual police officers to engage in mindful practices so they might not be so quick to racially profile, but I don't know whether it's possible to effect the kind of structural transformation that way, because if one looks at the institution of policing and its history and particularly its racist history in this country there is so much that has to be addressed and individuals are not always aware of the extent to which they embody their histories, they don't understand, many of us don't understand, the extent to which we inhabit and are inhabited by histories…

> JKZ: So let me ask you then: if mindfulness can easily be co-opted in that kind of way or just kept at a level where it doesn't really change the structural grid or lattice of our institutions because they are self-preserving, then what do you see as an effective alternative at this moment in time?

> AD: I'm not suggesting that we don't use mindfulness…a certain measure of liberation is possible but I want to look at that against the backdrop of a long-term strategy that abolishes the institution so it means that we have to give different weight to the guards and the prisoners. It means that it might be more important to emphasize bringing mindfulness practices to prisoners…

> JKZ: But see, it's not just about making them less aggressive—it's also about transforming the institution…I don't know if people are familiar with the martial art of Aikido…the idea is to move in as close as possible and then use the irrationality of the opponent so to speak, use their own anger or their own violence or their hatred, because that defines them as being off in some ways. So, if you don't get thrown off then you can actually help them to rotate in such a way that their energy is diffused. I think we need to develop an Aikido on our institutions and especially the institutions that perpetrate social injustice. [pause as audience claps enthusiastically] Because they're not going to voluntarily decide to close up shop…I think of mindfulness as a kind of institutional Aikido whether its medicine, whether it's the military, whether its prisons...we need short term strategies, middle term strategies, long terms strategies, and we need vision and strategies and methods for cultivating this and they're gonna come out of we [sic]...each one of us needs to take responsibility...even with corporations, with places like Google and Facebook, can we do Aikido with those institutions without naivete?...to find out collectively speaking what is in all of our interests? Now there may be common interests between even Google and social justice. Different corporations, some of them are more enlightened than others, but it may

---

[343] Kabat-Zinn, "Orthogonal Reality: Rotating Consciousness" in *Mindfulness* 9 (2018), 1309, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0952-x

be asking the question of self-interest is really important because then the question comes up, what is the self in the first place? Who is interested?

Again, Davis attempts to bring the focus back on structures—on the institutions and histories that individuals inhabit and that inhabit individual action and thus cannot adequately be transformed by an individual practice like mindfulness, even if this practice might afford "a certain measure of liberation." After initially responding with the characteristic defensive liberal rejoinder ("what do you see as an effective alternative at this moment in time?"), Kabat-Zinn uses the metaphor of Aikido to address how mindfulness might "diffuse the energy" of these institutions. The target here is to meet the "irrationality" of "anger," "violence," and "hatred" with the rationality of mindfulness. The transformation is thus a question of changing the opponent's perspective, a kind of ideology critique aimed at their irrationality from the perspective of the universal rationality of mindfulness. Once this irrationality is diffused through the "institutional Aikido" of mindfulness, an "orthogonal" model can develop that reflects the common interest. He suggests that even the most oppositional parties may have common interests, like "Google and social justice." As I've (hopefully) shown, though there may be common interests between technology companies and social justice, they tend to leave unaddressed the underlying causes of social injustice, and allow these companies to disavow their role in perpetrating and perpetuating them.[344] Instead, Kabat-Zinn suggests that these interests are aligned because we are all ultimately and intimately connected, because there is no proper self separate from the world outside of it—and that world includes corporations like Google.

Paradoxically he ends the conversation with Davis by positing that this "no-self" is one's authentic or rational self, liberated from delusion:

> We need to change the narrative...the virtue of cultivating—whatever you want to call it awareness, mindfulness—the virtue is then you begin to see the patterns in your own mind, you see the patterns in your own narrative...and you can see it differently...I've seen people actually move in a direction of greater wisdom, greater self-knowing, a greater sense of being who they were...whereas being before caught up in a narrative that was just not of their own making...if you think of the whole planet as a body, do we want the lungs to go to war with the heart?...no of course not, we're part of a larger whole...all of these animosities between groups—that's a kind of autoimmune disease of the planet and the autoimmune disease is our ignorance, our not using the full dimensionality of our hearts and minds and our bodies…once we form a certain kind of intentionality to be awake and to align ourselves with what's deepest and best and most beautiful about being human and to recognize the suffering that is going on in the planet there is the potential for liberation.

Mindfulness is described as model for what cognitive-behavioral therapists call "behavioral activation"—a recognition of negative thought patterns that allows one to alter their response and gain "a greater sense of being"—a discovery of one's true self, a self of one's "own making." The recognition of one's no-self—one's organismic place in the "whole planet as a body"—is what allows one to realize their potential self, one free from ingrained cognitive and behavioral

---

[344] See my discussion of the technology company Sales Force and corporate social responsibility at the end of chapter one.

patterns. Freedom is here an act of self-discovery that is also an act of self-creation. Ignorance, he goes on to say, is an "autoimmune disease of the planet," the reason for violence and suffering. Once we awaken to our true selves, to "what's deepest and best and most beautiful about being human," we can achieve liberation. The rationality that mindfulness affords—the healing of this ignorance disease—is thus enshrined as a substitute for politics.

Angela Davis holds a much more modest view of the role of mindfulness in social movements and politics, one that does not rely on the recuperation or consecration of the subject of humanism. At an earlier point in the conversation she states, almost off-handedly: "I'm wondering if it's possible to think of mindfulness as a way of exploring possibilities and possible consequences—so not just a literal remaining in the present but to see what is contained in that present." Rather than an act of self-discovery and holistic rationality, Davis attempts to think mindfulness as a form of exploration, one that interrogates the possibilities of the present. But this potential is mostly left unexplained in her conversation with Kabat-Zinn. In her recognition of both the potential of mindfulness as self-care and its construction of an individualism that dodges the project of structural transformation, she reveals a deep ambivalence toward mindfulness.

What would it mean to follow the tacit suggestion by Davis in this conversation that mindfulness can serve to open up unforeseen possibilities contained in the present, instead of just a means to remain in it? Rather than aiming to uncover an organismically embedded (no-)self delimited and inscribed by its speculative capacity for investment and enhancement, an alternative use of mindfulness as speculation on political futures would attend to the present in ways the open up spaces of possible critique and political action not reducible to individual choice or action. This transformation would occur not at the realm of ideology and ignorance because it doesn't seek to uncover things "as they really are," only as they could possibly be. The potential of mindfulness implied by Davis lies in its use as a tool for exploring and expanding our individual and collective political imaginary through creative interrogation. Here the subject is not the target of self-realization or discovery, but the explorer of possibilities in the present that open up potential political futures. Politics is not, in this suggestion, self-knowledge; it is not an expression or awareness of who you are, but something you do that is not set in advance nor reducible to individual expression. Thus, we can glimpse the possibility of a use of mindfulness that perhaps is not reducible to the individualization and responsibilization engendered by neoliberalism. One that aims at creating new political visions of individual and collective life outside of the valorization of human capital. One that questions how, as Foucault references in the epigraph that begins this section, "the growth of capabilities" found in mindfulness practice can "be disconnected from the intensification of power relations" and put to strategic political use.

Bibliography

Adams, Glenn, Sara Estrada-Villalta, Daniel Sullivan, and Hazel Rose Markus. "The Psychology of Neoliberalism and the Neoliberalism of Psychology." Journal of Social Issues 75, no. 1 (2019): 189-216. doi:10.1111/josi.12305.

Albrecht, Henry. "Back to the Future: How the Evolution of Corporate Wellness Influences Its Destiny." *The Huffington Post*, 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/henry-albrecht/back-to-the-future-how-th_b_9637092.html.

"Announcing Salesforce Transit Center and Salesforce Park!" Salesforce (blog), n.d. https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2017/07/announcing-salesforce-transit-center-salesforce-park.html.

Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. "All SF Evictions, 1997-2018," n.d. https://www.antievictionmap.com/sf-evictions.

Arsensdorf, Alfred M., Mary Brogan, and Bruce F. Chorpita. "Getting Better at Getting Them Better: Health Outcomes and Evidence-Based Practice Within a System of Care." *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 45, no. 6 (June 2006): 749-756.

Arthington, Phil. "Mindfulness: A Critical Perspective." *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* 2, no. 1 (2016): 87-104.

Ascher, Ivan. *Portfolio Society*. New York: Zone, 2016.

Ashwood, J. Scott, Sheryl H. Kataoka, Nicole K. Eberhart, Elizabeth Bromley, Bonnie T. Zima, Lesley Baseman, F. Alethea Marti, Aaron Kofner, Lingqi Tang, Gulrez Shah Azhar, Margaret Chamberlin, Blake Erickson, Kristen Choi, Lily Zhang, Jeanne Miranda, and M. Audrey Burnam, "Evaluation of the Mental Health Services Act in Los Angeles County: Implementation and Outcomes for Key Programs." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2327.html.

Audier, Serge. *Penser le 'néolibéralisme': le moment néolibéral, Foucault et la crise du socialisme*. Lormont: Le Bord de L'eau, 2015.

Austin, James H. *Zen and the Brain: Toward an Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

Becker, Gary S. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Becker, Gary S. *Human Capital A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

143

Becker, Gary S. *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior (Chicago: University of Chicago*. Press, 1976.

Becker, Gary S. and Richard A. Posner. *Uncommon Sense: Economic Insights, from Marriage to Terrorism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Behrant, Michael C. "Liberalism Without Humanism: Michel Foucault and the Free Market Creed, 1976-1979" in Modern Intellectual History 6, no. 3 (2009): 539-68.

Biebricher, Thomas. *"The Biopolitics of Ordoliberalism," Foucault Studies* 12, 2011: 179-191.

Black Mirror. "Smithereens." Written by Charlie Brooker. Netflix, June 5 2019.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Translated by Chris Turner. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2005.

Boyce, Barry. "The Many Who Prescribes the Medicine of the Moment." *Mindful*, August 2010. https://www.mindful.org/the-man-who-prescribes-the-medicine-of-the-moment/.

Brown, Wendy. "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization" *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 690-714.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone, 2015.

Buchanan, James M. "Politics Without Romance: A Sketch of Positive Public Choice Theory and Its Normative Implications" in *The Theory of Public Choice*. Edited by James Buchanan and Robert D. Tollison. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972.

Burgin, Angus. *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Butler, Andrew C., Jason E. Chapman, Evan M. Forman, and Aaron T. Beck. "The Empirical Status of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: A Review of Meta-Analyses." *Clinical Psychology Review* 26, no. 1 (January 2006): 17–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2005.07.003.

Caitlin Kelly, "O.K. Google, Take a Deep Breath." *The New York Times*, April 28, 2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/technology/google-course-asks-employees-to-take-a-deep-breath.html.

Caliskan, Koray and Michel Callon. "Economization, Part I: Shifting Attention from the

Economy Towards Processes of Economization," *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (2009): 369-398.

Carr, Nicholas. *Utopia Is Creepy and Other Provocations*. New York: Norton, 2016.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "What Is Total Worker Health?" National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, n.d. https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/twh/totalhealth.html.

Chade-Meng Tan. "Google's Chade-Meng Tan Wants You to Search Inside Yourself for Inner (and World) Peace." Knowledge@Wharton. Podcast Interview, April 25, 2017. http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/googles-chade-meng-tan-wants-you-to-search-inside-yourself-for-inner-and-world-peace/.

"Child FIRST – Focus on Innovation and Redesign in Systems and Treatment." UCLA, n.d. https://www.childfirst.ucla.edu/.

Chorpita, Bruce F., Eric L. Daleiden, and Leslie R. Rith-Najarian. "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Youth Mental Health Prevention." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 51, no. 2 (2016).

Clarke, John. "Living with/in and without neo-liberalism." Focaal 51 (2008): 135-147.

Cohen, S., and D. Janicki-Deverts. "Who's Stressed? Distributions of Psychological Stress in the United States in Probability Samples from 1983, 2006, and 2009." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 42, no. 2012 (1989): 1320–1334.

Connolly, William. *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Cooper, Melinda. *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*. New York: Zone Books, 2017.

Daleiden, Eric L., Bruce F. Chorpita, Christina Donkervoet, Alfred M. Arensdorf, and Mary Brogan. "Getting Better at Getting Them Better: Health Outcomes and Evidence-Based Practice within a System of Care." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 45, no. 6 (June 2006): 749–56. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.chi.0000215154.07142.63.

Dardot, Pierre and Christian Larval. *The New Way of The World: On Neoliberal Society*. New York: Verso, 2014.

Davies, William. *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*. London: Verso, 2015.

Davis, Angela, and Jon Kabat-Zinn. "Mindfulness and the Possibility of Freedom: Angela Davis

and Jon Kabat-Zinn in Dialogue." East Bay Meditation Center, Oakland, CA, January 15 2015. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/video-of-angela-davis-jon-kabat-zinn-east-bay-meditation-center-benefit-tickets-50134682184/.

Davis, Lauren Cassani. *"What Happens When Mindfulness Enters Schools." The Atlantic* (2015). https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/08/mindfulness-education-schools-meditation/402469/.

Dean, Jodi. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

"Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion (SN 56.11)." Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight. BCBS Edition, November 30, 2013. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html.

Dilts, Andrew. "'Entrepreneur of the Self' to 'Care of the Self': Neo-liberal Governmentality and Foucault's Ethics." *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011): 130-46.

Donzelot, Jacques. "Michel Foucault and Liberal Intelligence," *Economy and Society* 37, no. 1 (2008): 115-134.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

East Bay Meditation Center. "Mission & History," n.d. https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/mission-history/.

Elster, Jon, editor. *Rational Choice*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.

Elwyn, See G., D. Frosch, and R. Thomson. "Shared Decision Making: A Model for Clinical Practice." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 27, no. 10 (2012): 1361-1367.

England, Paula. "Separative and Soluble Selves: Dichotomous Thinking in Economics" in *Feminism Confronts Homo Oeconomicus: Gender, Law, and Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Feher, Michel. *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age*. New York: Zone, 2018.

Feher, Michel. "Self-Appreciation; Or, The Aspirations of Human Capital." *Public Culture* 21, no. 1 (January 2009): 21-41.

Feher, Michel. "The Age of Appreciation: Lectures on the Neoliberal Condition." Goldsmiths University, London, 2013-2015. https://www.gold.ac.uk/architecture/projects/michel-feher/.

Feher, Michel. "When Capitalism Changes Direction: Political Engagements With Our Invested Selves." Lecture at the University of California Berkeley, November 2, 2018.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*. New York: Palgrave, 2008.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Foucault, Michel. *The Essential Works of Foucault Volume I: Ethics Subjectivity and Truth*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997.

Foucault, Michel. *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault Volume III*. Edited by James D. Faubion. New York, NY: The New Press, 1979.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Reissue edition. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971*. New York; Picador, 2014.

Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. New York: Picador, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *Society Must Be Defended Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. New York: Picador, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." Critical Inquiry 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-95. doi:10.1086/448181.

Foucault, Michel. "Who Are You Professor Foucault?" in *Religion and Culture*. Edited by Jeremy R. Carrette. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Friedman, Milton. *Essays in Positive* Economics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Germer, Christopher, Ronald D. Siegel, and Paul R. Fulton, eds. *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy,* Second edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2005.

Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

GRI Equity - Integral Investment Management. "About LOHAS," n.d. http://www.griequity.com/resources/integraltech/GRIMarket/aboutlohas.html.

Gregoire, Carolyn. "Actually TIME, This Is What The 'Mindful Revolution' Really Looks
        Like,." *The Huffington Post*. December 7, 2017. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/this-is-
        proof-that-mindfu_n_4697734.

Greenwood, John D. *A Conceptual History of Psychology*. Second edition. Cambridge, United
        Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Grossmeier, Jessica, Ray Fabius, Jennifer P. Flynn, Steven P. Noeldner, Ron Z. Goetzel, David
        R. Anderson. "Linking Workplace Health Promotion Best Practices and Organizational
        Financial Performance: Tracking Market Performance of Companies with Highest Scores
        on the HERO Scorecard." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* V. 58,
        no. 1, January 2016, 6–23.

"A Guide to Claiming Prevention and Early Intervention." P.E.I. and Evidence-Based Practice
        (EBP) Services, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, September 2016.

Haiven, Max. *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday
        Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Hayes, Steven C. "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Relational Frame Theory, and the
        Third Wave of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies." *Behavior Therapy* 35, no. 4
        (September 1, 2004): 639–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7894(04)80013-3.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins Of Cultural
        Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992.

Hattori, Kozo. "Five Ways to Make Mindfulness More Manly" in *Greater Good Magazine*.
        Greater Good Center, U.C. Berkeley, n.d.
        https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_make_mindfulness_more_ma
        nly.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*. Edited by Ronald
        Hamowy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Hayek, Friedrich, A. *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism: Collected Works of F.A. Hayek
        Vol. 1*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *Individualism and Economic Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
        1980.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *Law, Legislation, and Liberty Vol 1: Rules and Order*. Chicago: University
        of Chicago Press, 1978.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *Law, Legislation, and Liberty Vol 2: The Mirage of Social Justice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Market and Other Orders: The Collected Works of Friedrich Hayek Vol 15*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago: Chicago: University Press, 1994.

Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Sensory Order: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*. London: Routledge, 1967.

Hayes, Steven. "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Relational Frame Theory, and the Third Wave of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies" in *Behavior Therapy* 35, vol. 64 (2004): 869-885.

Hoffman, Lisa, and Carol Kennedy-Armbruster. "Case Study Using Best Practice Design Principles for Worksite Wellness Programs." *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal* 19, no. 3 (June 2015): 30-35. https://doi.org/10.1249/FIT.0000000000000125.

Hori, Victor Sogen. *"*Koan and Kensho in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum" in *The Koan. Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. Edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Horney, Karen. "Culture and Neurosis." *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 2 (1936): 227.

Horney, Karen. *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1939.

"IRI Provides Actionable Insights into $400 Billion Self-Care Industry, Enabling Marketers to Unlock Personalization Opportunities." Information Resources Inc. Press Release, March 28, 2017. https://www.iriworldwide.com/en-US/News/Press-Releases/IRI-Provides-Actionable-Insights-into-.

Jones, Daniel Stedman. *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Kabat-Zinn, John. *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness*. New York: Hyperion, 2005.

Kabat-Zinn, John. *Mindfulness for All: The Wisdom to Transform the World*. New York: Hachett, 2019.

Kabat-Zinn, John. "Orthogonal Reality: Rotating Consciousness." *Mindfulness 9*, issue 4 (April 2018): 1309-1311.

Kabat-Zinn, John. "Too Early to Tell: The Potential Impact and Challenges—Ethical and Otherwise—Inherent in the Mainstreaming of Dharma in an Increasingly Dystopian World." *Mindfulness* 8, issue 5 (June 2017): 1125-1135.

Kabat-Zinn, John. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Bantam, 2013.

Kabat-Zinn, John. *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York: Hyperion, 1994.

Kachan, Diana. "Prevalence of Mindfulness Practices in the US Workforce: National Health Interview Survey." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 14 (2017). http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd14.160034.

Kelly, Caitlin. "Google Course Asks Employees to Take a Deep Breath." *The New York Times*, April 28, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/technology/google-course-asks-employees-to-take-a-deep-breath.html.

Kim, Eugene. "Salesforce Put a Meditation Room on Every Floor of Its New Tower Because of Buddhist Monks." *Business Insider*, March 7, 2016, https://www.businessinsider.com/salesforce-put-a-meditation-room-on-every-floor-of-its-new-tower-2016-3.

Kim, Hee-Jin and Kigen Dagen. *Mystical Realist*. Tuscon. AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1975.

Kohll, Alan. "8 Things You Need to Know About Employee Wellness Programs." *Forbes*, April 21, 2016. https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2016/04/21/8-things-you-need-to-know-about-employee-wellness-programs/.

LaRosa, John. "$1.2 Billion U.S. Meditation Market To Grow Strongly, Following Path of Yoga Studios." Marketdata LLC. *WebWire*, September 26, 2017. https://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp.

Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1979.

Laurinavicius, Tomas. "10 World Renowned Meditation Tech Experts Share What's Next." *Forbes*, 2017. http://lifevessel.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/10-World-Renowned-Meditation-Tech-Experts-Share-Whats-Next-In-2017.pdf.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. Translated by Joshua David Jordan. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2014.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Translated by Joshua David Jordan. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2012.

Lemm, Vanessa and Miguel Vatter. *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Levy, Jonathan. *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Lippmann, Walter. *A Preface to Morals*. New Brunswick, NJ: Routledge, 1982.

"LOHAS Market-Size Data Released: A $290 Billion Opportunity." Natural Marketing Institute, June 14, 2017. https://www.newhope.com/trends/lohas-market-size-data-released-290-billion-opportunity.

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. "Outcome Measures Application: Child Baseline Form," June 30, 2016. http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dmh/159904_MH_682_ChildBaselineForm_6_30_16rev.pdf.

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. "Outcome Evaluation Guide and Forms." L.A. P.E.I. MAP, n.d. http://dmhoma.pbworks.com/f/LA.

Martin Roll and Nicole Fall. "Consumer Trends Shaping the Future Today: Mindful Impact." Think with Google, 2018. https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/trends-and-insights/consumer-trends-shaping-future-today-mindful-impact/.

Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume I*. Edited by Ben Fowkes. London, UK: Penguin, 1990.

Maslow, Abraham. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968.

Maycroft, Neil. "Cultural Consumption and the Myth of Life-Style." *Capital & Class* 28, no. 3 (November 2004): 61-75.

McMahon, J. "Behavioral Economics as Neoliberalism: Producing and Governing Homo Economicus." *Contemporary Political Theory* 14, no. 137 (2015): 137-158. https://doi.org/10.1057/cpt.2014.14.

"Mental Health Services Act" State of California, November 2004.

"Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)." Department of Health Care Services. State of California. https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/MH_Prop63.aspx

Metcalf, Steven. "Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World." *The Guardian*, August 18 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world.

Mindful online. "About Mindful." Foundation for a Mindful Society, n.d.
https://www.mindful.org/about-mindful/.

Mindful online. "Mindful Media Kit 2018." Foundation for a Mindful Society. New York, June
21, 2018. https://www.mindful.org/content/uploads/Mindful-Media-Kit-2018-MASTER-
web-June21.pdf.

Mindful online. "Search Inside Yourself." Foundation for a Mindful Society, June 19, 2015.
https://www.mindful.org/search-inside-yourself/.

Mindful Schools. "Our Organization," April 2019. https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-
mindfulness/our-organization/.

Mindful Schools. "Why Mindfulness Is Needed in Education," April 2019.
https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/mindfulness-in-education/.

"Mindfulness Practices That Activate Your Full Potential." Feat. Tara Brach. Salesforce.
https://www.salesforce.com/video/183659/.

Mirowski, Philip. *Never Let a Serious Crisis go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the
Financial Meltdown*. London: Verso, 2013.

Mirowski, Philip and Dieter Plehwe, eds. *The Road from Mount Pelerin: The Making of the
Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Mitchell, Crickett. "Understanding the CIMH Dashboard Reports for LA PEI MAP." Webinar,
June 2014. https://www.cibhs.org/webcast/understanding-cibhs-dashboard-reports-la-pei-
map.

Mitchell, Scott. "The tranquil meditator: Representing Buddhism and Buddhists in U.S. popular
media." *Religion Compass* 8, no. 3 (2014): 81-89.

Müller-Armack, Alfred. "The Social Market Economy as an Economic and Social Order."
Review of Social Economy 36, no. 3 (1978): 325-331.

Musich, Shirley, Timothy McDonald, David Hirschland, and Dee W. Edington. "Examination of
Risk Status Transitions among Active Employees in a Comprehensive Worksite Health
Promotion Program." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 45, no. 4
(April 2003): 393–99.

National Business Group on Health, "Embracing a Broader Definition of Well-Being: Eighth
Annual Employer-Sponsored Health and Well-Being Survey." Fidelity Investments,
2017.
https://workplace.fidelity.com/sites/default/files/NBGH%20Fidelity_2017_WellbeingWe

binar_Presentation05022017.pdf.

Neisser, Ulric. *Cognitive Psychology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

Olfson, M., B. G. Druss, and S. C. Marcus. "Trends in mental health care among children and adolescents." *New England Journal of Medicine* 372 (2015): 2029–2038.

Peck, Jamie. Constructions of Neoliberal Reason. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Petersmann, E.U. *Constitutional Functions and Constitutional Problems in International Economic Law*. Fribourg: University Press, 1991.
Pickert, Kate. "The Mindful Revolution." *Time* Magazine, February 3, 2014.

Picketty, Thomas. *Capital in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation*. New York: Beacon Press, 2001.

PracticeWise, LLC. "About PracticeWise," n.d.
        https://www.practicewise.com/Community/About.

PracticeWise, LLC. "Direct Services Workshop Overview," 2011.

PracticeWise, LLC. "Managing and Adapting Practice (MAP)," 2018.
        https://www.practicewise.com/Community/MAP.

Raisborough, Jayne. *Lifestyle Media and the Formation of the Self*. New York: Palgrave, 2011.

Read, Jason. "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity." Foucault Studies 6 (2009), 25-36.

Reid, Mollie. "Collier Meyerson Talks 'Carefree White Girl,' Race and Gender with Conn Students." *The College Voice*, March 4, 2013.
        https://thecollegevoice.org/2013/03/04/collier-meyerson-talks-carefree-white-girl-race-and-gender-with-conn-students/.

Rith-Najarian, Leslie R., Eric L. Daleiden, and Bruce F. Chorpita. "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Youth Mental Health Prevention." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 51, no. 4, Supplement 2 (October 1, 2016): S132–39.
        https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.05.018.

Röpke, Wilhelm. *International Economic Disintegration*. London: William Hodge, 1942.

Röpke, Wilhelm. *Moral Foundations of Civil Society*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction, 1996.

Röpke, Wilhelm. *The Social Crisis of Our Time*. Chicago: Chicago: University Press, 1950.

Rose, Nikolas. *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press, 1998.

Rucker, Michael. *The History of Workplace Wellness*, 2016. https://michaelrucker.com/well-being/the-history-of-workplace-wellness/.

Rudberg, Glen. "The Era of Ethical Consumerism Is Here: How to Market to LOHAS Consumers." *Ethos* blog, 2017. https://blog.ethos-marketing.com/blog/how-to-market-to-lohas.

Ryan, Tim. *A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2012.

Schultz, Theodore W. "Investment in Human Capital." *The American Economic Review* 51, no. 1 (March 1961): 1-17.

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. "Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence Leadership Training," February 25, 2019. https://siyli.org.

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. "Our Story: The Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute," n.d. https://siyli.org/about.

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute "Search Inside Yourself Program Impact Report," 2019. https://siyli.org/downloads/Program-Impact-Report.pdf.

"Self-Care for Serenity Now," Iconoculture Consumer Insights. Corporate Executive Board. Inc, 2017.

Shachtman, Noah. "In Silicon Valley, Meditation Is No Fad. It Could Make Your Career." *Wired*, June 18, 2013. https://www.wired.com/2013/06/meditation-mindfulness-silicon-valley/.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.

Silva, Christianna. "The Millennial Obsession with Self-Care." *NPR* (June 2017). https://www.npr.org/2017/06/04/531051473/the-millennial-obsession-with-self-care.

Simon, Herbert A. *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making in Processes in Administrative Organization*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1959.

Simon, Herbert A. "Rational Decision-Making in Business Organization." *Nobel Prize Memorial Lecture in Economic Sciences*, 1978. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/1978/simon/lecture/.

Simon, Herbert A. *Reason in Human Affairs*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983.

Simon, Herbert A. *Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Simon, Herbert A., Massimo Egidi, Riccardo Viale, Fondazione Rosselli, and Robin Marris. *Economics, Bounded Rationality and the Cognitive Revolution*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2008.

Skinner, B. F. *About Behaviorism*. New York: Vintage, 1976.

Skinner, B. F. *Cumulative Record: Definitive Edition*. Acton, Mass.: Copley Publishing Group, 1999.

Skinner, B. F. *Science and Human Behavior*. New Impression edition. New York, NY: Free Press, 1965.

Slobodia, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Twenge, J.M. "Time Period and Birth Cohort Differences in Depressive Symptoms in the U.S., 1982-2013." *Social Indicators Research* 121 (2015): 437–454.

Twenge, J.M., and B. Gentile. "Birth Cohort Increases in Psychopathology among Young Americans, 1938-2007: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis of the MMPI,." *Clinical Psychology Review* 30 (2010): 145–154.

"Understanding the CIBHS Dashboard Reports for LA PEI MAP." California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions. Accessed February 26, 2019. https://www.cibhs.org/webcast/understanding-cibhs-dashboard-reports-la-pei-map.

"The U.S. Meditation Market." Marketdata LLC, September 2017. https://www.marketdataenterprises.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Meditation-Market-2017-TOC-4.pdf.

Velasco, Paulina. "The Industry of Wellness, by the Numbers." Marketplace, April 29, 2019. https://www.marketplace.org/2018/01/04/world/wellness-craze-numbers.

Wack, Pierre. "Scenarios: Uncharted Waters Ahead,." *Harvard Business Review*, September 1985.

Wacquant, Loïc. "Actually Existing Neoliberalism: Three Steps to a Historical Anthropology of Actually Existing Neoliberalism." Social Anthropology 20.1 (2012): 66-79.

Watson, John B. "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It." *Psychological Review* 20, no. 2

(1913): 158-177.

Weisul, Kimberly. "Monk, Ex-Marketing Guy Aim for Peak Mindfulness." *Chicago Tribune*,
        n.d. http://digitaledition.chicagotribune.com/tribune/article_popover.aspx.

Wilson, Jeff. *Mindful America: The Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and
        American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Winnubst, Shannon. "The Queer Thing about Neoliberal Pleasure: A Foucauldian Warning."
        Foucault Studies 14 (2012): 79-97.

Wong, Julia Carrie. "San Francisco Tech Worker: 'I Don't Want to See Homeless Riff-Raff.'"
        The Guardian, February 17, 2016.
        https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/17/san-francisco-tech-open-letter-i-
        dont-want-to-see-homeless-riff-raff.