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WORKER PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE CHOICES: MAKING SENSE DURING TIMES OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

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Statement of Authorship

To the best of the candidate’s knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. There are no contributions by others to the articles that constitute the body of this thesis. This thesis is the candidate’s own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

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13th November 2020

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I acknowledge with thanks that in the thesis that the RTP fee waiver has supported me the degree.
Conference presentations based on this study

Invitation


Presented

2020  *Practical empathy: thinking of and caring for civilians in crisis & disaster times.* Australian Army presentation for Regiment, Battalion and Army HQ.

2018  *Leadership, Humility and Ethics.* Presentation to MBA Students, Qld University of Technology, 13 August.

2017  *Values, resilience and holistic treatments for workplace stress and corporate responses (now known as Psycho-spiritual self-care choices for those stressed or suffering at work).* Paper presented at International Stress Management Conference. Pre-conference seminar, Goa, November.

2017  *Stress care and immunisation: Meaning making, values and personal choices at and for work: A creative dialogue between positive psychology and meaning making.* Paper present at International Stress Management Conference, Plenary Session, Goa, November.


Publications that cite the published papers in the thesis


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Abstract

This thesis explores and extends the use of psycho-spiritual self-care choices in support of sense-making and inner healing of workplace stress. The study was motivated by a lack of research about and the observation that, despite their usefulness in other disciplines, psycho-spiritual self-care choices are often poorly understood or ignored in the workplace. Yet, chronic stress, if left unaddressed, can lead to adverse mental health consequences. This is particularly so when harsh self-criticism, poor self-acceptance and lack of self-kindness stymie self-care and meaningful sense-making. Notably too, there is next to no research that shows how workers might detach from work “self-caringly”.

Using a psycho-spiritual lens, this thesis focuses on self-care choices by intuiting, contrasting, comparing and integrating a variety of reflective, self-caring themes from psychology and spirituality. It engages with the fact that, so often, positive psychology and applied spirituality are not integrated well into workplace self-care responses. This has implications not just for workplace chaplains, allied health practitioners but the stressed and suffering themselves. Moreover, while workplace spirituality has sparked much interest in organisational studies, leadership and business practice, little literature exists that examines applied, psycho-spiritual self-care choices, which are arguably an aspect of workplace spirituality in times of stress and suffering.

Bricolage is an emerging methodology in business which lends itself well to engaging with the personal, complex and subjective nature of the inquiry viz the stressed, suffering self. Such a subject calls for an intuitive, even idiosyncratic and self-focused approach. So noting the guidance of bricolage and to give it effect, heuristic inquiry process was chosen because it matches the idiosyncratic nature of human experience. Bricolage methodology in its broadest form, is well suited to this type of
endeavour. This is about a tender search for new options (emanating from an extensive literature review), intuitive, “self-caring” reflection and the integration of whatever is useful or necessary so as to make inner sense of lived experience. Such an approach not only examines inner and personal responses to the stress experience, it envisages new self-care possibilities through an in-depth reflection process of interpretation, integration, and transformation. A key result was the discovery of the inter-relatability of three previously separate self-care choices or themes that target how one treats oneself. The literature search led to self-compassion psychology which, despite considerable research, has been little studied in a workplace stress context (Neff, 2003a; Charry, 2010). It also led to particular self-care research questions that arose from the literature review.

It also led to a different form of detachment and to humility, both of which are about the related choice to be self-kind and not get enmeshed. Detachment focusses on separation from the stressful workplace, yet does not necessarily enable the stressed to reflect self-kindly way (Sonnentag, Unger, & Nägel, 2013). Humility is about self-acceptance and living with things as they are and not how we would wish them to be, raising the issue of meaningful detachment beyond physical separation from stressful work (Roehr, 2007). Often, this is limited to being told to go home and not think about the effect, pain or event which is often hard to achieve. These choices emerged repeatedly throughout the course of the intuitive inquiry process:

- Self-compassion as a modern expression of self-love;
- Positive humility; and
- Meaningful detachment and letting go from work.

By way of the five published, peer-reviewed papers, this research extends understanding of self-compassion psychology and humility-related spirituality by
highlighting their commonalities and integrated use in workplace situations. This is about self-kindly inner dialogue, self-care, and meaningful forms of letting go. Another key outcome was the emergence of a self-care conceptual framework. As guided by the research questions, several unique contributions to self-care literature and praxis eventuated, as evidenced by the five, peer-reviewed papers that form the nucleus of this thesis. This research represents the first attempt to develop theory and praxis relating to psycho-spiritual self-care to ameliorate the detrimental effects of harsh self-judgments, using self-compassion, humility and meaningful detachment. Extending heuristic inquiry into psycho-spiritual workplace research not only offers a new approach for researchers (noting the intuition and inner reflection it offers), it also proposes an intuitive, step by step, self-care framework.

The study concludes with suggested future research directions related to theory development and praxis augmentation and testing the emergent, self-care framework including quantitatively exploring how the three psycho-spiritual choices—self-compassion, humility and detachment affecting self-care—could be related, and how they individually and/or collectively, tangibly add to self-care choices.

Finally, it will be important to test the proposed heuristic inquiry-based methodology that sought to strengthen approaches to self-care research. In these ways, holistically navigating through, and healing workplace stress and suffering will remain at the centre of stress treatment and recovery efforts.
Definitions of terms used in the study

Due to the complex nature of the interdisciplinary study, the multiplicity or subjective nature of many so-called definitions, some key definitions are set out below:

- **Bricolage**: “a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry; (it is where one) pieces together their life-history with artefacts (e.g. texts, discourses, social practices) of their given cultural context to construct meaning” (Rogers, 2012, p. 3).

- **Burnout**: refers “to job stressors and resulting mental health problems that may occur.” It is defined as “a three-dimensional syndrome, characterized by energy depletion (exhaustion), increased mental distance from one’s job (cynicism) and reduced professional efficacy” (ILO, 2000). It points to various painful consequences including “negative attitudes about the future, hopelessness and loss of motivation” (Pompili, Rinaldi, Lester, Girardi, Ruberto & Tatarelli, 2006, p. 138).

- **Detachment**: the “personal choice to stand slightly further away from suffering, to step back so as to not get overwhelmed or controlled by feelings” (Rohr, 2007, n. p.). Although this is also “non-attachment and equanimity in the face of life’s vicissitudes”, it is not about an inability to connect or attach to avoid emotional attachment in and of itself (Dobie, 2002, p. 35).

- **Heuristics**: is the discovery of “the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration, and discovery” (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010, p. 1569). It is about being receptive to intrinsic information that is entrenched in oneself. “The heuristic process opens to knowledge that is embedded and integrated within the self through understanding of the
self in relation to and in context of the dynamic whole” (Sela-Smith, 2020, n.p).

- **Heuristic research:** “begins with a personal question or challenge that has a social or universal significance. It is aimed at discovery through self-inquiry and dialogue. The life experience of the heuristic researcher and the research participants is not a text to be interpreted but a full story that is vividly portrayed and further elucidated. From these individual depictions and portraits from research participants, a composite depiction is developed. The researcher then develops a creative synthesis from this material” (Moustakas, 1994, p.181). It “attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration, and discovery. Heuristic methodology encourages the researcher to explore and pursue the creative journey that begins inside one's being and ultimately uncovers its direction and meaning through internal discovery” (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010, p. 1569).

- **Humility:** Funk’s (2005) humility connotation is used in this paper: “standing in the truth of being” (p. xxv). For Funk, this relates to self-awareness. Funk (2005) refers to humility as being a “form of modesty” and not “lack of confidence” (p. xxv), although noting its problematic modern reception some “mistake humility for weakness will find it difficult to accept that it is related to inner strength” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 11).

- **Inner life:** (as it relates to work) is about “the feeling an individual has about who he or she is, what he or she is doing and what the contribution(s) he or she is making” (Vaill, 1998, p. 78).
• **Meaning**: “individual’s sense of meaning when an activity counts in their value system… (they) derive personal significance, get energised and become connected” (Muchinsky, 2006, p. 275).

• **Meaning making**: is a key component of lived experience noting, Frankl’s assertion that it is located in “doing a deed; by experiencing a value; and by suffering” (Frankl, 1984, p. 133). It is relevant to a thesis on choices related to suffering and particularly humility and detachment because these can support healing and recovery. As Clarke (2008) argues “meaning can only be actualized when individuals have the freedom to make choices. To access meaning individuals must be free enough to make decisions that enliven their sense of emotional and spiritual well-being” (p. 222).

• **Psychological detachment**: “an individual’s sense of being away from the work situation”; and “being able to psychologically disengage from work during non-work time” (Sonnentag, 2012, p. 115).

• **Psychological wellbeing**: “(is) more than being free from stress, and not having other psychological problems. It encompasses positive self-perception, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life and emotions inclined towards a healthy development” (Saricaoglu & Arslan, 2013, p. 2098).

• **Psycho-spirituality**: is the “immaterial inner core of human personality (and) refers to the fact that the inner world has no separate spiritual and psychological compartments” (Benner, 1998, p. 540).

• **Rumination**: refers to “the tendency to repetitively think about the causes, situational factors, and consequences of one's negative emotional experience” (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991, p. 572).
• **Self-management:** “refers to how well we control our emotions, impulses, and resources. It includes keeping disruptive impulses in check; displaying honesty and integrity; being flexible in times of change; maintaining the drive to perform well and seize opportunities; and remaining optimistic even after failure” (Lunenburg, 2011, p. 4).

• **Self-care:** “Self-care is an intrinsic, continuous and highly important activity performed by any professional, particularly those involved in health care. Also called the ‘inner therapy’, [it] aims to ensure that both mental and physical health of the professional is in good shape” (AIPC, 2009, p. 20). Self-care is about well-being related choices (Myers et al., 2012). Further, it is about “various strategies for promoting or maintaining physical, psychological and spiritual health; it requires self-reflection and self-awareness” (Mills & Chapman, 2016, p. 88).

• **Self-compassion:** a positive psychological concept comprising three components: mindfulness, self-kindness and understanding that our experiences are part of our common humanity. That is, “painful or distressing feelings are not avoided but are instead held in awareness with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity” (Neff, 2003a, p. 225).

• **Spiritual well-being:** “subjective experience that incorporates psychological wellbeing and meaning in life” (Manning-Walsh, 2003, E56).

• **Stressors:** "Physical and psychological demands to which the individual responds.", often without mention of spiritual or meaning-oriented stressors (Landy and Conte, 2007, p. G19).
- **Suffering**: includes a “wide range of unpleasant subjective experiences including physical and emotional pain, trauma, psychological distress, and existential anguish, and feelings of disconnection” (Lilius et. al., 2011, p. 3).

- **Tacit knowledge**: “the deep structure that contains the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs and judgments housed in the internal frame of reference of a person that governs behaviour and determines how we interpret experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32).

- **Workplace spirituality**: “Workplace spirituality involves the effort to find one’s ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency or alignment between one’s core beliefs and values of their organization” (Mitroff & Denton, 1999).
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Chapter One: Introduction

You are a living being who deserves and needs love and compassion. In fact, you can’t really love others until you learn to love yourself. That doesn’t mean being selfish and egotistical. It means being a friend to yourself, accepting yourself as you are with your faults and limitations, knowing that you can change and grow. It is no use hating yourself because you are not the way you would like to be or beating your heads against the wall everytime you make a mistake. Doing this only adds more problems to those you already have, and does not help you to improve. But having a kind heart towards yourself lightens the pain of failure and faults, providing the space in which you can grow (McDonald, 2010, p. 38).

This chapter provides the background to the research and introduces the research problem and research proposition. Some key themes that are of interest to pastoral carers and the stressed and suffering themselves are introduced and extended upon in the scoping and literature review; self-compassion, heuristics and innate sense-making. In essence, noting McDonald’s (2010) strident self-compassionate call above, this is an exploration of self-care despite what has occurred; faults, mistakes and stress. Additionally, the justification and motivations and a personal and professional reflection are presented. This is followed by the research questions, considerations of the target audience, methodological issues, and chapter summaries.

Purpose

What if self-care is not so much about stress management and damage limitation as about finding ways of remembering and staying connected in the workplace with the wholeness that is already there? If our organizations understand this they will realize that an investment in encouraging and facilitating self-awareness and self-care is a sound business strategy that benefits staff, clients, and the health-care organization… (this arises from) the “clinicians’ realization that patients have within themselves innate capacities to heal, physically, psychologically and spiritually. (Kearney & Weininger, 2011, p. 1-3)

Although written in a clinical work setting, the quote frames up the opportunity for improved self-care for both businesses and individuals. It derives from the fundamental proposition that healing can and must, yet do not necessarily, include people’s inner or personal responses,
particularly in stressful times (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). This requires a “high degree of self-knowledge; we need to know ourselves well enough to recognize that we have reached that place of powerlessness, to prevent ourselves reacting impulsively, and to consciously respond in the most appropriate way, including the possibility of calling time-out, or choosing to remain compassionately present without acting, despite possibly painful feelings of failure or impotence” (Kearney & Weininger, 2011, p. 10).

While Kearney and Weininger (2011) speak of holistic self-care, “it is not always clear that psycho-spiritually oriented approaches and those to do with meaning (or loss thereof), self-kindness, and self-care are used to best advantage where indicated” in response to workplace stress (Devenish-Meares, 2015a, p. 79). In fact, there is a lack of psycho-spiritual self-care research. Perhaps this is because spiritually focussed self-care and spiritual ideas such as compassion remain relatively nebulous terms at work (Dezorzi & Crossetti, 2011). This is notwithstanding the fact that spirituality and some psychological concepts such as self-compassion may be useful (Neff, 2003a; Rohr, 2007; Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010; Yarnell and Neff, 2012). In fact, what is neither clear nor comprehensively researched is just how much compassionate self-care, especially that to do with inner values, addresses self-criticism and restores hope and meaning (Devenish-Meares, 2015a).

This study explores and synthesises improved psycho-spiritual self-care options for the stressed at work. It seeks to address the dearth of research into psycho-spiritual, workplace self-care and contributes to the interdisciplinary dialogue and praxis that is beginning to emerge. To do this, we must recognise that the thesis is subjective and intentionally personal and intrinsic in nature. In this, what motivates the thesis is the need a movement against the “reductive approach of formulating discrete diagnostic categories towards with a holistic approach based on open-ended phenomenological research” (Spittle 2020, p. 6).
In undertaking this work, certain psycho-spiritual self-care choices that address self-judgments, self-blame and suffering emerged repeatedly and led me to use a more intrinsic method to research inner, meaningful and a healing sense of stress using self-care choices (Moustakas, 1990). It is essential that this type of research is highly and personally relevant to the researcher and requires the use of methods and procedures that increase the ways that they personally engage with intrinsic subject matter (Anderson, 2000; 2004).

This is a qualitative exploration into how three psycho-spiritual choices that arose from the literature—“self-compassion, humility and detachment could be related and how they individually or collectively tangible act as self-care choices” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 4). The concept of “psycho-spiritual self-care” is difficult to define, let alone locate in workplace literature. The distinctions between secular and psycho-spiritual notions of self-care and the fact that psychology and spirituality do not always engage in dialogue are noted (Bonet, 2009; Schneider, 2005). This will be examined later in the document. Additionally, noting the complex, subjective and intuitive nature of the subject matter, the approach adopted in this work gravitates as much towards methodological appropriateness as it does methodological orthodoxy (Anderson, 2000; Patton, 1990).

Not only does this thesis address the need for psycho-spiritual self-care, it provides an opportunity to consider ‘how’ to research psycho-spiritual self-care choices, around self-compassion, in addition to tender self-awareness. This is about the researcher using one’s intrinsic, reflective engagement with a topic of deep personal interest as well as its relevance to “the stressed” (Anderson, 2004). This heuristic process “encourages the researcher to explore and pursue the creative journey that begins inside one's being, and ultimately uncovers its direction and meaning through internal discovery” (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010, p. 1569).

Work on innate studies such as this one requires the researcher to follow the intrinsic process no matter where it takes the researcher (Anderson, 2000). The aim is for the stressed
caring for themselves in a self-kindly way to support them to heal, by coming, via a personal reflection, to “know some aspect of life through internal pathways of the self” (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985, p. 39).

A pressing definitional issue

It is noted at the outset that this study adopts a psycho-spiritual approach to self-care. This raises definitional issues as spirituality and psychology are distinct disciplines. As a chaplain, I could simply say that I research, teach, and practice in the spiritual domain, and yet I also use positive psychological themes in pastoral care at work. Theorists and practitioners from either domain could challenge me; however, this thesis is written for a secular, workplace environment, so language, usability and accessibility are key considerations (Schneiders, 2005).

Giving impetus to the term psycho-spirituality, positive psychology and related disciplines use what are, arguably, spiritual actions or themes such as one’s inner life, love of self and others, intrinsic meaning and hope (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Reinforcing this, Van Gordon et al. (2018) describe “mindfulness training, compassion and loving-kindness as psychotherapeutic agents” (p. 5).

In fact, in terms of etymology, Spittles (2020) states that “the meaning of psyche in psychology and psychiatry is essentially psychospiritual” (p. 1). Further, Hyman (2010) states when advancing holistic approaches that include psycho-spiritual notions that being tied to so-called psychiatric terminology represents “an unintended epistemic prison” that has been “palpably impeding scientific progress” (p. 157) Moreover, in workplace pastoral care, praxis and related therapy responses can be a blending of the psychological with the spiritual. For example, Somlai and Heckman (2000) encouraged psychotherapists to actively consider spirituality in their work. The term psycho-spirituality enables an integrative approach and is
consciously adopted to better reflect the study’s interdisciplinary and applied workplace focus and to assist in the study’s potential co-option in the post-modern and often secular workplaces. To affirm this approach, it is noted, as Benner (1998) says, that psycho-spirituality is the “immaterial inner core of human personality [and] refers to the fact that the inner world has no separate spiritual and psychological compartments” (p. 540). This does not exclude religious belief and practice nor does it ignore psychology; neither of which discipline necessarily dialogue easily together (Schneiders, 2005).

**Introduction: 21st century work dynamics; background to the research**

Stress and suffering in the workplace have become a major concerns for human resource planning, staff development and even psychological treatment practitioners (Sonnentag, Binnewies, Carmen, & Mojza, 2010). Although comprehensive workplace statistics are sparse, a UK-based report stated that 595,000 people, at [any] one time, were suffering from workplace stress, worry or depression (Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 2018). What makes such stress addressing research so important is the multiplicity of stress effects and responses. Of particular interest to this researcher is that psycho-spiritual responses are not actively explored in relevant workplace literature. Perhaps this is because the term workplace spirituality, as highlighted in the literature review, is hard to define and is mostly focussed on leadership, performance and cultural outcomes (Fry, 2003). Then there is the issue that non-workplace derived psychospiritual, self-care motifs, however useful, are not readily adapted by workplace researchers or by practitioners (Devenish-Meares, 2015a; 2017).

In the main, medical, psychological and sociological aspects are the focus of applied research and treatment processes (Frewen, & Lanius, 2015; Litz, 2004; Quick & Henderson, 2016). However, this is beginning to change and some psycho-spiritual practices such as meditation are receiving attention (American Holistic Nursing Association, 2004). Reinforcing
this, the International Labor Organisation (ILO) (2016) says that stress issues are related not only to physical health but also to meaning and these can have “hazardous influence over employees’ health through their perceptions and experiences.” Issues also include, pressure to perform, lack of role clarity, overwork, inter-personal issues, intra-personal issues and fear of redundancy. Then there are innate or more spiritual issues to do with meaning at work, sense-making and fulfilment or lack thereof (Weick, 1995). In terms of this, spirituality is of value in times of work-related inadequacy or stress (Arnetz, Lucas & Arnetz, 2013; Harrison, 2017).

Crucially, there appears to be a connection between stress, over-identification with symptoms and negative self-judgment, in terms of personal meaning-making, although this has not been comprehensively explored (Driver, 2007; Pratt, & Ashforth, 2000; Van Dam et al. 2011). Some research has alluded to, but not yet examined, the possibility that mindful non-judgment and even self-compassion is efficacious in dealing with anxiety and stress (Devenish-Meares, 2015a; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2013). This calls to mind how much at work one can judge oneself harshly, fail to accept oneself, avoid being self-kindly and engage in self-blame, which not only raises issues to do with self-acceptance, but more broadly with psycho-spiritual self-care (Neff, 2003a; Kozlowski, Hutchinson, Hurley, Rowley, & Sutherland, 2017; Soysa &Wilcomb, 2013).

**Religion and spirituality: are both terms equally useful for the modern secular workplace?**

This thesis deliberately adopts a broad definition of spirituality and psycho-spirituality as opposed to more narrowly focussed definitions of spirituality that is about religion and its praxis. That is not to say that both themes are not related and often overlap. Then there is the issue that spirituality which may constitute religious practice, is often hard to define.

In modern, secular life spirituality is often seen as being more about self-expression and self-determination that it is about faith (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Milliman,
Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003; Rathjee & Rajain, 2020). It is precisely these broader application that are of relevance to the study

Spirituality has many definitions, however, of note, Mitroff and Sloan (1999) said that it is “the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe (p. 1)”. It is also about how one makes inner sense of work and care for themselves and others (Garg, 2017). Again, in general terms, spirituality can be far less structured than religion and it may or may not include belief in a divinity (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Reinforcing this point and more particularly, it has been defined as being about “individualized experience of transcendence through the work process”. (Miller and Ewest, 2018, p. 2).

Religion, while form a part of the spirituality domain, is often defined in terms of belief, worship, following God, using the gifts that God has given us and serving others and taking care of our resources in accordance with God’s commandments and precepts” (Mitroff & Sloan, 1999). What religion and spirituality have in common is that they can both be about bringing all of one’s self to work to make meaningful sense from work however religion may have perjorative connotations (Devenish-Meares, 2018). Of note too, many organisational are now actively seeking to include broad, non-religious connotations of spirituality into their culture. This has positive implications for work performance, job satisfaction and even meaning-making (van der Walt & de Klerk, 2014).

Again, for some, religious practice is deemed inappropriate at work due to its ways of organising and formulated practices, whereas spirituality is arguably acceptable as being more personally expressive and less prescriptive (Mitroff & Sloan, 1999; Rathjee & Rajain, 2020). Moreover, which makes research more challenging is that assimilation of religion and
spirituality in the context of the workplace is a relatively new area of study (Miller and Ewest, 2018). This all presents challenges for any research.

Overall, as shown in Figure 1 below, this thesis deliberately uses a broader definition of spirituality as a meaning-making and self-determining choice. This is so as to reach and engage with the secular worker and their workplace.

![Figure 1: A broad definitional approach to spirituality](image)

The differences between definitions do not mean that religious-based spirituality and care are not useful nor relevant to the secular workplace. Belief and religiosity can assist in coping with stress and anxiety although this is not the thesis’ focus (Gall & Guirguis-Younger, 2011). Moreover, faith, formal spiritual practices and prayer can be positively associated with improved mental health and reducing workplace stress (Arnetz, Ventimiglia, Beech, DeMarinis, Lokk & Arnetz, 2013; Barnard & Curry, 2012). However again, the focus is on broader, non-religious definitions.

Then there is the issue, that so often, organisationally focussed spiritual research fails to address issues such as loss of personal meaning, painful self-awareness, inner suffering, problematic inner heuristics; for example, there is negative self-talk and the avoidance of self-care choices (Devenish-Meares, 2015b; Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Galanis & Theodorakis, 2013). Some or all of which could relate to inner sense-making spiritual themes, which call to mind psychospirituality (Foster & Wall, 2019; Weick, 1995).
Psycho-spirituality, inner reflection and the intrinsic search for meaning, in particular, are receiving some attention in workplaces. This includes in trauma medicine and therapeutic work where their usefulness and efficacy is better understood (Anderson, 2004; Kalsched 2013; Koenig, 2015; Roberto, 2019).

**Stress at work: What self-care choices are available?**

At work, psycho-spirituality is most often researched in the context of employees’ aspirations, emotions and needs (Loo, 2018; Smith, 2006). However, psycho-spiritual choices are not much considered as responses to chronic workplace stress and suffering and self-care. Although, self-compassion, which is arguably spiritual, has been examined in the context of non-workplace distress and anxiety (Devenish-Meares, 2015a; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2013).

Research indicates that that self-awareness is improved by self-care and spirituality, although it not clear how these actually work nor how to define or activate them (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). However, despite the challenges spirituality and psychological self-care are deemed beneficial to workers (Norcross, 2005; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010; Valente & Marotta, 2005). All of this calls for improved, interdisciplinary approaches to workplace self-care and, arguably, ones that include psycho-spiritual responses.

So, a key driver for the thesis is the search for psycho-spiritual self-care choices or motifs that are accessible for the modern workplace, irrespective of belief or religious practice (Calicchia & Graham, 2006; Katzman, 2019; Schneiders, 2005). In this, Nolan (2017) epitomises my approach: “my role as psycho-spiritual carer allows me to integrate the language and concepts of psycho-therapy with that of my religious, sacramental role and to see myself as caring holistically for the soul/mind (psyche) and spirit (spiritus) regardless of a person’s belief” (p. 187). Then, not dissimilarly, Nolan (2017 and Saakvitne & Pearlman’s (1996)
widely used self-care assessment model proffers a broad and non-religious meaning of spirituality. Therefore, this study uses a broadly inclusive, non-religious definition of spirituality, noting that religion forms a subset of it. This is shown below in Figure 1.

A further impetus is the lack of research on sense-making and inner choices about how one lives, self-acceptingly and self-caringly when faced with stress (McKee, Helms, & Driscoll, 2008; Weick, 1995). Reinforcing my approach, the study adopts a broader spiritual connotation which speaks to the “immaterial inner core of human personality [and] refers to the fact that the inner world has no separate spiritual and psychological compartments” (Benner, 1998, p. 540).

Noting the thesis focuses on psycho-spiritual self-care choices, it is important to briefly mention self-management. Self-management is commonly cited as a business theme, often defined in terms of performance, teams, and leadership (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013). Thus, this research is about useful self-care choices as a form of self-management.

In summary, the practical expression of self-care does not often include conceptualisations of practical psycho-spirituality, however useful these could be in terms of stress (Bernier, 2007; King-White & Rogers, 2018; Lewis & King, 2019). The research opportunity is to search for and synthesise self-choice material drawn from positive psychology and spirituality in its broader definition. The plan is to develop a heuristic framework of self-care that addresses the pressing issue of inner meaning making and tender psycho-spiritual care.

**Interdisciplinary approaches to workplace stress**

[In the workplace] spiritual, religious and social interventions aim to deal with social and self-condemnation, that is, criticism and condemnations of oneself, by oneself accompanied by emotions of guilt, shame, regret and self-blame. The goal is to deal with self-condemnation in a personal but psychologically informed way. This is done by conversing with a friend, family member, chaplain, or a counsellor. (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2015)
The lack of psycho-spiritual self-care research for workplaces, as stated above by the Department of Veteran Affairs, this statement highlights the possibilities of interdisciplinary and even psycho-spiritual choices to address to workplace trauma, chronic stress and suffering especially as they relate to self-criticism, self-judgments, and remorse.

“Questions about the usefulness of interdisciplinary research approaches to workplace stress, suffering, and trauma, and, conversely, wellbeing and human flourishing, exercise the mind of some psychologists, managers and theologians” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3). These include Charry (2011) and Chopko, Facemire, Palmieri, & Schwartz (2016). However, relationships between self-care and related variables remain underexplored, so, clearly, there is much more to be done (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010).

Workplace stress and suffering are often seen as reactions to work and are less about the search for psycho-spiritual meaning, despite the fact that stress can be associated with worsening self-perceptions (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Pastor, Sanz-Vergel, & Garrosa, 2009). Yet spirituality has something important to say here and this includes expressions of self-love (Charry, 2011; Schneiders, 2005). So, self-love is sometimes seen as connected to but is not necessarily the same as self-compassion psychology, although both offer support in terms healing and inner meaning (Devenish-Meares, 2015; Neff, Pisitsungkagarn, & Hsieh, 2008).

Despite emerging research, psychology and spirituality are often seen as incompatible or even unrelated to each other. This has sometimes led to each discipline overlooking the other or, as Webb, Toussaint and Conway-Williams (2012) describe it, albeit in one context, as a “suboptimal level of collaboration between the two fields to the detriment of healthcare” (p. 57). Yet there is another more integrated way, as described below.

Noting the interdisciplinary opportunity, experientially and from the ongoing literature review, self-compassion, meaningful detachment and letting go arose again in terms of
supporting self-acceptance and non-judgmental self-care. Such aspects are central to both positive psychology and applied spirituality (Graham, Morse, O’Donnell & Steger, 2017). Humility too, as a personal inner meaning-related choice, could also be included although it has not been used in this way before (Rohr, 2007).

In my 2020 paper I summarised notable research related to inner meaning and spirituality. This was:

Isaksen (2000) noted that a sense of inner meaning at work enabled people to better withstand workplace stress. Morin (2008) also found that a sense of meaning can be a protective factor against workplace stress, although they did not delve into applied spirituality. Moreover, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) found that the inner or intrinsic characteristics at or associated with work can lead to meaning. Then, spiritual writers and researchers posit the inner or transformative benefits of applied psycho-spiritual approaches and particularly those which pay attention to one’s suffering in self-loving ways (Charry, 2010; Rohr, 2007) (p. 3).

Noting these key writers and the criticality of meaning and in developing this study, it became increasingly clear that a heuristic synthesis of psycho-spiritual care options could be particularly useful for the workplace (Devenish-Meares, 2020). As Kenny (2012) says, “[H]euristic methods of inquiry offer the potential for the emergence of insight that could create meaningful order from the complexity that accompanies questions that arise” (p. 11). Such an approach seems relevant to the self-care researcher engaging with significant subjectivity and inner meaning-related questions. The heuristic approach can also integrate psycho-spiritual themes, including tenderness and self-kindness, however eclectic and inner-meaning oriented they may appear to the outer world (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Charry, 2011; Devenish-Meares, 2016a, 2017). This is because, in addressing self-blame and self-judgment, and “however idiosyncratic and personal they may appear to the secular world, which have much to offer treatment and healing when considered in terms of positive psychology (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3).
The research is about the ‘holistic’ sense of the human being drawing on as many perspectives or themes as are necessary (Moustakas, 1990). This is as much about the spiritual as much as it is about positive psychology. Fourie (2014) puts it this way, albeit with a positive focus that does not overtly contemplate failure nor suffering:

Spirituality is about the key components (such as the working human being that is accepted as a ‘whole person’ in the workplace, ‘interconnected wholeness’ with the self, society and the experience of sense with regard to work as well as personal fulfilment) may indeed lead to a positive work experience (n. p.).

Finally, Lambert (2010) argues that spirituality is relevant in workplace considerations because “creativity at work is a spiritual process that involves the whole person, and not just the intellect or manual skill, another new class of knowledge is devoting more of their time to work because they find deep meaning and a sense of purpose on the job” (n.p). The question remains: what happens when such aspirations or sense-making or inner needs are not met or become lost or impaired?

**What is self-care and psycho-spiritual self-care in particular?**

Self-care refers to any activity that one does to feel good about oneself. It can be categorized into four groups which include: physical, psychological, spiritual, and support. (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010, p. 253)

In general terms, as described above, self-care is multi-dimensional phenomena. Self-care is about well-being related choices (Myers et al., 2012). It is defined as “various strategies for promoting or maintaining physical, psychological and spiritual health” (Mills & Chapman, 2016, p. 88). Moreover, speaking in a medical context, self-care “requires self-reflection and awareness to identify relevant stressors and supports in both personal and professional spheres. But to what extent can doctors effectively attend to self-care, if they lack self-compassion?” (p. 88).
Despite the above quote, what is unclear is just how holistic and all-encompassing self-care is, especially for those who are searching for meaning, judging themselves harshly, have lost hope or are self-critical as a result of stress (Devenish-Meares, 2015). From this, there is an opportunity to augment how one might conduct integrated and intrinsic research into psycho-spiritual self-care choices. This is an inherently tender, subjective even idiosyncratic undertaking. Of note, Anderson (2000) says that compassionate inquiry “invites the researcher to structure the research method, procedures, setting, and context to maximize (rather than minimize) the very gateway through which the researcher understands or is inspired by the experience studied” (p. 34).

When workplace-related self-care is studied it is often about organisational issues, mindfulness, religious practice or merely coping with stress (Mills, Wand & Fraser, 2018; Vannucci & Weinstein, 2017). When it is examined in terms of intrinsic and even spiritual issues it is most often about positive connotations to do with personal meaning and not about when workers are adversely affected by stress (Estanek, 2007).

Despite some evidence of self-care’s efficacy, relatively little literature attempts to define self-care or it is framed in vague terms (Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010). Pincus (2006) said rather nebulously that self-care is what "one does to improve [the] sense of subjective well-being. How one obtains positive rather than negative life outcomes" (p. 1). Coster and Schwebel (1997) indicated that sound personal relationships and exercise are means of self-care; their work did not explore spirituality although they did examine a related concept: self-awareness.

This study adopts the view that psycho-spiritual self-care is about the choices that support the stressed person in spiritual, meaning-making and self-tender ways (Mayer, Surtee, & Barnard, 2015; Roberto, 2019). Such a conceptualisation is reinforced by a significant body of research, albeit in a non-work-related way, from Kristen Neff concerning self-compassion.
which is efficacious for treating oneself in a self-caring manner. More particularly, almost all self-compassion literature is in a “non-work” context; it appears to have applied psycho-spiritual connotations and relevance to one’s lived experience at work although it is not explicitly named (Neff, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016).

There is almost no research is about inner-meaning or intuitive sense-making at work, and relatively little about self-compassionate responses or other psycho-spiritual choices (Butler, Mercer, McClain-Meeder, Horne, & Dudley, 2019; Clode & Bodero, 2006; Vannucci & Weinstein, 2017). Nor is it much about psycho-spiritual care. Therefore, as shown below in Figure 2, the thesis is an exploration or synthesis between psycho-spiritual literature and workplace-based self-care literature.

**Psycho-spiritual self-care literature in dialogue with workplace self-care literature**

*to discover, synthesise & illuminate improved psycho-spiritual self-care choices*

**Figure 2: Integration and development of emerging self-care themes**

In summary, without self-care to address workplace stressors, pressure and expectations, there can be a downward spiral into self-blame and negativity which may, in turn, lead to more suffering and anxiety (Vivian, Oduor, Arceneaux, Flores, Vo, & Maddern, 2019). Moreover, research identifies many expectations on a worker which may be related to stress and anxiety. These can come from external sources, such as leader’s demands and expectations (Bhui, Dinos, Galant-Miecznikowska, De Jongh & Stansfeld, 2016). Further, some issues and expectations are self-driven, intrinsic or strongly related to one’s inner or spiritual life and the ability to make meaningful sense of stress (Casado & Alves, 2016; Singh & Chopra, 2018; Vaill, 1998; Weick, 1995). There are questions about how or if people enact self-care even when detached from work.
Detachment

People are told to detach or separate from stressful work conditions, yet it is unclear just how self-care can be enacted when absent from work due to stress (Sonnentag, Unger & Nägel, 2013; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). This introduces the term psychological detachment which is about “being able to psychologically disengage from work during non-work time” and times of stress (Sonnentag, 2012, p. 115). One might reasonably speculate that psycho-spiritual choices in conjunction with a more self-aware detachment enables a meaningful and, as Anderson (2000) argues, a more “tender” approach to qualitative, meaning related studies (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). However, to date, psychological detachment literature does not engage with psycho-spiritual self-care.

When workers despite being advised not to ruminate, often painfully, on their circumstances, what personal or intuitive resources do they have to treat themselves tenderly or self-caringly? (Anderson, 2000; Neff 2003, Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Underscoring this opportunity, Tong, Chong, and Chen (2019) point to other unknown mediating choices or factors that could address self-criticism in the context of detachment; they ask:

Are the moderating effects of psychological detachment universally beneficial? The dearth of extant research that examines the potential dark side of psychological detachment as a moderator is a critical omission because it limits our ability to understand and predict when and how psychological detachment improves or worsens important employee outcomes. (p. 6)

Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) suggest that “whether or not stressors actually have a negative impact on individuals largely depends on appraisal and coping processes” (p. 74). Again, being told “not to think on it” is, in itself, unhelpful. Overall, psycho-spiritual self-care is, with the exception of mindfulness, largely absent from such detachment literature.
Mindfulness

One well-researched stress-related coping technique, which is arguably psycho-spiritual in nature, is mindfulness. This is defined as an intensified awareness of what is occurring to oneself at the present time (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Drawing on Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney (2006), Soysa and Wilcomb (2013) summarised the five aspects of mindfulness as “observing our sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions; describing these experiences with words; [having] awareness rather than [being] on autopilot; [being] non-judging of these experiences; and [having] non-reactivity to these experiences” (p. 1). Not dissimilarly, mindfulness is also part of Neff’s (2003) self-compassion concept which is located in positive psychology. It is further defined as “individuals observing their thoughts” in a non-judgmental way (Neff, 2003a, p. 224). Mindfulness does not necessarily seem to include deliberate self-caring choices to do with kindness and acting differently in the context of lived experience (Neff, 2003a, 2009). In fact, as will be seen, self-compassion although including mindfulness as a key aspect, goes further than just being in a certain state, as important as this can be.

While mindfulness pays non-judgmental attention to living in the present, it only forms part of the responses to stress and anxiety. It does not necessarily intuit, as Anderson (2000) describes, self-kindly ways to deal with life and, in this case, with self-care. This is because attention in itself may not necessarily lead to self-caring action. As Davis and Hayes (1998) indicate, mindfulness may encourage certain inner practices, but it is “not equivalent to or synonymous with them; [it is] a state, not a trait” (p. 198). Unless mindfulness is combined with other mediating self-care choices such as self-compassion, one wonders how helpful it can be alone (Neff, 2003a).

Thus, while mindfulness may certainly be helpful, it does not necessarily develop practical self-care choices despite the fact that it is about “internal capacity to make inferences
and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structures or dynamics” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 23). Such cognizance, as a heuristic process, is foundational in becoming aware of deep, inner responses and self-care choices in response to stress as one notices and modifies older viewpoints and develops new ones (Tejuosho, 2017).

From this, the dissertation is driven by the possibility that becoming attentive may only start the reflective and healing process that engages with self-judgment and negativity. It may not stimulate the search for and use of practical, self-care attitudes and choices (Moustakas, 1990). Moreover, mindfulness relates to Neff’s (2003) conceptualisation of self-compassion which arises from self-psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). This is about “individuals observing their thoughts” in a non-judgmental way (Neff, 2003a, p. 224). Clearly, self-compassion goes further than just being in a certain state, as important as this can be. It includes deliberate self-caring choices to do with kindness and acting differently in the context of lived experience (Neff, 2003b, 2009).

**Heuristic inquiry**

Now that self-care is introduced, I turn to heuristics, which over the research journey acts as a primary guide. This reflects the fact that stress-related experiences can be multifaceted, subjective, and even pain-filled (Tzounis et al., 2016). In addition, often, disciplines are considered in isolation to others, not allowing for sufficient intrinsic synthesis (Schneiders, 2005).

Here, it is also relevant to briefly note the history of heuristic inquiry. Psychologist, Clark Moustakas (1923-2012) began using a heuristic process informally to reflect meaningfully on his studies into human experience. Then, of significance to this thesis, in 1990, Moustakas posited heuristic inquiry as a more formal research, albeit non-empirical approach
that enabled him to record his personal experiences of engage meaningfully with his feelings
to do with a a personal, human phenomena; loneliness.

The present study presents an opportunity to extend, methodologically speaking, how
to undertake integrated self-care research. Here, in the review and integration of approaches to
self-care, and noting the lack of in extant literature and practice, Moustakas’ (1990) work on
heuristic methodology is highly relevant, although it has not previously been used in workplace
self-care; this is about the “internal search of the researcher” where they “explore, collect and
interpret data holistically” (p. 6). Notably too, as Harrison (2017) postulates in a self-care
context such a “methodological approach, while comparatively unusual, is gaining followers
in the academy as it gives an alternative source of ideas for the development of a framework
for practice and further research” (p. 14).

Yet people have many responses to stress phenomena or no ready responses at all which
drives the need to “conceptualise what is occurring at the (inner) meaning, spiritual or sense-
making level” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 2). However, research does not include as many
disciplines as necessary to support the holistic self-care choices which may be necessary

Heuristics is described as “subjective experience that incorporates psychological
wellbeing and meaning in life” (Manning-Walsh, 2003, E 56). Yet, for inner support and
noticing the self-care conversation above, heuristical research is relevant because it

attempts to discover the nature and meaning of phenomenon through internal self-
search, exploration, and discovery. Heuristic methodology encourages the researcher
to explore and pursue the creative journey that begins inside one's being and ultimately
uncovers its direction and meaning through internal discovery. (Djuraskovic and
Arthur, 2010, p. 1569)

In terms of the work of Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010), heuristics lends itself well to the study
of the stressed’s complex and even problematic inner world. This is because heuristic inquiry
is an innate process where the researcher focuses on a “person-centred perspective, mainly that every day we create our own reality, and truth from our own unique experience” (Gray, 2018).

In fact, in support of this psycho-spiritual study, Gray (2018) says that there exists a spiritual quality at the very heart of the heuristic method, which can be seen in the use of language in the literature, for example, searching, inward looking, reflective, meditative, felt sense, inner-awareness, meaning, intuitive, and experiencing. (p. 4)

In terms of reflective self-care, there is lack of research into intuitively based psycho-spiritual self-care options that include becoming self-aware and self-accepting, yet this goes further to include responses to stress in a tender or self-kindly way. By way of further impetus, the literature search continuously located applied humility as a self-care choice, the study of which is largely absent from inter-disciplinary dialogue between positive psychology and spirituality (Charry & Kosits, 2016; Davis, Worthington & Hook, 2010; Rohr, 2007). Such humility is arguably relevant because it is about an intuitive choice to accept oneself as one truly is and to learn with the incompleteness of the human condition (Rohr, 2007). It is worth noting Katzman’s (2019) position that

[w]hile the domains of spirituality and religion overlap to some degree, for the past two decades, the concept of spirituality has been increasingly used to describe an intrinsic human desire to find meaning in one’s personal existence… and a sense of self-transcendence. (pp. 564-565)

This view points to a non-religious expression of spirituality, but modern and seemingly non-religious spirituality may include religion and, especially, “one’s acknowledgement of and relationship with a Supreme Being” (Katzman, 2019, p. 557). Spirituality is also about subjective, personal meaning and intrinsic value placed on one’s life (Anderson, 2000) which suggests that definitions remain elusive even as they seek to be multidimensional. The challenge is that while psycho-spirituality is relevant in the intuitive search for self-care, it is
idiosyncratic and difficult to research meaningfully let alone effectively (Devenish-Meares, 2019b). What is more, ways to research self-care responses to workplace stress are difficult to locate.

Overall, a heuristic approach engenders inner discovery, because it is “a process/method wherein an individual solves a problem or resolves [it]” (Dorcy, 2010, p. 79). Yet, there is a dearth of workplace-oriented research that examines intuitive, inner, and least of all self-kindly ways to address negative self-judgment, problematic rumination and lack of self-acceptance “next to no workplace-oriented research examines self-kindly ways to address negative selfjudgement, problematic rumination and lack of self-acceptance. Let alone does workplace research or praxis to date utilise Moustakas’ (1994) heuristic inquiry process” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 2). This is despite Moustakas’s (1990, 1994) work being useful for examining subjective issues to do with the human condition and helpful in considering deeply personal questions that require intuitive illumination of personal issues and responses so as to make sense of them and bring about transformation (Anderson, 2000; 2004).

Self-love as a key background theme

If one considers that psycho-spirituality is an aspect of self-care, then self-love must be noted although it is not typically considered in a workplace stress context (Collins, 2005). In fact, a comprehensive search for the term self-love in business literature is not particularly fruitful. Notably, only one paper purports to be on self-love, in a workplace context, yet there is no definition of self-love in the body of the research. Here, the authors focussed exclusively on self-enhancement (Chen, Ferris, Kwan, Yan, Zhou, & Hong, 2013).

In his quintessential work on love, Eric Fromm (1956) describes love as “the productive orientation” of the psyche, an “active and creative relatedness of man to his fellow man, to himself and to nature (sic)” (p. 67). Of relevance to this research, Fromm reframes self-love
much more positively than the self-purgation that often arises from Christian literature (Devenish-Meares, 2016a, 2016b).

Overall, self-love, while a key concept in human experience, is not typically used in modern psychological research let alone in workplace studies. However, self-kindness or self-compassion are more widely used and understood as modern terms, given their common usage in positive psychology (Neff, 2003a; Reiza, 2019). Arguably, themes of self-kindness and self-compassion could be seen as proxies for self-love. Indeed, these are used almost interchangeably in recent research, yet in such studies, it is notable that the concept of self-love is largely missing (Neff, 2009; Reiza, 2019).

As background to the research in this thesis, self-love was reflected upon in two non-core spiritual papers published in The Royal Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal during the course of study. They did not form a core part of the final thesis’ focus. Yet, from this, it became clearer that some self-care choices and action relate to the spiritual concept of self-love, again, even if the term is not widely used in business and hence is seemingly less useful in workplace contexts. Hence in the thesis, it was decided to opt for more workplace-related terms such as self-care although self-love remained a key foundation.

In the context of workplace suffering, these two papers examined and contrasted self-compassion and Christian self-love. They were found to possess some similarities. However, the results in these exploratory papers will require more applied research if self-love is to be extended into the self-care research and praxis. Overall, while the decision was taken not to include these papers in the centre of the thesis, the synthesis of self-love is as follows:

- practitioners such as a chaplain: to encourage further reflection on and synthesis of self-love with self-compassion psychology as meaningful self-care choices;
- the interdisciplinary and/or spiritually focussed scholar (positive psychology, theological researchers and therapists, in particular): to stimulate the use of applied
spirituality themes and motifs, where necessary, or indicated in terms of sense-making and self-care.

Finally, and in summary, it must be said again that Christian spiritual literature, in particular, provides crucial foundational reading and reflection for some, including this researcher. The reflective papers offer a starting point for those who wish to integrate such aspects further. The papers remain, however, an incomplete exegesis of a complex topic and, again, beyond the scope of this workplace self-care thesis. They nevertheless may point the way towards future research.

**Motivation: An intuitively focussed, psycho-spiritual opportunity**

For this researcher, as explained in more detail in Chapter Two, and recalling the heuristic discussion above, an intuitively focussed, psycho-spiritual opportunity arose from workplace pastoral experience, purposeful reading and extensive intuitive reflection. Of particular relevance, Anderson (2000) argues that intuition “includes the more commonplace forms of intuitive insight such as novel thoughts and ideas, together with insights derived from processes such as dream images, visions, kinaesthetic impressions, a felt (or proprioceptive) sense, an inner sense or taste accompanying contemplative practices and prayer…” (p. 33).

This study is motivated to support stressed workers by augmenting psycho-spiritual self care choices. Recalling that such psycho-spiritual or inner reflective processes are complex, non-rational, and, again, subjective, Anderson (2000) says that “such descriptions do not assume that the researcher is looking for an objective world ‘out there’ in the positivistic sense but give us hope and an expanded awareness of human life lived fully and richly (and perhaps a more elegant consensus of its measure)” (p. 32). Yet, this is about a complex and instinctive exploration of personal experience and choices and, as such, one must work sensitively with
inner responses to workplace stress and suffering because these are highly relevant to exploring human transformation (Anderson, 2004).

The goal is to locate, synthesise and augment psycho-spiritual choices. As noted by Johnson (2017), “Christian positive psychology is still in its infancy (if not its gestational period!), signified by the paucity of empirical work being done that operates from an explicitly Christian orientation” (p. 425). Perhaps this is partially because of a prevalent view that some spirituality does not orientate itself towards the self, let alone transformation and self-care in the workplace (Schneiders, 2005).

Another motivator is a lack of inter-disciplinary research and, given psychology’s use of naturalistic approaches and empirical or scientific methods, its tendency to avoid matters of inner meaning and even general non-religious psycho-spirituality. Christianity, in turn, may do the same (Charry & Kosits, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Schneiders, 2005).

With this in mind, the synthesis of positive psychology and applied spirituality, provided it can be adapted to post-modern, pluralistic conditions, could be mutually beneficial, particularly for psycho-spiritual self-care. However, as the literature confirms, self-care is mostly about mindfulness and self-compassion and not about forms of spirituality such as humility and meaningful detachment (Griffiths, Royse, Murphy & Starks, 2019; Hotchkiss, 2018; Neff, 2009). This creates an opportunity for a dialogue between disciplines and, further, a potential integration of the two disciplines in support of the stressed or suffering worker.

As a further impetus for this research, Burkhart (2014) indicates that self-care may be helpful in times of burnout and compassion fatigue amongst care workers (see also Skovholt, 2001). This is especially so when, heuristically-speaking, inner conversations are harsh, self-judging, blameful and lacking in inner hope (Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael, & Synder, 2006). Yet, as Hawkins and Shohet (2012) indicate, such self-talk could be about making meaningful sense and choices around of the “disturbance, distress and dis-ease” (pp. 21-22).
The research aim and problem: Mapping psycho-spiritual self-care choices

The research aim is to locate and extend psycho-spiritual self-care for the workplace. Recalling Anderson (2000), this is about a compassionate uncovering of newer ways of intuitively knowing, reflecting on and transforming stress. Latterly, it has become apparent that there are notable gaps in ways to synthesise and conceptualise the psycho-spiritual choices or, indeed, even to search for, discern, and integrate which choices are needed.

Overall, the problem is that psycho-spiritual approaches to address the self-blame and self-judgment associated with stress and suffering are underexplored in research and seldom used in practice. Yet, the research opportunity is also underscored by recent work indicated that inner or personal reflection, sense-making and, more generally, psycho-spirituality are may alleviate stress symptoms (Chopko, Facemire, Palmieri, & Schwartz, 2016). Such approaches work holistically to address stress and see each individual as unique, “noting that serious stress can affect emotional and spiritual wellbeing” and possibly even lead to depression (Price, 2017).

The research problem is the dearth of psycho-spiritual, self-care choices available to stressed and suffering workers engaged in negative self-judgment and self-blame. Reinforcing this, Duggan, Chislett & Calder’s (2018) statement below, albeit in terms of community health underscores the necessity for focussed research on workplace self-care:

Currently, responsible self-care carried out by informed individuals is not being effectively harnessed. Whilst self-care should be the first option, it is often not considered at all, by either individuals or clinicians. The reasons for this are complex and rooted in the ways in which health and illness have been thought about and organised. (p. v).

Moreover, Duggan, Chislett and Calder (2018) established that the “the state of self-care and self-management policy, programs and support in Australia is fragile at best” (p. 1). Pointedly too, there is a paucity of support for “individuals to understand and make better-informed
choices about their personal health” (p. 1). This paucity, in self-care focus, as stated below, is an urgent call to research action which helps frame the research problem.

Stressors can lead to not enacting self-care and to isolation where symptoms worsen or problematic rumination increases (Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Pastor, Sanz-Vergel, & Garrosa, 2009). This can exacerbate feelings of despair, separation, or remoteness and lead to diminished self-care and increased self-judgment and self-blame (Devenish-Meares, 2015). People are often sent home or given leave from work for treatment and recovery purposes (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Yet, people may well still ruminate about what has led to stress, not enact self-care let alone engage with necessary treatments. The problem is that detachment is not enough. It needs to be augmented by other personal support factors such as meaning making (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

Self-negativity and harsh self-judgments may or may or not be occasioned by detachment and are felt at a deeply personal level. They may cause the stressed to struggle and question their lives and possibly even not engage with necessary treatment and healing. Despite the potential of meaningful self-care, there is relatively little research that examines it in the context of detachment, although one study suggests that the type of detachment is important and that psycho-spiritual care could assist in such meaning and sense-making endeavours (Montero-Marín, Prado-Abril, Piva Demarzo, Gascon & García-Campayo, 2014).

From this, even self-awareness and self-care may be too painful to contemplate. Then, thinking about psycho-spiritual self-care choices and self-awareness also introduces the concept; spiritual intelligence and conceptualisations as to whether or not to engage with healing (Devenish-Meares, 2015).

Citing Zohar and Marshall (2000), Vialle (2007) says that spiritual intelligence which relates to self-knowledge, is about “the capacity to be flexible; a high degree of self-awareness; a capacity to face and use suffering; [and] a capacity to face and transcend pain” (p. 177).
Faming the research problem well, Zohar and Marshall (2000) suggested that spiritual intelligence of which self-care forms a part, is a protective factor and may build resilience against stress in that it develops self-awareness and enhances spiritual intelligence. They said, of note, that paying attention to one’s internal voice or self-talk can lead to a reflective intuitive search for choices and actions that can make one “more flexible, more self-questioning, thoughtful, open to learning, and willing to grow” (p. 45).

In fact, reinforcing the imperative of this study, Zohar and Marshall (2000) argue that spiritual intelligence is highly relevant not only to an individual’s sense-making and self-awareness but it is also important to business. In terms of this, they speak of humility as a form of realistic self knowledge saying that it “puts us in touch with a sense that our true importance comes from something deeper than, or from something beyond, our mere ego selves” (p. 107).

As elaborated in the next section, such self-reflection is not only for the researcher but for the treatment/care practitioner and the stressed themselves. The problem is exacerbated in that relatively few applied spiritually-focused bricolage studies exist, and there is much uncertainly in research related to self-care for and at work, let alone defining and taking a holistic approach to it.

There is the challenge that many people hope too that their work will be a source of inner meaning in their lives. Yet with constant change and the stressors and anxiety associated with work, often meaning and inner expectations are not met; moreover, psycho-spiritual self-care is not enacted when necessary. Mindfulness can be a key response, but it is about non-thinking and moving beyond the experience nor reflecting intentionally ‘on it’ (Neff, 2003a).

In response to this and the results of the literature search, self-compassion kept arising as a key response, yet it is little studied in the context of work stress. More specifically, self-compassion, which is arguably a psycho-spiritual theme and which is efficacious because it actively addresses self-blame and negative self-judgment, is not much considered in the context
of workplace stress, however much it could help alleviate symptoms and give effect to meaningful treatment (Neff, 2003a; 2008).

Also from the literature, the emerging synthesis and the published papers, it became clearer that such self-compassionate choices are similar to Franciscan’s Fr Richard Rohr’s (2007) positive humility motif. This is worth exploring because such choices, while not having been studied together before, are about self-kindness and not getting enmeshed in negative thinking or rumination. They are about sense-making, self-acceptance and, inner-meaning, and hence, potentially useful for better engaging with the lived experience of work (Van Manen, 2011).

As a further imperative to explore self-compassion as a useful psycho-spiritual theme, recent research reveals it is highly efficacious for supporting veterans with PTSD (Meyer, Szabo, Frankfurt, Kimbrill, De Beer & Morissette, 2019). Moreover, this research said that self-compassion can help predict recovery from PTSD symptoms in war veterans. Yet, the research did not contrast, study nor augment self-compassion with any other psycho-spiritual themes or variables. Moreover, recent meta-analysis indicates that self-compassion as a construct needs further refinement and augmentation (Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier & Singh, 2017).

**Secondary aim: Improving the ‘means’ of research**

Noting the dearth of self-care research and, to date, the lack of integration of psycho-spiritual choices in a workplace stress context, I deliberately engage with Tracey’s (2010) work on qualitative research quality as a key outcome. Tracey talks about processes that measure not only research outcomes but its means (methods and practices). Specifically, Tracey (2010) offers an assessment approach to determine if a study makes a significant contribution.
Of considerable relevance to this study, Tracey (2010) notes the term “heuristic significance” or “moving people to further explore, research, or act on the research in the future” (p. 846). Considering the current study’s focus on self-care choices and in terms of research aims and goals, it is worth noting Tracey’s view that a study is heuristic when “it influences a variety of audiences, such as policy makers, research participants, or the lay public, to engage in action or change—something that overlaps with practical significance” (p. 846). From this, not only is the search for knowledge and influence a motivator it is also relates to the secondary aims of the research. These are to (a) support and influence workplace researchers and care practitioners; (b) stimulate applied research outcomes in the area of workplace self-care choices.

Finally, reinforcing the research problem, an intuitive self-reflection of self-care choices could be critical to times of workplace stress. This has resonated with me and engaged me as a chaplain and researcher for over 20 years and led me to wonder about the inner ‘rules’ or notions that may be blocking self-love and the possibility that heuristic inquiry could liberate people in terms of self-acceptance and self-care (Cherry, 2010; Neff, 2003b).

That self-compassion, meaningful detachment and humility respectively, appear to have key similarities and, whilst not being integrated before, this raises questions about how to effectively conduct the research. Arguably, an intuitive synthesis is needed to address harsh self-criticism and self-blame and promote realistic, non-judgmental thinking and self-care choices in the suffering worker (Anderson, 2000; Dorcy, 2010; Germer & Neff, 2013; Kumar & Kumar, 2014).
Research questions

The research questions arose from literature, supervision, reflections and professional interests over many years, from pastoral interactions and observations in a wide variety of self-care related activities. To address the noted self-care choice gaps, I asked:

Overall research question

- What psycho-spiritual choices can assist in workplace self-care, especially in terms of stress, self-blame and harsh self-judgments?

Guided by this key question, using the literature, deeper inner reflection on stress and suffering, and intuitive discernment, the themes that emerged were: self-compassion, humility, and meaningful detachment (Anderson, 2004). Each required further investigation which led to secondary questions.

Specific research questions

In developing the conceptual framework for this research and arising from the intuitive search, more specific questions emerged. These arose in support of self-awareness and non-judgmental self-acceptance that could possibly be synthesized into self-care considerations (Anderson, 2000).

- How could self-compassion, meaningful detachment, and humility enable improved inner sense-making in terms of psycho-spiritual self-care? Specifically:
- How can self-compassion be used in conjunction with other self-care and self-management choices to address self-criticism, negative self-talk, and help make meaningful inner sense of workplace stress?
- How can humility as a non-judgmental self-awareness choice be used in supporting those who suffer, are anxious, or experience burnout?
- In times of suffering, failure or inadequacy, how can Rohr’s (2007) ‘standing apart’ detachment motif and ‘letting go choice’ support or complement psychological
detachment? This acts on the possibility that detachment from work is augmented by a psycho-spiritual response related to sense-making and self-care.

**Initial conceptual framework**

In terms of addressing the research aims and problem, analysis will be primarily conducted in the published, peer-reviewed papers. To assist this process and in support of the research questions, an initial conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 2, guides the study. This shows the progressive development of the themes that were uncovered and how the methodology also developed over time. Note the academic debate as to whether conceptual frameworks come at the start or end of the research (Maxwell, 2005); for this study the conceptual model was developed at the outset to guide its progress but evolved in parallel with the study overtime.

This approach is supported by Maxwell (2005) who argues that “concept maps usually require considerable reworking to get them to the point where they are most helpful” (p. 54). For me, the model was a useful way to progress through the theories to see how they could be integrated with each other in some way or another. Using Maxwell (2005) as a guide, the advanced conceptualisation, in Figure 3 below, shows a progressive and cumulative approach to the themes. It also tables the unfolding methodological approaches.

The initial model began with my earlier reflections and pastoral experiences, synthesis of readings and the perceived gaps in self-care theory and practice from a psycho-spiritual perspective. It reflects a cumulative process of building one theme on another as self-care responses develop. This led from a search for self-love related themes to which both the psychologist and spiritual practitioner could relate. It seeks to show, subject to further illumination, the presumed relationships between the self-care motifs and themes being explored.
Figure 3: Integration of disciplinary and psycho-spiritual self-care choices

Meaningful detachment and humility seem relevant to self-compassion because they are about self-care, sense-making and addressing self-judgment albeit in terms of separation from work and standing back and not being so identified with stressful outcomes or (perceived) failures (Rohr, 2007; Sonnentag, Unger, & Nägel, 2013).

Yet, there is no substantive research synthesising self-compassion with psychological detachment and humility. It seems that a synthesis of self-compassion, humility and meaningful detachment could help address negative self-judgments, lack of self-acceptance and even the suffering occasioned by stress and, possibly, burnout (Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2009). As crucially, it is the previously un-compared self-choice constructs which could produce a more integrated approach to self-care; specifically, self-compassion could be assisted by positive humility and meaningful detachment shown in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts that arose progressively</th>
<th>Parallel Methodological processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-love (from spirituality)</td>
<td>Continual search for related themes and terms and intuitive reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-compassion</td>
<td>Critical and comparative reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-love &amp; Self-compassion</td>
<td>Critical and comparative reading &amp; synthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- contrasted and compared</td>
<td>Emergence of bricolage as a methodological guide and heuristic inquiry process as an inner, intuitive way to uncover and synthesize new knowledge, meaning and self-care choices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Integration of interdisciplinary & psycho-spiritual self-care choices

**TABLE 1: The three self-compassionate subscales and their opposites**
Devenish-Meares: Workplace psycho-spiritual self-care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-compassion sub-constructs</th>
<th>Uncompassionate sub-constructs</th>
<th>figure, Self-compassion (Column 1 sub-constructs) could be assisted by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-kindness</td>
<td>Self-judgment</td>
<td>Positive humility (Rohr 2007) – not unlike Neff’s self-compassion addresses self-judgment by kindly self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common humanity</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Detachment research is most often about physical separation and being told not to think about the stress-related situation, although it is now noted that this is perhaps not sufficient (Montero-Marin, Prado-Abril, Demarzo, Gascon, &amp; García-Campayo, 2014). Hence there is a focus in the study on meaningful, self-kindly detachment (Sonnentag, Unger, &amp; Nägel, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Over-identification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, using the conceptual model, this study seeks to break new ground by integrating, in a workplace context, selected psycho-spiritual themes or factors as psycho-spiritual, meaning-related ‘choices’ for the suffering or stressed worker and, where possible, to assist practitioners/care. This approach is reinforced by Osanloo (2014) who says that a conceptualisation encapsulates the focus, assumptions and beliefs, all of which underpin the research plan. Similarly, Miles & Huberman (1994), say that the theoretical model “lays out the key factors, constructs, or variables, and, presumes relationships among them” (p. 440). It is also intentionally a reflective conceptualisation and the aim is to synthesise, as far as is possible, relevant spiritual, positive psychology and personal sense-making choices to support the processes of addressing problematic, inner dialogue, and improving self-talk, self-care, and self-acceptance by the sufferer supported by their carers.

Linear and monocular approaches do not seem well suited to such deeply personal and meaning-related studies that come to recognise that self-care choices may or may not be enacted and may also be flawed (Kincheloe, 2001). For the individual at work, enacting self-
care is not a systematic or linear process it is about constant review, reflection and searching. A methodologically-oriented paper, albeit in an other discipline (managerial systems), summarises it very well. It says that one engaged in change can be to an “emergent method” and at the level of the individual this is a revelatory approach. This an iterative process of “enacting, acting, reacting, interacting, and adapting” (Madsen, Kurtz, & Vigden, 2007, p, 226). This is rather like the heuristic inquiry approach proposed by Moustakas (1990).

Crucially, Sela-Smith (2020) says “if knowledge at the tacit level is flawed, the experience of and response to the external world will reflect that flaw; to correct flaws, we must find entrance to the tacit dimension.” However, in this Sela-Smiths does not consider the potential impact of the heuristic inquiry process described by Moustakas; it is an interior process of reflecting, pausing, distancing, and even detaching oneself from presenting issues or symptoms for a while so as to gain new insights. Heuristic inquiry appears to match the eclectic, subjective and arguably non-linear nature of inner experiences related to stress. It involves tenderly noting inner patterns, sensitively and recalling Moustakas (1990), “gently reflecting, dialoguing with the self, revealing new information and re-framing what is possible, noting that all the while we are dealing with the lived and, therefore, subjective inner experience of people” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 4). This enables the individual to overcome flaws in knowledge leading to flawed responses as described by Sela-Smith (2020).

In this research, the term ‘initial conceptualisation’ is used because the ‘what’ that is and ‘how’ were both continually open to adaption: the ‘what’ being the emerging self-care choices remaining open to searching, scrutiny and integration (Anderson, 2004) and the ‘how’ from a bricolage perspective being the necessary changes to approach. This is an intuitive, subjective and reflective response which may see highly subjective insights arise that will be cobbled together and only make sense to the researcher immersed in the phenomena (Anderson,
This corroborates with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) description of the qualitative researcher as bricoleur who is the “maker of quilts” (p. 9).

In summary, conceptually at least, noting Kenny (2012) this is search for “an approach that matches the presenting human condition to meaningful, inner reflection, discovery of knowledge and synthesis with all its subjectivity, is useful” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3). Such an approach is useful when examining self-care choices that could address self-judgment, harsh self-criticism and negative self talk in times of stress and anxiety.

**First person language**

Due to the reflective nature of the project, encouragement from my pastoral supervisor, considerable personal engagement and the inner-related responses that the material demands and the heuristic and highly subjective nature of the inquiry (Maddalena, 2010), the text is written in both the first and third person. The reasons for this are also partially addressed in Chapter Two.

Additionally, I actively use self-reflection, noting its subjectivity, to add value to the paradigmatic and methodological approaches. My chosen approach also reflects the fact that the heuristic inquiry engages researcher, sufferer and carer each in their own search for meaning, illumination and discovery (Moustakas, 1990).

**Methodological considerations**

While methodological considerations are explored in Chapter Four and in the related peer-reviewed paper (Chapter Five and the Appendix), some comments are necessary in the introductory chapter. First, it must be restated that this is an interdisciplinary, psycho-spiritual project (Kincheloe, 2001). This recalls that “monocular research approaches fail to consider the opportunity offered by a synthesis of multiple disciplines could offer” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 2).
The research, against the background of stress is also about exploring psycho-spiritual self-care and separating from stress in self-kindly and meaningfully ways. This, however, requires creativity, imagination and the possibility that one needs to consider a wide range of seemingly dissimilar, known, improvised or yet to be discovered information, choices, and material. This calls to mind bricolage as a methodological concept (Baldick, 2008).

The examination of such choices requires approaches that actively and reflectively include the subjective and often painful experiences and how to tenderly and meaningfully respond to them (Anderson, 2000, 2004). Again, beyond mindfulness, this calls to mind heuristics which is about intuitively seeking the inner meaning of and even transformative possibilities contained within personal experience(s). In this, Dorcy (2010) who examined suffering heuristically said that such an approach may offer a deeper perspective when one is dealing with the personal anguish and despondency that stress may occasion.

Weinstein and Weinstein (1991) say that bricolage-oriented method is an "emergent construction" (p. 161). This presents both risk and opportunity, noting that we are dealing with highly subjective material which requires holistic person-centered responses. As Yardley (2008) says, “research work undertaken in this way inevitably tests the capacity of the methodology itself to move successfully beyond the boundaries of more formally documented and disseminated research practices” (n. p.).

Self-reflection and subjectivity add value to the conceptual methodological approach. In fact, the reflective and iterative insider motif were a perennial focus as the publications accompanying this thesis progressed. This is not unlike the hermeneutic circle of textual interpretation where one returns again and again to ideas, motifs, and emerging interpretations (Geertz, 1974). Self-reflection is a movement, eclectically backwards and forwards, but staying with and allowing an in-dwelling of the phenomena in new ways. Again, it is not linear in approach, hence the multi-directional nature of the initial conceptual framework. Such an
approach maintains the characteristics of bricolage as a research methodology (Kincheloe, 2004b). Further, the exploration was informed by synthesis and heuristic inquiry across the length and breadth of the research (Moustakas, 1990).

Given the confounding factors of the workplace such as subjectivity, failure to enact self-care, and varying individual performance demands a holistic and wide-searching response such as is offered by the bricolage concept has been taken. As noted by Carter and Narramore (1979), this type of research requires broad interdisciplinary approaches. From my literature review of such as Kincheloe (2004b) and Parker (2015) is is clear that “bricolage is well established in the humanities and has begun to be used in contemporary spirituality related to human experience although not yet for the workplace” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3). It draws on the “skill of using whatever is at hand and recombining them to create something new” (Mambrol, 2017, n.p). Then of note and as stated in my fifth paper, Levi-Strauss (1966) “used bricolage to study and challenge prevailing and dominant discourses and ways of understanding phenomena. This then can guide intuitive studies in the forms of heuristic searching for answers to human predicaments that note, challenge, integrate and grow inner conceptualisations” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3).

However, there is also the risk that personal, intuitive self-care choices can be regarded as less scientific and therefore less useful (Anderson, Braud, & Valle, 1996). Then as Anderson (2000, 2004) indicates, there is need for more imaginative and instinctive research that draws on materials from wide-ranging sources. Despite the imperative, in interdisciplinary studies, there is potential for “distrust or dismissiveness between the disciplines” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 2). However, reinforcing the need for interdisciplinary, subjective research, Carter and Narramore (1979) state that:

[W]e must venture out if we are to build a meaningful integration… to shed light on innumerable problems and new theoretical concepts to better understand the nature of
human beings and human functioning... if these are pursued [in an] isolated fashion then we make little progress. (p. 121)

As indicated in the quote, this is not a dichotomous pursuit setting disciplines against each other. Rather, it recognises that each brings relevant theory to bear on the nature of being human and the interactions of choices that is my focus. I note here that Cortez (2010, p. 9) speaks of the “challenging questions of living humanly in a broken world” which is surely as much a spiritual as it is a psychological concern and arguably, must include the workplace.

This brings me to the dynamism of qualitative research which Maxwell (2005) describes as a “do-it-yourself” rather than an “off-the-shelf” process, one that involves “tacking” back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing their implications for one another.” (p. 3). Lest one think this is far too open or eclectic, it is well established that the qualitative research design must remain open to, reflect on and learn from experience (Avolio, Griffith, Wernsing, & Walumbwa, 2010; Getliffe, 1996). Moreover, in terms of bricolage, the inclusion of the researcher’s interests in such areas could be useful when searching for and using compassion and related tender approaches to stress and suffering. As Anderson (2000) affirms:

Compassionately informed research is qualitatively different from emotionally detached research. Our values and intentions intimately shape our concepts and analysis daily, as people, as scientists. Valuing rigor, precision, and clarity does not exempt us from providing descriptions of human experiences that claim the full domain of being human, including experiences generally thought of as spiritual and mystical. (p. 33)

In terms of this, rigor and compassion do not need to be at cross purposes. In fact, as Devenish-Meares (2017) says a bricolage type approach can assist one “navigate the complexities of interdisciplinary research (p. 7). In this, the thesis is about “making interactive use of what is found or “useable” albeit in semi-structured way. Bricolage is a methodological approach to
material that takes place across disciplines and draws on and integrates as many ideas and themes, even previously unintegrated ones, as necessary” (Devenish-Meares, 2017, p. 7).

This is about new ways to conceptualise and respond to suffering, stress and anxiety as much as to challenge fixed, unhelpful or problematic ways of responding (Moustakas, 1990). In bricolage, the researcher is a reflective insider seeking to construct options by being open to constant change, challenge, and criticism. As Hammersley (1999) suggests, in such contexts, the researcher is “someone who uses whatever is to hand to solve problems” (Northey, Tepperman & Albanese, 2009, p. 83). This mirrors, at least to some extent, the sufferer who may seek hope and healing wherever they can find it, or someone to support them in their sense-making.

Bricolage works intuitively with ‘what is’ or what can be co-opted. It even adopts an eclectic approach working “across modalities, opening up the researcher to new frameworks, explanations and responses even where these may not previously have been recognised or explored together” (Devenish-Meares, 2017, p. 7). Such an inquiry process is given particular expression by Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry approach which is about the researcher growing in self-awareness and self-discovery by using subjective immersion, illumination, openness, explication, and a synthesis process. Of relevance here is the seminal work by Levi-Strauss (1966) who proposed bricolage for studies into the human condition, using whatever materials are to hand, necessary, and useful to produce an outcome; and as a sense-making approach to the human issues. In the adoption of bricolage, my aim is an improved self-care model. As Maxwell (2005) argues a conceptual framework is something that is constructed, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence, is something that you build, not something that exists ready-made. It is important for you to pay attention to the existing theories and research that are relevant to what you plan to study, because these are often key sources for understanding what is going on with these phenomena. (p. 42)

Specifically, Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry process was selected for the study.
The heuristics approach adopts a reflective, self-care processes to highlight when inner self-condemnation or self-judgments prohibit self-kindly considerations. Heuristics is also about self-dialogue with lived experience and seeking to stay with the question less intensely, yet seek new insights (Sela-Smith, 2020). Where possible, heuristics is integrated with inner sense-making, thereby breaking new ground by comparing two previously integrated reflective approaches (Weick, 1995).

Anderson (2000, 2004) affirms subjective forms of inquiry into the human condition. Such approaches, being about inherently personal matters require a process which remained constantly open to refinement, intuitive reflection and challenge. As Anderson (2000) says, “compassion allows us to ask the most meaningful questions and guides our hypotheses and speculations toward rich and expansive theories regarding the nature of the human experience” (p. 33).

In fact, noting the possibility that we are studying self-blame, negative affect and self-care with all their attendant vulnerability and fragility, the responses and, moreover, any conceptual model will require a tender yet dedicated focus and inner response to the material or themes under examination. As Anderson (2000) argues:

By loving what we study, we approach it tenderly. Such a compassionate knowing brings a softness to the way we ask our questions, set our hypotheses, devise our instruments, conduct our investigations, analyze our data, construct our theories, and speak to our readers or audience. Our loving approach brings the nature of the phenomenon studied alive to our senses. (p. 31)

Intuitive inquiry is relevant to studies into human care, transformation and compassion because as Anderson (2004, p. 308) states it “is an epistemology of the heart that joins intuition to intellectual precision in a hermeneutical process of interpretation” (p. 308). This thesis is a process of synthesising interdisciplinary themes, not in any order and from each as needed to
operationalise the bricolage. The aim is to move from a place of awareness through self-dialogue; after all, each theme is about self-care, via knowing to integration. Heuristics addresses negative self-talk, becoming aware of inner rules, dialoguing with and testing these against personal experience and possibly allowing a new, self-caring choice framework to emerge (Moustakas, 1990).

**Proposed contributions and significance of the study: Theory and practice relevance**

The study is based on the “positive correlations among spirituality, positivity, and positive psychological and social functioning, supporting spirituality’s close association with extant dimensions of flourishing” (McEntee, Dy-liacco & Haskins, 2013, p. 141). What makes this study necessary and significant is that both spiritual and psychological disciplines speak to the human condition and can support the stressed at work, in particular. As such, the research seeks to contribute in a number of theoretical and practical ways to knowledge and praxis for in psycho-spiritual self-care, noting that psychological and medical treatments are already well comprehended. Further, the study seeks to explore psycho-spiritual choices and it is apparent that one needs to locate and extend research methods into workplace self-care. The proposed contributions are as follows:

- **Initial conceptual framework:** Articulation of an emergent framework to guide self-care choices. It seeks to do this by integrating themes from positive psychology and applied spirituality. The aim is to provide choices for the stressed by articulating options that address negative self-concepts, especially self-judgments and to make sense of their circumstances in self-kindly ways. The self-kindly related themes:

  - **Self-compassion:** extending the use of this choice and examine it in the context of detachment and humility
Meaningful detachment: extending the concept of detachment from psychological detachment using non-pejorative and even non-religious spirituality definitions. It also seeks to address the notion that simple separation or detachment from workplaces is inadequate if it isn’t accompanied by meaningful reflection and reframing. This seeks to address the notion that simple separation or detachment from workplaces is inadequate if it is not accompanied by meaningful reflection and reframing.

Humility: synthesising key literature on humility to extend its uses as a key and positive choice for the stressed; guiding leaders in support of self-care and recovery; so as to augment the dialogue between spirituality and positive psychology noting the relative dearth of integrated research and praxis (Linley, Harrington, & Garcea, 2010)

- An extension of research approaches in the area of workplace psycho-spirituality. The study aims to extend research approaches, in the form of heuristically-focussed process of reflection, understanding, and synthesis for the sufferer and for workplace psycho-spiritual research. In particular, in the latter stages of the publication series, the heuristic inquiry process was extended not only as a way to research workplace self-care but as an intuitive reflective approach to directly assist people. This is about using a heuristic self-search process to transform the inner self-critical “rules” that lead to self-judgments and suffering. It is also about self-dialogue, incubation and reflective illumination; albeit of a tender and non-intense nature.

Summary
Overall, psycho-spiritual self-care is the focus of this study. In sum, the thesis seeks to articulate and integrate theoretical and practical aspects of certain self-care options by analysing and synthesising selected literature on self-compassion, humility, and detachment. As an evolving study, it became clearer over time that the heuristics inquiry process could inform the sufferer directly and needed to be included in the research to inform practice.

While research examining ways to extend self-compassionate ways to combat self-blame, rumination and poor self-acceptance, there is a dearth of such studies in relation to the workplace. Similarly, research of praxis, fails, to date, to utilise Moustakas’ (1994) heuristics inquiry process which takes account of inner rules, inner needs and the search for new ideas and choices.

Psycho-spiritual, inner meaning related, self-care responses to workplace stress and suffering could be of use especially when one is harshly self-critical, blameful and suffering. This research also seeks to build on mindfulness as a useful response. To partially address what Avolio, Griffith, Wernsing, and Walumbwa (2010) calls maladaptive self-reflection and problematic rumination at work, the thesis is about meaningful and hope-filled self-awareness and related inner choices. While such research may not explicitly call it such, it nevertheless urges a worker to revisit the past and re-frame intrusive thought processes and move towards meaningful personal adaptation; this process appears to be remarkably similar to a heuristics process.

Chapter guide

Chapter 1 introduces workplace stress and self-care, outlines certain personal effects of workplace stress and suffering as related to negative self-judgment, highlights the scope of current workplace spirituality studies and consequent goals related to psycho-spiritual self-care
The chapter explains the personal and professional motivations for the research, and describes the design and methodology of the research project.

Chapter 2 sets out the personal and professional reasons and motivators for the research. This research seeks to discern self-care choices in an instinctual and personal way in the researcher. Therefore, it is important to set out the researcher’s passion for care of the suffering and stressed and how to empower them to make healing-oriented choices (Anderson, 2004). This may seem unusual, yet given the immersive, reflective and intuitive nature of the research, the researcher’s commitment, focus on gaps, pastoral struggles and reasons will be crucial in framing up and researching responses to the problem.

Chapter 3 explores the literature associated with workplace spirituality, inner meaning and self-care choices. The chapter explores different connotations of workplace spirituality and identifies notable gaps. It also examines relevant non-workplace literature that could be co-opted for inner sense-making and self-care. The chapter concluded with a draft conceptual framework that guides the thesis.

In Chapter 4, the research methodology is presented. Then the primary research methods are discussed. These are critical reading and synthesis and the heuristic inquiry process. Finally, researcher involvement and the need for an adaptable approach are discussed.

Chapter 5 comprises a summary of each of the peer-reviewed papers. It includes the progressive and cumulative outcomes and findings.

Chapter 6 summarises the findings, sets out contributions of the study recommendations of the study both to enhance methodological approaches and augment self-care choices. It also revisits the conceptual framework in light of what the intuitive and critical synthesis and heuristic process produces. Further, the chapter highlights certain refinements and contributions to methodological approaches. It also sets out limitations and biases and reflects on the research project overall contributions and provides suggestions for further research.
Chapter Two: Why Heuristics?

This chapter sets out the personal and professional motivators and background of the study. This is deemed necessary given the intuitive and highly subjective nature of the study and the fact that the practical self-care issues and, in fact, the methodology demands an approach where the subject and more particularly self-care choices are incubated and discovered in and by the researcher’s engagement with the issues, potential solutions and trialling approaches with various audiences with which they are engaged.

“Within each researcher exists a topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest and area of search. The task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important meanings and personal, compelling implications. This initial engagement invites self-dialogue, and inner search to discover the topic and question. During this process one encounters the self, and significant relationships within a social context” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27).

Certainly, in terms of Moustakas (1990) statement about a vital interest, the alleviation of workplace suffering and stress is a key and passionate focus of my professional praxis. Yet, some academics might still ask: Why study and advance psycho-spiritual care for workers? In Chapter Three, I will highlight research that points to its efficacy, yet it is more than that (Collins, 2005). Surely too, they may say that psychology and medical care are effective; they are correct. Yet as a chaplain involved in chronic workplace situations, I often encounter people who are self-critical, have lost meaning or are looking for more spiritually-oriented assistance or related self-care albeit in but not limited to its broader, non-religious connotations. Moreover, reinforcing the non-religious, spiritual focus, spiritual studies often focus on prayer and a higher power, both of which I would endorse and yet recent experience shows that spirituality is a far wider phenomena in the post-modern workplace (Dezorzi & Crossetti, 2008; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010).
My work as a chaplain strongly suggests that stress conditions can be related to or worsened by how one treats or cares for oneself, especially when one is isolated or away from work and possibly using self-judgments or pejorative thinking (Sonnentag, Binnewies, Carmen & Mojza, 2010). Moreover, the search for inner meaning—often eclectic, subjective and poorly understood—is often ignored or organisationally-derived (Driver, 2007). From the literature too there seems to be a need for a more nuanced, even eclectic, approaches to self-care, given the deeply personal and inherently subjective issues of stress (Keyes, 2002; Kincheloe, 2004b).

As an ordained minister and chaplain, Christian spirituality is a key foundation for me, although it is not the main focus of the thesis due to the need to consider as broad a secular perspective as possible to reach as many as possible. Therefore, I sought a broader definition of spirituality, that is, how the self ascribes meaning and makes interior ‘sense of life’ even if not religious in nature (Manning-Walsh, 2003). While I maintain my own belief system, this thesis is deliberately not theological in any sense, as I have adapted an applied spiritual approach to make it relevant to a wider workplace audience. Therefore, the thesis deliberately seeks to remain engaged with interdisciplinary approaches avoiding separation into health, spiritual and psychological aspects so as to offer as practical synthesis where possible (Benner, 1998).

Similar to the intensity in Moustakas’ (1990) quote above, my interest was about the heuristics that leads the sufferer to, or takes one beyond, patterns of negative self-talk and self-blame that may not support self-kindly reflection, meaningful self-dialogue, or to non-judgmental self-care (Neely, Schallert, Sarojanni, Roberts, & Chen, 2009). The following real-life vignette underscores the interdisciplinary context and potential of the research:

Chaplain, thank you for contacting me at home. I am anxious and worried. I have heard from no one from work. Attending medical appointments is hard. I agonise every day about what went wrong, what happened. I wonder if I will work again. I keep going over it all. Can I tell you my story and tell how I stuffed up and why I am very hard on myself?
Pastorally, it also epitomizes the oft-encountered sense of disaffection, rumination and suffering that may be present. Noting the deeply personal nature of stress, the problematic rumination, and the regular absence of holistic self-care contained in the vignette, not only did this researcher embark on a theoretical search through the literature reflecting on effects and implications, I also undertook a process of pastoral engagement while I reflected on theory, praxis and tradition, all at the level of the person being cared for. This seemed to me to be a parallel process: to simultaneously consider extant research and theories, even the means of research and praxis, all the while learning how better to support the stressed and suffering (Crowe, Oades, Deane, Ciarrochi & Williams, 2011; Magnotto, 1996). This process enables me to examine the potential place of self-compassion and ‘standing apart’ from stressors in humble and self-caring ways. Here too, one must note that psychodynamics offers a form of observing the self from afar as a form of meta-awareness, although that is not the focus of this thesis (Schooler et al. 2011). Moreover, we must recall that problematic heuristics is where one engages in unhelpful observations: either older possibly unhelpful patterns of avoidance or even stuck thinking or the active and self-respectful search for new, inner insights and transformative possibilities (Sela-Smith, 2020).

Thus, the research was a highly personal endeavour, noting the perennial risk of bias, with the researcher as ‘reflective’ insider—open to constant change, challenge, and criticism. This multi-dimensional approach is reinforced by Pattison’s (1993) idea that the researcher’s experiences and beliefs are one aspect alongside spiritual tradition and the contemporary context under consideration. So, too, this is not dissimilar to the Whiteheads’ (1983) triangulated model of tradition, experience and culture.

Underpinning this, workplace stress and suffering are often seen as reactions to work and less about psycho-spiritual meaning, despite the fact that stress can be associated with worsening self-perceptions (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Moreno-Jimenez, Rodríguez-Muñoz,
Pastor, Sanz-Vergel, & Garrosa, 2009). Yet spirituality has something powerful to say in this space and this includes expressions of self-kindness and self-love (Charry, 2011; Schneiders, 2005).

Often missing are connotations of psycho-spiritual self-care alongside medical and psychological treatment that can address or even transform the inner self-critical “rules” that lead to self-judgments and suffering (Devenish-Meares, 2015a). This triggered a long term search for this researcher for self-kindly ways to treat oneself which, over time, led to self-compassion and self-acceptance which are, to a greater or lesser extent, related to spirituality (Neff, 2003a; Rohr, 2010).

Living one’s values at work, being reflective, pastoral care of the anxious and suffering, adaptive wellness, and supporting self-management are key areas of my research and practice (Devenish-Meares, 2015a, 2016c). Moreover, psycho-spiritual self-care as a response to stress is relatively little examined in academia although recent findings have confirmed its efficacy in certain workplaces (Hotchkiss, 2018). Yet, such research also calls to mind inner meaning and spiritually-related themes to do with self-dialogue and sense-making, although frameworks to enact such choices are largely absent from workplace research and praxis (Weick, 1995). Where such themes are studied they most often focussed on performance and business outcomes but do not address stress conditions such as self-blame and lack of self-acceptance (Aboul-Ela, 2017).

In terms of Moustakas’ quote about a critical area of research interest, it is important to reflect on how this research arose for me personally as workplace chaplain researcher. It came about as a result of 15 years of work as a chaplain providing pastoral care in complex, stressful trauma-informed settings. Chaplains regularly encounter people who, as a result of, or during their suffering and anxiety share many experiences of negative self-judgment, lack of self-kindness, and harsh self-criticism. Self-love too often seems largely absent. It is also recognised
that this is an intuitive process (Anderson, 2000). This means that I, as a researcher, must focus on my own experience and try to be as fully “attuned to subtle nuances and synchronicities of internal and external experiences and to employ empathic identification and knowing” of the causes of suffering (Netzer, 2012, p. 167).

**Motivator**

Then there is the motivator, which also enacts empathy and compassion in me, that is often stymied during times of stress, anxiety and suffering self-care and the search for meaning; people forget they are self-loveable or they choose not to engage with the psychological or spiritual and pastoral assistance that is available (Anderson, 2000; Devenish-Meares, 2015). Often the ability to respond self-caringly to stress and cope with events, failure or incompleteness is impaired because of the constant pressure to live up to expectations or to perform well all of the time. This research is driven by the professional hunch that a sufferer’s personal choices around self-care could be supported in holistic meaning-making ways, reframed, and made sense of in self-kindly ways; yet, these can often appear absent when the person is ruminating painfully or overwhelmed (Rimes and Watkins, 2005).

Turning to self-talk, this too is often problematic in times of workplace anxiety, stress and suffering. I continually met stressed workers who engage primarily in self-blame and self-defeating self-talk. At times, it is as if this is the pre-set or default ‘mental shortcut’ that is activated first. Self-kindness and self-love can seem largely absent.

Yet, I am also encouraged by non-workplace related literature that indicates that compassionate self-talk makes a real difference (Bassett, 1996). Not surprisingly for a minister of religion and chaplain, this struck me as inherently psycho-spiritual in nature although it is not generally conceptualised that way in academia. Then there is the issue that self-talk in
research is predominantly considered in terms of business performance and sports (Hatzigeorgiadis, Zourbanos, Galanis & Theodorakis, 2011).

Noting Duymedjian and Rüling (2010), the vignette reflects painful rumination and harsh self-judgments and, possibly, older forms of thinking. It also recalls Yardley’s (2008) work on cognition and choices and working sensitively to expand the options and even possibilities of “creative leaps” (p. 1). With appropriate care, such choices could even form what I term “a patchwork of ideas and possible solutions to the problems that trouble”, which a type of bricolage (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Clearly, asking people to avoid rumination or actively receive extant psychological treatment may not be enough.

Inherent in the vignette are the issues of meaning, self-care and complexity associated with healing and treatment choices, or lack thereof. Again, research suggests that asking people not to think of problematic or stressful occurrences is not sufficient and suffering continues or worsens (Moreno-Jimenez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Pastor, Sanz-Vergel and Garrosa, 2009). Issues can also include fear of reprisal, trust issues, isolation, self-doubt and uncertainty about where to get support (Hoge, Castro, Messer, McGurk, Cotting & Koffman, 2004). Again, harsh self-judgments and self-criticism may exacerbate suffering and delay recovery (Neff, 2003a).

Again, in terms of Moustakas’ (1990) notion that the researcher needs to truly experience what is being studied, I acknowledge that when I am stressed due to complex pastoral care work over a prolonged period, I too fail to enact self-care, self-kindness and detachment, let alone avoid self-judgments if things go awry. Then, from pastoral experiences, it is my firm contention that spirituality and positive psychology, both to do with self-care, living (well) with failure, and separating meaningfully from problematic symptoms and sensations are relevant, and yet have not been examined in concert, let alone synthesised before, as self-care choices, for the workplace.
Overall, stress, anxiety or other adverse factors can mean that one loses one’s sense of meaning, purpose or value at or in work and suffering may ensue (May et al., 2004). Taking the above personal and professional background and reasons into consideration, there is a vital need to pay attention to the inner-meaning and sense-making related to self-acceptance and self-care; one must take note of one’s highly individualised or heuristically-related inner world and how to make inner sense in times of workplace stress (Moustakas, 1990).

The complex and highly individual nature of workplace care is often idiosyncratic which indicates that intuitive, even reflective approaches that can include multi-facteted seemingly disparate approaches. It is a messy business, noting the concept of bricolage, because we are using a lens related to human frailty, suffering and incompleteness. Without either discipline overshadowing the other, the result aims to produce a fruitful balance.¹

To address such an approach one meaningfully engages with suffering in a way that does not over-identify with it but enacts a self-kindly response. This also calls to mind the ever present issue of researcher bias. This is where my own experiences needed to be examined in a learning journal and checked by constant referral to colleagues and a pastoral supervisor. The issue here and throughout is that my own work experience could disproportionately support my assumptions. With qualitative research via the journal, supervision and peer review, I kept in mind that I needed to ‘park’ assumptions as much as I could and design the study on gaps that the literature presents. The research questions were useful to explicate the topic from a

¹ Reflecting Paul Ricoeur’s idea of “interpreting phenomena at multiple levels”; Stephen Bailey, Laos and Religious Freedom, The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 2013, 11(2), p. 64; Stephen Bailey advances the notation that in studying occurrences we should “pursue an anthropology of meaning.”
spirituality point of view, but this needs to be grounded in the evidence thus far, rather than my own anecdotal experience.

It is also crucial, due to the subjective nature of stress, to note my reactions and observations, subjectivity and intrinsic experiences, not least because they will inform the inner-reflection and heuristic process (Anderson, 2000). Experientially too, it is fair to note that stress and responses to it exercise the minds of managers and chaplains charged with leadership and pastoral duties, respectively. Yet reflections are not always reliable and we often pay attention to what we pay attention to; that is, we are inherently biased (Ledingham, 2018).

Inherent subjectivity and self-reflection means that one also has to know and understand one’s opening stance, limitations and inner-rules of operating when dealing with stress and suffering. Moreover, Coulehan (2010) says this is about “honest self-awareness and reflective openness to others” (p. 201). The need for such reflexivity is why I deliberately adopted Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic approach to intuitively think on and synthesise in a movement from awareness through self-dialogue to discovery of newer frames of reference (Sinclair, 2007).
Chapter Three: Literature Review

The literature review in this chapter complements the published papers and summarises key literature, identifies important theorists, and considers theoretical and conceptual principles relevant to the thesis. It also notes controversies and shortcomings in the literature and how the proposed study relates to the literature.

Introduction

To enact the literature review and bearing in mind the draft conceptualisation model, I wondered how: (a) workplace literature; and (b) non-workplace, psycho-spiritual self-care literature relate to chronic stress and psycho-spiritual self-care. The aim was to locate and synthesise themes and concepts from whatever discipline necessary in the form of a tapestry or bricolage in support of psycho-spiritual self-care. From this, the chapter structure is as follows:

- Workplace spirituality
- Heuristics revisited: as a key guide to inform the literature search
- Conceptualisation 1: workplace-based psycho-spiritual care literature
  - Introduction
  - Search for relevant term and themes
  - Mindfulness and stress
  - Self-management, self-talk and stress
  - Inner meaning and workplace stress
  - Literature on psycho-spiritual choices and self-care at work
- Conceptualisation 2: non workplace psycho-spiritual literature
- Workplace spirituality – religious nature
- Workplace spirituality – non-religious nature
• Workplace self-care
  o Spiritual
  o Psychological

• Non-workplace spiritual self-care themes
  o Self-compassion
  o Meaningful detachment
  o Humility

• Summary: three themes of self-compassion, meaningful detachment and humility

**Workplace spirituality**

To begin, spirituality is increasingly seen as a workplace factor, however hard it is to define (Mitroff, 2008). Further, according to Dehler and Welsh (2005), workplace spirituality is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encourages the worker to seek meaning and purpose. Such considerations make a focused literature review a challenge. This thesis focuses on psycho-spiritual care, provided it is useful, and from whatever its origination. Then there is the issue as shown below that self-care derives from a variety of disciplines, some of which are spiritual in nature.

The literature review is complex, not the least because of a multiplicity of spirituality definitions, usages, disciplinary boundaries and practices, not to mention the challenge that psychology and spiritual disciplines do not always engage with each other (Schneiders, 2005). Moreover, as shown below in Figure 4, a survey of the overall literature landscape reveals a complex and disconnected picture, making a focus rather challenging.
For the workplace too, however complex a research undertaking in itself, one needs to locate a working definition of spirituality that is sufficiently broad to encompass both religious practice and non-religious notions to do with one’s inner-life, intrinsic meaning and self-awareness (Anderson, 2000; Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008). In this, summarising Moberg and Brusek (1978)’s foundational work, Perrone-McGovern, Webb, Wright, Jackson & Ksiazak (2006) state that spirituality is about two dimensions; meaning it may or may not be connotations about God:

- “one’s relationship with a higher power within a system of religious beliefs”
- “one’s sense of meaning and purpose in life, apart from any specific religious framework.” (p. 254)

By contrast, religion is by and large about formal expressions of and practice and belief (Garg, 2017). Then we see that, in the extensively used, twenty question Spiritual Well-Being Scale, ten questions mention God. The remaining ten questions are about existential questions to do with relationship and life satisfaction (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982).
This study recognises both of the above aspects. Yet again, it seeks a broader spiritual approach, rather than one that is just about belief. It is about inner purpose and the search for healing and sense-making wherever it may be found (Weick, 1995). That said, if we are to conduct a dialogue with positive psychology and, after all, the aim is to augment psycho-spiritual self-care, then we must also recognise as Bonet suggests, that spirituality is “increasingly viewed as independent of any organized religion… spirituality is not categorical but continuous and multidimensional” (2009, p. 4).

Remaining open to broader and even emerging conceptualisations is a vital exercise because, as Lee and Waters (2003) confirmed, spirituality can ameliorate cumulative, severe stress. So too, Bonet (2009) found that spirituality was “a buffering or protective factor during traumatic stress” (p. 68). However, Bonet went on to state explicitly that, in stress treatment practice, spirituality remains highly subjective, as it is about “how individuals interpret spirituality as a coping mechanism and what meaning they ascribe to this concept” (p. 71).

In summary, workplace spirituality may or not be about belief, let alone self-care and self-care at work may or may not even reference psycho-spiritual matters. Again, the scope and complexity of the research landscape and the study’s interdisciplinary focus is shown in Figure 4 above reveals that relevant psycho-spiritual self-care will be sought from workplace and non-workplace literature with an emphasis on themes and aspects that are transferable to the secular workplace. It also shows, in particular, that workplace spirituality research and literature may or may not be religious in nature or about stress, inner meaning or workplace self-care (Fry, 2003). Workplace spirituality, as will be shown, is mostly about performance, leadership, personal character, organisational connotations and related outcomes. Despite at times being about personal spirituality and meaning, this does not necessarily mean much when things go personally awry or stress arises (Biggio, 2013; Breevaart, Bakker and Demerouti, 2013).
Further, there are a multiplicity of themes and terms, some of which overlap, while others clearly do not. Accordingly, the literature review focuses on concepts such as compassion at work, suffering, self-blame, spiritual self-care, and authentic, inner experience and related reactions, especially when stressful, dismal, difficult or challenging events occur. The search is contextualised by connotations of self-blame and self-judgment or like terms. It also asks the question: What happens when success, hope, resiliency, and optimism fail to materialise or stress and related suffering ensue? (Avolio and Gardner, 2005)

That said, the review remains open to emerging ideas and themes that actively address self-care and enact non-judgmental and self-kindly acceptance, in particular. In terms of the initial self-care conceptualisation, it is notable that choices can arise from “particular standpoints, to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the research topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of documents in relation to the research being proposed” (Hart 1998, 13). In fact, what began with a relatively general analysis became more focused and crucial, over the course of the publications, as the search and synthesis of the literature review progressed (Silverman, 2012).

I have already noted the disparity between organisationally focussed and personal spirituality. So too, the choices that each participant will make may be different (Anderson, 2001; Berniker & McNabb, 2006). Again, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. Therefore, to enact this process, the following two conceptualisations guided the literature review:

- **Conceptualisation 1**: workplace-based psycho-spiritual care terms and responses to stress, anxiety. Search terms included:
  - self-care, compassion, self-kindness, (coping with) failure, self-management, coping, self-talk, inner-values, belief, inner-life, detachment, suffering at work, workplace spirituality, workplace-related meaning, meaning at work,
authenticity, personal hope, self-blame, self-judgment, self-acceptance, stress reduction

- **Conceptualisation 2**: non-workplace psycho-spiritual literature about stress and anxiety: the search for themes and motifs from non-workplace related disciplines that could speak into the workplace or be co-opted for that purpose. Search terms included:
  - self-care, belief, compassion, self-kindness, (coping with) failure, suffering, pastoral care at work, workplaces, stress self-management, inner-life at work, self-talk, self-compassion, inner sense-making, self-care, self-blame, self-judgment, self-acceptance and stress reduction. Here it must be noted that terms such as suffering, pastoral care, and meaning abound in modern spiritual texts, but it is not (yet) clear how they relate to the workplace literature or stress.

**Heuristics inquiry revisited: A guide for the literature search**

Heuristics is revisited here at the start of the literature review because it guides the search for psycho-spiritual self-care concepts. It is also because limited workplace spirituality literature relates to self-care and much will be extraneous to the thesis. Heuristic inquiry is useful because it is about an innate search for intrinsic self-care choices and responses to and the discovery of new insights (Moustakas, 1990).

Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry approach urges a literature review focussed on the researcher’s inner dialogue “which is about openness, indwelling and a more interior focus on the highly subjective questions” (Anderson, 2000). While this may seem methodological in nature, it is important to the literature review because the researcher’s own reactions, hunches and interests had some bearing on the search (Anderson, 2000, 2004). In this, Moustakas’ (1990) approach is affirmed by the three stage, inner search and synthesis process articulated
by Olman (1993) and Berniker and McNabb (2006). This is summarised as follows; with my comments in italics locating in the research the context at hand:

- an issue gives way to reactions, often problematic and even contradictory; the stressed negative self-judgments and suffering contextualises and commences the literature search;

- leads to a synthesis, which, with new information and assistance; continues the search, processes the literature, and guides the consequential self-care synthesis;

- leads to an improvement in the overall situation; from the comparative analysis, produces the consequential self-care choice(s) synthesis.

Such a process is heuristic in nature as it is about self-dialogue and deepening reflection on lived experience (Anderson, 2000). The heuristic inquiry process, more particularly, if we take bricolage seriously, drives the literature review. It provides an intuitive, even eclectic way to locate and use relevant information related to the innate, human questions (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2020).

It is, as Berniker and McNabb (2006) say about the quest for relevant material, that self-care choices and reactions can come to include meaningful synthesis and improvement in the stressed person’s lived experience. In fact, the heuristic process is a form of revelatory, inner sense-making by comparing emergent or previously un-integrated themes, choices or approaches (Berniker & McNabb, 2006; Weick, 1995). Arguably, this is about helpful, sense-making choices. Each is a participant as it were, as

actors whose actions are guided by their own particular understandings of the processes in which they participate. If we assume that actors have choices, their categories and meanings become necessary, complementary elements in a valid representation of those processes. Furthermore, those processes “make sense” to participants. (Bernicker & McNabb, 2006, p. 644)
The above quote, while written in an organisational context, is noteworthy in the search for psycho-spiritual choices as they pertain to stress because it identifies the interrelationship between understanding, categorising and choosing which to date may have not been enacted, let alone been effective, in addressing the self-care phenomenon (Anderson, 2000). For example, if a stressed worker believes that they will not find healing or meaningful sense then they may not even begin the search process. Then there is the related issue in workplace stress of not seeking support when experiencing stress-related symptoms (Devenish-Meares, 2015). More positively, both researcher and the stressed themselves each in their way can conduct an intuitive and purposeful, albeit subjective, search about how to respond meaningfully and in self-kindly ways to subjective experience (Anderson, 2004; Berniker & McNabb, 2006).

Crucially, this process is only the start of the literature search and review. It is, for innate research—and this will be a challenge in some academic circles—deeply personal, possibly eclectic and even unsystematic because the inner search may well not be a linear nor a logical one (Geertz, 1974; Kincheloe, 2004a; Moustakas, 1990). Guided by Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry approach, this resulted in a wide ranging and long term, intuitive search for useful, practical psycho-spiritual choice-driven conceptualisations of self-care (Anderson, 2004). This was about staying with the questions instrinsically even interiorly as the literature search ensues even when this seems fruitless (Kenny, 2012).

It is noteworthy that the search and review process was a deepening and iterative process so, over time, humility and the more nebulous concept of learning how to live with imperfection or incompleteness also emerged. Finally, and overall, this whole process was a non-linear and hermeneutical search. It sought explication and new iterations, noting that business research would not always use psycho-spiritual terms and vice versa.
Conceptualisation 1: Workplace-related psycho-spiritual literature

Introduction

Overall, the literature review confirms that both religiosity and spirituality have an effect on psychological health (World Health Organisation, 2012). Spirituality is increasingly seen as a workplace factor, however hard it is to define (Fry, 2003; Mitroff, 2008). Yet its effect on or relationship with workplace stress is far less understood. However, according to Dehler and Welsh (2005), consensus is building that workplace spirituality is a complex issue that encourages the worker to seek meaning and purpose. More particularly, workplace spirituality is defined “as a means of self-realization and as inner experience” (Garg, 2017, p. 131).

So often, workplace spirituality research relates to organisational values, performance and leadership conceptualisations (Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Again inner-meaning, spirituality and personal sense-making—all highly personal and subjective themes—are often poorly understood, and rarely comprehensively or consistently defined in workplace spirituality research (McKee, Helms, & Driscoll, 2008). Perhaps this is partially because of the subjective, even heterogeneous or unsystematic ways to reflect on stress, particularly when meaningful sense-making, self-care and healing are absent (Cassell, 2011).

Workplace spirituality: various conceptualisations

In the workplace, both spirituality and religion are sometimes viewed as aids to coping with adversity and trauma (Pargament, 2011). However, it becomes more complex when one tries to separate out the two factors. By way of example, albeit in a broader sociological context, Saslow et. al. (2013) said that spirituality is related to compassion whereas religiosity by itself was not. This is highly contestable, and interestingly, for Saslow et al., compassion towards self and related self-care factors were not considered.

Again, the literature review is dealing with something idiosyncratic. For this thesis, workplace spirituality is defined “as a means of self-realization and as inner experience” (Garg,
2017, p. 131). Of critical note too, it is about the “recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 140). Yet, when purpose, inner hope and sense-making is impaired, troubled or thwarted due to stress or (perceived) failure, it seems that suffering is exacerbated (Milliman, 2003).

Critically, and relevant to this psycho-spiritual research, workplace stress, disaffection, emotional exhaustion, and even burnout may result in progressive mental injury or maladaptation over time (Bakker & Costa, 2014). Yet so much workplace spirituality literature does not address such themes. Moreover, despite some emergent research, it remains unclear how, or even if, people in times of chronic stress readily enact psycho-spiritual themes as self-care strategies to address self-judgment and reduce rumination (Calicchia & Graham, 2006; Devenish-Meares, 2015). This includes tenderly exploring such rumination and discovering a healing-related sense of self and coming to terms with failure (Graham, Morse, O’Donnell & Steger, 2017; Pargament & Mahoney, 2002; Rohr, 2007; Zohar and Marshall, 2001). Such conceptualisations also bring to mind notions of inner-argument and self-blame.

Using Conceptualisation 1, its search terms, as well as extensive reading and critical synthesis, I recognised the following overlapping themes as generally representative of workplace spirituality: performance, leadership, and organisationally-driven imperatives (Fry, 2003; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). In reviewing the literature below I asked: Do the following concepts and themes actively consider stress at work or related aspects such as failure or self-negativity? Do they have anything to say about self-care?

- **Self-awareness:** Self-awareness is an aspect of work-related research, yet it is almost always about emotional intelligence and performance and seldom researched in terms of inner meaning or self-care when stressed (Goldman, 1998; Yeung, 2009).

- **Workplace behaviour and culture:** Oliveira (2004) posited spirituality’s usefulness for business culture and organisational life, noting personal connections and meaning.
However, the literature ignored that stress, disconnection or suffering can impede such things.

- **Leadership and performance:** Here, much spiritually related research has focussed on positive leadership and the relationship between spirituality and performance (Neal, 1997; Rego, Cunha, & Oliveira, 2008). Very little literature considers person-centred aspects of spirituality when leadership or performance are degraded or other so-called negative issues such as when stresses arise and suffering occurs.

- **Workplace values:** Fry (2004) is a representative researcher who focuses on spiritual leadership. Others examine values in terms of personal outcomes including peace, job satisfaction, workplace commitment, and productivity, yet little work has been done about when personal values are sorely tested, hope fails at work, and stresses arise (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Terms such as character and values are almost always used in terms of their positive affect and resilience and not necessarily in times of chronic stress and PTSD (Bellehumeur, Bilodeau, & Yeung, 2017; Niemiec & McGrath, 2019)

- **Emotional intelligence:** Freedman and Everret (2004) studied the importance of emotional intelligence to ensure sustained performance. Again, the use of emotional intelligence for spirituality’s sake, meaning, and sense-making particularly in times of suffering and the personal effects of degraded performance were largely overlooked.

- **Positivity, authenticity, and relationships:** While these aspects seem, prima facie, to be about inner and self-driven issues, research in the main considered leadership, performance, success, and sustainability. By way of example, Avolio and Gardner (2005) noted the potential usefulness of business “supporting people in their search for meaning and connection; by fostering self-awareness” yet did not go very far on this research trajectory or examine stress as a factor (p. 316).
• **Mindfulness**: This is important to healing and increasingly referenced and explored in the context of work (Coleman, Martensen, Scott, & Indelicato, 2016). Of note too, mindfulness was recently examined in a workplace stress context, but this research considered neither self-care generally, nor spirituality or psycho-spiritual self-care specifically (Bostock, Crosswell, Prather & Steptoe, 2019). However, some research examines self-care and mindfulness in terms of discerning one’s choices but does not do it comprehensively. A representative paper makes very brief mention of self-compassion in the context of mindfulness and choices but does not relate it specifically to self-care choices (Hugh-Jones, Rose, Koutsopoulou & Simms-Ellis, 2018).

  In summary, the literature confirms that the above themes are spiritual in their broadest sense but few, with the exception of mindfulness, are examined in the context of self-care in times of stress. Further, while the psycho-spiritual or meaningful self at work has been investigated, this is often related to productivity and performance at the corporate level and values-based concerns at the personal level (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013; Busse, Kwon, Kloep, Ghosh, & Warner, 2018). Such aspects are mostly examined as an aid to character strengths and resilience and are seen as key factors in intrinsic motivation and performance (Costea, Crump & Amiridis, 2008; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Garg, 2017). Such themes are not examined in terms of stress.

  Yet, as a further impetus for this study, chronic stress can impair emotional even spiritual wellbeing, impair inner resources and choices, and lead to not only loss of meaning but physiological symptoms (Price, 2017). Of note too, among paid religious workers, spirituality was found to positively impact on personal well-being at work (Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, & Rodgerson, 2004). However, this is often more about more religion and belief than modern, non-religious expressions of spirituality, meaning, self-management or self-
Some business leaders and mental health practitioners are increasingly aware that personal meaning and values are relevant to workplaces; however, related research on suffering and anxiety in a psycho-spiritual context is sparse (Busse, Kwon, Kloep, Ghosh, & Warner, 2018; Lilius, Kanov, Dutton, Worline, & Maitlis, 2011). Yet, as an impetus to such interdisciplinary work, it was discovered that quasi-spiritual themes such as sense-making and intuition can assist one to navigate experiences, using cues, retrospection and plausibility, although these have not been deployed to address workplace stress (Anderson, 2000; Weick, 1995). Further, Mitroff and Denton (1999) point out that a personal crisis often leads to increased importance of workplace-related spirituality. Then, Pargament and Mahoney (2002), albeit in a non-work context, notes that “crises become spiritually meaningful and even opportunities for growth” (p. 647).

Importantly, some research did show that spirituality, inner meaning and personal reflection as personal resources can reduce stressors and assist during burnout (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003; Rupert, Miller and Dorociak, 2015; Sprung, Sliter and Jex, 2012). Yet these studies do not examine self-care choices of a psycho-spiritual nature.

However, when workplace issues arise, treatment is almost always on the basis of “rehabilitation, performance management, psychological treatment, therapy or removal or detachment from the workplace” (Devenish-Meares, 2017, p. 4). Such responses do not appear to be necessarily associated with inner reflection or personal choices (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015; Tsui & Wu, 2005).

Yet from the scant literature, it is apparent that stressed, burned out, and suffering workers periodically seek more than medical and psychological treatments. In other words, particularly in terms of PTSD-related symptoms, they may engage with issues such as inner
questions, problematic self-judgments, lack of self-love, failure to maintain a self-care stance, and fostering self-management of their inner or personal lives (Charry, 2010; Devenish-Meares, 2015; Ford & Tartaglia, 2006; Hodgson & Carey, 2017). What is rarely examined is psycho-spiritual self-care in response to stress.

**Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is useful in addressing stress because it is about “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). While it is about self-awareness, remaining in the present moment, and it relates to the acceptance of reality, I want to build on this and go further in the search for practical psycho-spiritual self-care choices (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Jimenez, Niles & Park, 2010; Vivian, Oduor, Arceneaux, Flores, Vo, & Maddern, 2019). Of note to, self-compassion is a more comprehensive concept although it includes mindfulness as one of its three key components (Neff, 2003).

Mindfulness is certainly a psycho-spiritual practice although it is not necessarily always posited as such (Conversano, Ciacchini, Orrù, Di Giuseppe, Gemignani, & Poli, 2020). Moreover, it does not necessarily include a process for intuitively evaluating biased, irrational or unhelpful thinking nor does it necessarily provide a means to enact practical, self-caring choices (Bauer, 2003). Rather, mindfulness is about non-evaluative observation while noting how impermanent such thoughts are (Kabat-Zinn, 1994); it is worth noting that much literature does not necessarily refer to mindfulness being about practical choices beyond awareness. Yet, certainly, mindfulness is important and critical to workplace care; however, arguably again, it is most often not about meaningfully and tenderly dialoguing with the actual circumstances. It is more about focussing on oneself and pushing the stress to one side (Bauer, 2003; Briere, 2012; Coleman, Martensen, Scott, & Indelicato, 2016; Gauthier, Meyer, Grefe, & Gold 2015; Horan & Taylor, 2018). In fact, mindfulness is posited as “moment-by-moment awareness”
(Germer et al., 2005, p. 6). Moreover, Davis and Haye (2012) say that mindfulness is a “state of mind” (p. 198).

In fact, mindfulness is often seen, rather statically, as a disposition to be cultivated and is not readily integrated with applied spirituality (Platt, Chinn, Scallan & Lyon-Maris, 2017). Whereas, self-compassion which includes mindfulness is seen as more proactive even comprehensive (Neff, 2003). In fact, research indicated the a combination of mindfulness with compassion (Conversano, Ciachini, Orrù, Di Giuseppe, Gemignani & Poli, 2020).

From this and significantly, the thesis is focussed on action, in the form of self-care choices that engage with ‘what is’.

Of note too, Neff (2003, 2010) has done research on mindfulness in terms of self-compassion psychology which appears to be connected to spirituality. This is examined later in the chapter in the self-compassion section yet here I note that very little research relates directly to workplace stress and anxiety.

Generally, to date, such seminal research makes make scant reference to workplace meaning or self-care and it fails to actively explore workplace spirituality or spiritual praxis beyond the concepts of compassion and mindfulness (Horan & Taylor, 2018; Zaki, Narayanan & Neff, 2005). By way of example, Coleman, Martensen, Scott and Indelicato’s (2016) paper on self-compassion and self-care made but one scant reference to spirituality.

**Self-management and stress**

Turning to self-management, this is often cited as a business theme and defined in terms of performance, teams and leadership (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013). In fact, Manz and Sims (1980) indicate that self-management helps structure the business and acts as a substitute for leadership effects and resourcing. Interestingly, self-management could be related to psycho-spiritual, self-care choices, not that it is named this way as such; this is because it can include self-scrutiny, setting one’s owns goals and rewards, and self-punishment.
Overall, there is a dearth of literature that about how self-management relates to psycho-spirituality and can help in times of stress, anxiety or suffering, at or related to work (Houghton & Neck, 2002). This is despite the fact that Kriger and Hanson (1998), Ashmos and Duchon, (2000), Driver (2007) and Mitroff (2008) point to the possibility that self-management and self-care could be assisted by spiritually-related themes and meaning making (Busse, Kwon, Kloep, Ghosh, & Warner, 2018).

In particular, self-management could be relevant to a psychospiritual self-care because it is about self-observation. This means that one is aware of what is occurring to and around them and why they chose certain behaviours (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013). It is also about self-awareness and emotional regulation (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). Hawkins and Shohet (2012) argue that self-care is about “sustaining one's own resilience” (p. 12). Moreover, Burkardt (2014) indicated that self-care may be helpful in times of burnout and compassion fatigue amongst care workers (see also Skovholt, 2001). This is especially so when inner conversations are self-judging and blameful and lacking in inner hope (Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael, & Synder, 2006). Such care serves so that one can make sense of the “disturbance, distress and dis-ease” at work (Hawkins & Shohet, 2012, pp. 21-22).

Yet, these two concepts also have limitations. This is because they have not been examined nor developed in the context of workplace stress and suffering, nor do they engage with negativity, stress or anxiety; moreover, they have not incorporated intuitive or spiritual approaches (Anderson, 2004). Conversely, non-business related and expanded connotations of self-management and self-talk could prove to be useful for inner meaning, sense making, and, arguably, healing and treatment. This is especially useful in times of chronic stress, anxiety and suffering.
More generally, Fry (2003) suggested that themes such as self-care and compassion are noteworthy, although he fails to examine any of these. Fry also cites humility briefly and uses what could be described as approximating spiritual language:

Focusing on care and concern for both self and others, independent of one’s own needs, drives out fears and worries, anger and jealousies, failures and guilt, and provides the foundation for well-being and the experience of joy, peace, and serenity. (2003, p. 713)

In sum, self-talk is relevant to workplace stress, yet it is not much examined in the work spirituality or the self-care choice context. When self-talk is examined in the workplace context, it is predominantly about mastery and overcoming challenges. It does not appear to be considered in the context of workplace stress and suffering (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque & Rowe, 2010). One exception though is Neck and Milliman (1996) who focused on behavioural and organisational issues and mention self-talk relating to emotions, distorted beliefs and meaning-related issues. Again, they did not consider it in a stress or anxiety context, let alone consider inner issues of self-care. Finally, in non-workplace literature, self-talk is often viewed as a negative phenomenon (Bassett, 1996).

**Psycho-spiritual self-care**

Before we consider religious and non-religious self-care connotations, it is important to reiterate that there is no widely accepted definition of self-care. In fact, in the literature any agreement on how to define self-care is rather nebulous (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010). Also, workplace self-care of a psycho-spiritual nature is difficult to define; this will be delineated later, especially in the published papers. Moreover, there are secular self-care conceptualisations from psychology and sociology and ones from spiritual disciplines that have not necessarily been integrated before. This is both an opportunity and a great challenge (Schneiders, 2005). Benner’s holistic definition of psycho-spirituality is about both and not either-or; he says it is the “immaterial inner core of human personality [and] refers to the fact that the inner world has no separate spiritual and psychological compartments” (1998, p. 540).
Thus, the literature review is a complex and potentially rich undertaking, due to the multiplicity of spirituality definitions, usages, disciplinary boundaries, and practices. This is complicated by the issue that psychological and spiritual disciplines do not always engage with each other (Schneiders, 2005).

Psycho-spiritual self-care, which is a particular form of self-management, is the focus. In this context, perennial challenges exist in defining and applying self-care; that is, “while self-care has been shown to mitigate compassion fatigue, self-care activities can be vague and difficult to prioritize” (Coleman, Martensen, Scott & Indelicato, 2016, p. 1). Essentially, the (potential) nexus between such positive psychology and applied spirituality is largely under-explored in terms of the extent of research and the dearth of spirituality references within (Neff, 2019).

One difficulty is that workplace self-care is a broad term that encapsulates themes from a extensive range of disciplines, including medicine, psychology, social work, and spirituality (Martin, 2017). Specifically, it appears that psycho-spiritual self-care literature beyond workplace research poorly understood and rarely used. This dearth is a key driver of this thesis. Then the issue of how a stressed worker is cared for and can support their own care is complex and may or may not draw on interdisciplinary approaches. Finally, it appears from reading widely beyond the workplace realm that other psycho-spiritual material could be relevant.

From all this, the challenge and opportunity in the literature review, that occurred over the course of the published papers, was to search widely at first, then focus on certain key, recurrent topics and themes. Considerable repetition of these in the research were necessary given each paper was written for distinct audiences. The goal was to bear in mind that the refining focus was psycho-spiritual self-care for the stressed at work.

Psycho-spirituality self-care research is scant and the term difficult to define, yet such care is relevant to the treatment of workplace stress and assists personal coping in times of
stress (Arnetz, Lucas & Arnetz, 2013; Harrison, 2017). Moreover, the absence of such self-care for those concerned with care of the human spirit and/or seeking an innate sense of meaning, can negative self-regard and be a "potential contributor to the high rates of stress, depression, and burnout" (Mills & Chapman, 2016, p. 87).

Notably what can be missing from responses to negative self-judgments, self-blame and harsh self-talk are self-care themes to do with inner meaning and even spirituality, despite the fact that in non-work settings these are used to support inner meaning, healing, and transformation (Charry, 2011; Mills & Chapman, 2016). By way of example, Rohr (2007) although not in a work context, suggests a self-caring and self-loving approach particularly related to humility, that is knowing, accepting and learning to live with and love oneself in the current reality, even if it is incomplete.

In terms of self-care and reinforcing Rohr (2007), Kozlowski, Hutchinson, Hurley, Rowley and Sutherland (2017) posit that self-awareness and reflection can "clarify intuition and gut feelings" (p. 9). Overall, they point to intuition and self-awareness yet do not explore how these assist in stressful times. Further, self-care can be stymied during chronic workplace stress because as Skovholt (2011) says, while "self-care is always important, at times of personal crisis or excessive stress, the ability to function may be severely compromised" (p. 134).

Thus, self-care aspects are highly subjective and not well understood (Kaur & Kaur, 2015; Sharone, 2009; Stanulis & Manning, 2002). Where I am going in this study is the discovery and augmentation of self-care choices with psycho-spiritual self-care choices. This approach is reinforced by Mills and Chapman (2016) who urge a need for multifaceted and interdisciplinary approaches to health and wellbeing, say that, "Self-care involves various strategies that help promote or maintain ones’ physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health” (p. 88). To this I would add, “responses to stress and suffering for those searching for or who
have lost meaning at work.” Arguably, this is about strengthening intrinsic or psycho-spiritual choices that address the problematic, inner ‘rules’ of self-blame including the belief that ‘I am a failure, worthless or unlovable’ by supporting improved self-care and self-acceptance (Neff, 2003a, 2010).

However, to be clear, a comprehensive review of extant literature confirms that self-care research does not necessarily include psycho-spiritual connotations or choices (Collins, 2005; Orem, 2001). For example, in contrast to Mills and Chapman (2016), Cook-Cottone (2015) describe self-care as “the daily process of being aware of and attending to one’s basic physiological and emotional needs including the shaping of one’s daily routine, relationships, and environment as needed to promote self-care” (p. 68).

This study explores, dialogues with and integrates themes drawn from positive psychology and spirituality, in its broader definition, in an exploratory conversation with business self-care literature. Reinforcing the research focus, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) indicate that work-related spirituality should be researched holistically: that is, in terms of medicine, psychology and spirituality. This is about recognising and dealing with the innate and idiosyncratic nature of the human condition (Anderson, 2000; Arnetz, Ventimiglia, Beech, DeMarinis, Lökk, & Arnetz, 2013; Kutcher et al., 2010).

Further, as Harrison (2017) says, there is efficacy in being “attentive to all dimensions of care (including) listening and responding with empathy and compassion” (p. 17). What complicates it all is that self-care is a highly subjective and intrinsic phenomena (Anderson, 2004; Butler, Mercer, McClain-Meeder, Horne, & Dudley, 2019; Devenish-Meares, 2015; Kruger, 2018; Mills & Chapman, 2016; Sieberhagen, Pienaar, & Els, 2011).

**Inner meaning and workplace stress**

Meaningful work and spiritual aspects—including transcendence, self-awareness, inner peace and self-harmony—are considered at work; however, surprisingly little literature about
them is examined in relation to stress and even less about self-care choices (Scherer, 2016). This is despite the fact that a few researchers suggest making sense of work, integrating one’s personal values and beliefs and taking note of the heuristics or cues can lead to intrinsic sense-making and even self-actualisation (Ashford & Pratt, 2003; McKee, Helms, & Driscoll, 2008). Yet even these researchers do not examine stress.

Then, reinforcing the gap, a recent meta-analysis of workplace stress burnout responses, despite being about personal choices, was devoid of themes related to inner-meaning, psychospirituality and self-care choices, and did not include any form of spirituality (Mäkikangas & Kinnunen, 2016). Similarly, Avolio and Gardner (2005) urge workplaces to assist people “in their search for meaning and connection by fostering self-awareness,” but make few references to the issue of stress (p. 316). Then, McGee and Delbecq (2000) say that mature approaches to meaning and spirituality look at the unpleasant aspects of life. Such spirituality “includes the realities of imperfection, failure and sin, such as greed, exploitation, abuses of power and exploitation” (p. 96); again, stress is not given any attention. Further, Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) found that meaning is related to motivation, though, pointedly, not when things go awry or stress occurs. This is also despite the fact that a leader who “fosters, encourages, and appreciates his or her workers and effectively promotes the emergence of a meaningful self at the workplace” is effective in promoting inner meaning (Busse, Kwon, Kloep, Ghosh and Warner, 2018, p. 69). Again, what happens when perceptions of ineffectiveness, failure or stress arise?

Perhaps the dearth of literature is because meaning, sense-making and even spirituality are too esoteric or nebulous for the world at work. Yet some research has begun to pay attention to an inner-meaning concept or even spirituality at work which is associated with lower stress levels, although, notably, self-compassion and humility are seldom or not considered (Rupert, Miller & Dorociak, 2015; Sprung, Sliter, & Jex, 2012).
The heuristic search for inner meaning—which is about learning, (re)discovery and bringing new light to bear on a subject—often starts with a personal question or challenge (Moustakas, 1994). In this case, it is about inner meaning and and self-care in times of stress (Hoffman, 2003; Kress, 2011; Neal, 2000). Adding to the complexity, Ashford and Pratt (2003) indicate that innate or spiritual pursuits, however personally defined, can be threatening to organisational coherence, yet do not examine personal failure, negative self-talk, or stress.

In summary, insufficient workplace research examines spiritual themes to address inner-meaning questions and concerns especially about self-care choices that proactively address self-blame and self-judgments. Perhaps this is as trauma and suffering research notes because such choices can become problematic and people can be reluctant to seek support for many reasons (Rajagopal, Mackenzie, Bailey & Lavizzo-Mourey, 2002). This may be because of self-condemnation, self-judgment, or poor self-care and self-management skills (Ashford & Pratt, 2003). Arguably some form of personal choice or engagement with healing and treatment has to be made (Devenish-Meares, 2015).

Literature on psycho-spiritual choices related to self-care at work

From a workplace viewpoint, the literature review found that, despite an upsurge in spiritual or quasi-spiritual research, there was a real dearth in psycho-spiritual studies related to personal, inner-meaning support; more pointedly, also absent were choice-related and intuitive responses to workplace stress and suffering and ways to use psycho-spirituality to reduce the negative effects. This is despite well established approaches that actively engage in inner reflection, meaning, and intuition, albeit in non-workplace contexts (Anderson, 2004).

Trauma, stress and crisis literature was also searched for references to psycho-spiritual choices and themes. In terms of crisis-oriented emergency responses to personal issues at work, while cognitive and educative approaches to prevention and treatment are common, spiritually-oriented approaches are far less prevalent (Eriksson, 2004). Overall, the gap in the research is
that the literature does not comprehensively explore inner reflection, sense-making or, more generally, spiritual choices, despite their potential to augment stress symptom alleviation and their proven efficacy elsewhere (Chopko, Facemire, Palmieri, & Schwartz, 2016; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Lilius, Kanov, Dutton, Worline, & Maitlis, 2011; Neff, 2003a; Rohr, 2007; Tangney, 2000).

Moreover, highlighting the need for a rapprochement between psycho-spiritual literature and business, Litz (2004) claims that traumatic workplace issues and events can “violate core tacit beliefs and assumptions” which are arguably related to inner meaning, spirituality, values-based aspirations, and intrinsic aspects of work (p. 1). The challenge is that, particularly when stressed or anxious, one may not have the inwardly-oriented or reflective tools to support self-management which includes helpful self-awareness and self-care. This reflects research that often focuses on organisational outcomes and increased workplace engagement (Breevaart, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2013).

There is a lack of research around personal sense-making and self-compassion as self-care concepts or themes are not surprising given the transactional and output/outcomes focus of most organisations. The themes are not often illuminated, synthesised or enacted as choices in responses to workplace stress, anxiety and the search for inner meaning (Lilius, Kanov, Dutton, Worline, & Maitlis, 2011; Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Zohar and Marshall, 2001).

Overall, quantitative and business focussed spirituality epitomises much workplace research. It does not readily mirror the intrinsic, subjective and even eclectic nature of individual, psycho-spiritual responses to stress and suffering (Anderson, 2000; Devenish-Meares, 2015; Harrison, 2017). There is a “dearth and complexity surrounding psycho-spiritual, workplace-self care, including the issue of how to define” such a process (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 4). This researcher recognises a need to explore in what ways could three psycho-spiritual choices—self-compassion, humility and detachment—individually or
collectively augment self-care, how they could be enacted as psycho-spiritual self-care. A significant barrier to this recognition is that the ‘how’ that would enable one to research these issues is not readily available.

**Conceptualisation 2: Non workplace psycho-spiritual literature**

**Introduction**

Little workplace research considers intuitive, inner or self-kindly choices to ameliorate harsh self-judgment, over rumination, and poor of self-acceptance. Therefore, the search widened beyond the workplace to search for relevant psycho-spiritual literature.

Here, Allen’s (1995) comments are highly relevant; in the context of stress and anxiety, he talks of taking care of oneself, warning that it is complex and may seem counter-intuitive when self-blame and self-recrimination are the default choices. Allen says, “your self-concept has a steering function and this train of thought can lead to a self-perpetuating stalemate... if you hate yourself, you won’t take care of yourself” (1995, p. 269). Overall, one can opt for positive self-regard and self-kindness as self-management choices or one can make choices that perpetuate unhealthy self-relatedness (Vincent, 1990). There is very little psycho-spiritual literature that notices, integrates experience, and actively brings compassionate self-care to bear on workplace trauma, anxiety, and even trauma and failure (Frewen & Lanius, 2015).

In terms of inner dialogue, the concept of self-talk is also relevant to notions of self-care or its absence. It is in fact, also about choice. As opposed to negative self-talk which can prolong suffering and stress, Bassett (1995) speaks of “compassionate self-talk”, being “any kind of message or dialogue with yourself or someone else that makes you feel good, strong, happy, confident, relaxed, capable, loving, energetic, peaceful, or motivated” (p. 147).

As such, self-talk and self-management are relevant to notions of suffering, anxiety, burnout and even recovery although none of the literature reviewed incorporate self-acceptance, self-kindness and mindfulness which, collectively as self-compassion, in respect
of lowering depression and fear of failure (Yarnell & Neff, 2012, p. 2). Moreover, in terms of self-care choices such notions could be extended to self-reflection, letting go and sense-making opportunities especially when times are challenging, anxiety arises, failure occurs or other negative issues impact on worker wellbeing (McKee, 2004; Rohr, 2007; Williams, 2015).

Having established the dearth in the research as well as the importance of choices and the opportunity, it is now timely to and the next section will examine the relevant psycho-spiritual literature, most of which arises from non-workplace contexts, which could assist self-care choices. Of note is the bricolage-driven search for innate, self-care choices which echoed certain themes (Moustakas, 1990; Berniker & McNabb, 2006). This again, even in the literature review is a process of “a process/method wherein an individual solves a problem or resolves [it]” (Dorcy, 2010, p. 79).

What emerged repeatedly over the five-year, intuitive research journey were the following themes which are now examined in terms of extant literature:

- Meaningful detachment and letting go: noting that psychological detachment is not sufficient, by itself, to offer meaning-related self-care support
- Self-compassion
- Humility

**Meaningful detachment and letting go**

If we see nothing wrong with attachment we won’t even try to work on it, so an important first step is to recognise the problems that it brings..disappointment, grief and pain (etc). (McDonald, 2010, p. 32).

There is extensive psychological detachment literature shows that mentally switching off from work and not thinking about work when away from it leads to fewer symptoms of psychological strain (Sonntag, 2015; Sonntag, Binnewies & Mojza, 2010). Similarly, detachment has also been examined in the context of emotions in a health setting, but neither
that context nor emotions themselves are the focus here (Webb, Hirsch, Visser, & Brewer, 2013). Yet, a growing realisation apparent in recent literature is that psychological detachment from work alone is not sufficiently therapeutic nor helpful, which suggests that the nature of detachment may be important (Montero-Marín, Prado-Abril, Demarzo, Gascon, & García-Campayo, 2014). Then as McDonald (2010) states above, asserts one must also note what one has become attached to and see the challenges that malaption or inability to detach bring.

The risk is that maladaptive self-reflection can arise which “involves more destructive ways of thinking that depletes energy resources… [and] generates anxiety, self-doubt and fear” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 42). It could also point to the possibility of not being aware of self-care possibilities or even being so overwhelmed that one cannot enact self-care (Devenish-Meares, 2015b). Clearly, people may still agonise over the meaning of what has occurred, trying to make sense of events and yet, possibly enacting harsh self-judgments around failure to meet performance expectations, which could impede treatment and healing. In fact, research suggests that individual reflections around unfulfilled expectations and perfectionism are factors in burnout (Alarcon, 2011; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). This points to concepts such as mistakes, fault, wrongdoing, and transgressions, and possibly also to forgiveness.

In contrast to painful and negative rumination, Avolio and Gardner (2005) speculate on the benefits of re-informing the individual and positive forms of self-reflection, which is a heuristic process (Moustakas, 2010). Here, spirituality as a coping mechanism appears somehow associated with emotional detachment or separation and exhaustion, yet it has not been thoroughly investigated (Isaksson, Tyssen, Hoffart, Sexton, Aasland & Gude, 2013). Note too, that issues to do with self-determination, self-management, and personal choices have only briefly been examined as self-care choices (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In the literature is that there is little research that readily contemplates meaningful self-management; despite psychological detachment, job demands, over-thinking, harsh self-
judgements and poor self-care may still take place when one is away from work. Detachment literature also alludes to meaning-related issues that enhance the ‘type’ of detachment but does not yet explore them (Montero-Marin, Prado-Abril, Demarzo, Gascon, & García-Campayo, 2014). In the main, detachment is about being asked not to think on the issue; however, it not clear how this can occur meaningfully or helpfully without additional support choices (Sonnentag, 2012). This is despite the fact that spiritual detachment offers something in terms of standing apart in a non-judgmental way, even as one experiences stress and or suffering.

With this in mind, this current study explores self-reflective aspects that support meaningful detachment and improved self-care choices. It does this by offering certain applied spirituality to augment self-compassion and psychological detachment. Emergent psychological detachment research certainly points to the need for a more self-care related conceptualisation. In fact, Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) says that “psychological detachment is mainly defined as the absence of something (i.e., not thinking about one’s job during non-work time) and implies letting go of work related thoughts and activities” (p. 74). However, ‘letting go’ is not clearly defined here or elsewhere in the extant literature. Rohr (2007) calls this detachment, or the “stable witness”, that is, the self that can witness to stress or adversity in a self-loving way while not getting caught up in it. Irrespective of naming preferences, such meaningful detachment terms are non-academic in nature and seem colloquial, despite their use in non-workplace, spiritual literature (Dalai Lama, 2001; Rohr, 2007).

So too, mindfulness training is seen as a way to ‘let go’ in times of stress, yet, again, the ‘how’ of the letting go process is given insufficient attention (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop & Cordova, 2005). This does not mean it is important to examine it. Further, it is, in the main, enacted by choosing not to hold onto things or emotions while maintaining a non-judgmental awareness (Rohr, 2007; 2011a). This is not dissimilar to the idea of non-focus offered by mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). In the workplace, non-judgmental awareness is most often
used in stress, leadership, change management or learning contexts (Chi Vu & Gill, 2018; Kets de Vries, 1993; Smith, 2005; Wardley, Flaxman, Willig & Gillanders, 2016; Wilson & Ferch, 2005). It can also be about career change (Caprino, 2012).

Letting go at work has been briefly considered in a psychological detachment context, yet how to accomplish this is not specified, nor are the self-care choices which can be made when interior dialogue and harsh self-judgments stymie this process. Specifically, Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) said that “letting go of work-related thoughts and mental representations of the job stressors [allows] the employee to recover from them and to rebuild psychological resources, thereby increasing well-being and reducing strain” (p. S92). Yet they also speculate that there needs to be something more to detachment that is about meaningful letting go (Rohr, 2007).

Letting go, which is a mindful action, may also be about forgiveness and conflict at work (Paul & Putnam, 2017). Of note, it can be about psychological detachment from the work day, although this was predominantly about job attrition and not taking work home (Van Laethem, Van Vianen & Derks, 2018). There is very little, if any, research about letting go or psycho-spiritual detachment in the context of workplace stress and suffering.

Of note for interdisciplinary self-care and possibly connected to meaningful detachment, Rohr (2007) talks about ‘letting go’ as being overly enmeshed in the problematic circumstances that cause one to ruminate painfully on failure, incompleteness, and suffering. He urges the suffering self to metaphorically ‘stand slightly further apart’ from the immediate effects and ‘look back’ at oneself—with awareness of the issue of phenomena—with self-kindly and self-loving eyes. Spiritually, Rohr (2007) describes this choice as enacting the inner ‘stable witness’ in oneself who is unaffected, loving, and focussed on care. While it is often presented in religious terms as being about God’s witness, it applies to the secular individual.
triggering the choice to stand back, detached as it were, simply observing the circumstances with more self-loving eyes.

Re-stating the thesis, it is about intentional self-care choices related to responding directly to stress and suffering. In this, self-care habits are defined as one which “involves various strategies that help promote or maintain ones’ physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health” (Miles & Chapman, 2016, p. 88).

Mindfulness, mentioned earlier, is about helpful yet so often a non-evaluative observation while noting the impermanence of presenting thoughts. Yet, more needs to be said. Crucially, the techniques of mindfulness are shown to have a positive effect on stress and improve coping skills (Gauthier, Meyer, Grefe, & Gold, 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). However, meaningful self-acceptance and making sense is different to non-reflective mindfulness, however helpful this may be.

**Self-compassion**

Self-compassion as articulated by Neff (2003) is a positive psychological choice related to the self. According to Neff (2003), self-compassion “has three main themes: (a) self-kindness versus self-judgment; (b) a sense of common humanity versus isolation; and (c) mindfulness versus over-identification” (pp. 6-7). It is particularly useful in times of stress and perceived failure and in addressing negative emotions (Leach, 2017; Neely, Schallert, Mohammed, Roberts, & Chen, 2009). Notably, while self-compassion has only, to date, been studied sporadically in a workplace setting, early research indicated an inverse relationship between occupational stress and self-compassion (Atharyan, Manookian, Varaei, & Haghani, 2018). Notably, too, “higher levels of self-compassion have been associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, maladaptive perfectionism, thought suppression, fear of failure, and egocentrism” (Yarnell and Neff, 2012, p. 2).
Self-compassion is largely absent from research about stressed workers notwithstanding that Neff (2009, p. 212) showed that self-compassion supports self-care concepts. Yet, in one paper, self-compassion was found to be a supportive choice for clergy burnout, but, similar to the limited nature of other research, it was not contrasted against potentially and similarly reflective, self-caring themes (Barnard & Curry, 2012).

Of relevance to both the self and the business, self-compassion psychology has been described by Mruk (1999) as “a meta-cognitive activity that allows for recognition of the experiences of the self and the other” (p. 120). At the individual level, Neely et al. (2009) consider that self-compassion “predicts subjective well-being and mental and physical health” (cited in Raque-Bogdan, 2011). Moreover, of note to the research question, self-compassion appears to address problematic detachment, rumination and even self-loathing (Neff, 2003; Roxas, Adonis, & Caligner, 2014). Almost all of the self-compassion literature takes place in a non-work context, yet it appears to have spiritual connotations that are not explicitly named and reinforces the need to treat oneself- self-caringly (Neff, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016).

The literature review also noted considered self-forgiveness although this lay outside the primary focus. One notes that self-compassion is periodically examined with this concept; however, research aboutself-forgiveness as a key self-care choice were inconclusive at best (Woodyatt, Wenzel, & Ferber, 2017b). By way of an example, Neff (2008) showed that self-compassion predicts mental wellbeing. Other more recent research highlighted self-compassion as a key, mediating variable to assist with psychological distress yet the results for self-forgiveness were by no means conclusive, appearing as more of a related personal outcome than a key, self-directed choice (Gilbert & Woodyatt, 2017; Griffin, 2014; Neff & Pommier, 2012).

In sum, self-compassion as an empirically-tested choice is used widely, but its lack of application in the context of the workplace suggests that it needs augmentation by other related
factors (Neff, 2003a; Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier, and Singh, 2017). This research brings self-compassion into dialogue with complementary self-care choices for the suffering worker.

What constitutes a real challenge to Neff’s (2003) often cited self-compassion research is that it may not be as robust a construct as has been long held. Some even raise validity questions and the possibility that it does not adequately address self-critical judgments (López, Sanderman, Smink, Zhang, van Sonderen, Ranchor, & Schroevers, 2015). Moreover, Sinclair et al.’s (2017) meta-analysis claims that “self-compassion is more accurately construed as composite of common facets of self-care, health self-attitude and self-awareness rather a construct in and of itself” (p. 23). They found “concerns regarding the construct validity of self-compassion, specifically as it relates to the construct of compassion; most research on self-compassion has been conducted using the Neff (2003) questionnaire—the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)—thereby diminishing its clinical relevance and utility” (p. 22).

Further, Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier, and Singh’s (2017) self-compassion meta-review showed that it emerged from Buddhism and was incorporated into positive psychological thought. Yet, one must note too that self-compassion type conceptualisations are inherently contained in Christian expressions of self-love (Devenish-Meares, 2016, 2016b). However to date, there is next to noempirical research that contrasts or integrates it with concepts such as humility and self-love, let alone with Christian spirituality or non-religious, psycho-spirituality (Neff, 2003a).

While not explored previously, self-compassion appears related to self-love and spiritual conceptualisation of the self. This is due, as spiritual texts affirm, to its orientation towards the lovable self and the need for a self-kindly, inner dialogue supported by conscious choices which must be enacted (Rohr, 2007). Confirming this literature, Bassett (1995) says that “compassionate self-talk is like any other skill: it must be learned. You have to understand
what the skill is, learn the technique, and then practice, practice, practice” (p. 148). This will require the support of carers and treatment practitioners, including psychologists and, arguably, chaplains.

Having examined self-compassion, I return again to the related concept of mindfulness which is one of Neff’s (2003) three self-compassion sub-components. Pointedly, mindfulness, unlike meaningful detachment and humility, does not readily include an action-oriented process for evaluating biased, irrational or unhelpful thinking related to what is happening (Bauer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1982). The literature gap is that noting or staying with ‘what is’ is not sufficient. How does one go further and enact self-care choices of a reflective and conscious nature with the presenting issues or stress-related issue of phenomena still in mind, albeit self-tenderly?

Clearly, more work is needed and as Sinclair et al. (2017) suggest, one must incorporate other self-care aspects. Pointedly, too, for my research, Sinclair et al. (2107), while referencing Buddhism, reference other applied spirituality only briefly. From all this, one wonders how self-compassion, in the augmentation of mindfulness itself, can be used in conjunction with other self-care choices to address self-criticism, negative self-talk, and help make meaningful, self-caring sense of workplace stress.

**Humility**

Surprisingly for this chaplain researcher and in terms of workplace self-care choice, positive humility emerged again and again in the literature review and synthesis. Specifically, Rohr (2007) speaks of humility as the tender, self-acceptance of things as they are, not how we wish them to be, in the midst of perceptions and suffering. Similarly, for Davis and Hook (2013), humility is about self-awareness and even hope. Despite these texts and, in the main, humility has been used in leadership practice and character development but not for worker self-care or even in stress wellbeing studies (Huizinga, 2016; Lindorf & Jonson, 2013).
Humility, is about realistic self awareness and self-acceptance but not which is punitive nor self-blaming (Exline & Hill, 2012). Such self-truth—and this is representative of modern spiritual literature on humility—points to a personal awareness and frank reality about issues as they are, not as we want them to be (Rohr, 2007). Similarly, Funk’s (2005) positive definition of humility is useful as it is about “standing in the truth of being” (p. xxv). This relates to self-awareness and speaks of humility as a “form of modesty and not as a lack of confidence” (Funk, 2005, p. xxv). Noting the issues of pride and ego, it is suggested that “those who mistake humility for weakness will find it difficult to accept its relationship with inner strength” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 11). This permits a re-framing of experience and acceptance of reality (Funk, 2005). Again, this has similarities with compassionate self-acceptance (Neff, 2003a). Yet, a common misperception is that humility is about low self-esteem or a sense of lowliness.

Humility is also about knowing and accepting one’s reality and accurately seeing one’s limitations, which makes it an important key character strength in support of emotional management, so as to meaningfully allow self-reflection notwithstanding stress or failure (Tangney, 2000). This is because humility “involves an accurate self-assessment, recognition of limitations, keeping accomplishments in perspective, and forgetting of the self” (Via Institute, 2016, n. p.). All such literature has workplace implications although, to date, little research has been extrapolated in a self-care and stress-based context.

We must also note that humility has a long and problematic history due the perception of its oft-stated negativity towards the self; thus, it needs considerable rehabilitation (Button, 2005; Hume, 1740). Religious texts could, for secular and modern sufferers, exacerbate matters because they so often talk of humility as being about self-deprecation (Foulcher, 2011). So, the theme presents both a challenge and an opportunity, as suggested by Charry and Kosits (2016):
Medieval piety espoused humility, at times even counseling self-denial on the belief that humbled participants would promote more harmonious and well-functioning societies… [Yet] a faith that counsels humility, self-control and gratitude cannot but hesitate to embrace a movement which seems on the surface at least so self-focused and oriented to increasing one’s own personal level of happiness, while lacking a corresponding mechanism for self-examination. (p. 10)

Yet, there is still an unresolved tension about humility which, beyond medieval interpretations, is sometimes reflected in modern spiritual texts and workplace literature. This tension is, amongst other things, between the self-effacing types of humility, character and self-denial and, more rarely, self-caring humility, which is of particular interest (Lavelock, Worthington, Davis, Griffin, Reid, Hook, & Van Tongeren, 2014; Rohr, 2007).

Then, of relevance to stress and not dissimilar to the applied humility concept advanced by Rohr (2007, 2010), the humble “neither ignore nor ruminate about their shortcomings” (Barnard & Curry, 2011, p. 3). One wonders about its applicability to address the meaning-related shortcomings and the type of psychological detachment already identified; to be detached is not enough if people still reflect with harsh self-judgment on their circumstances, as is often seen in pastoral praxis (Devenish-Meares, 2016).

Humility is also described as a virtue and and examined in terms of servant leadership and authentic and spiritual leadership in the workplace (Beazley & Gemmell, 2006; Fulcher, 2011; Huizinga, 2016). Beyond this, of no small note due the scarcity of such research, Kriger and Hanson (1999) refer to two self-care themes that are central to this research—the values of humility and compassion—as ways to heal in a workplace context. This has implications for accepting the limitations of oneself and others (Neff, 2009, pp. 3, 8). Interestingly too, although there is scant research to date, positive humility seems remarkably similar to self-compassion as noted by McElroy, Rice, Davis, and Hill (2014):

[H]umility involves (a) an accurate or moderate view of one's strengths and weaknesses as well as being (b) interpersonally other-oriented rather than self-focused, marked by
the ability to restrain egotism (i.e., self-oriented emotions such as pride or shame) in ways that maintain social acceptance. (p. 20)

Honest self-assessment, however difficult, can be the catalyst for inner compassion and compassion towards others as it is about seeing oneself as human, imperfect, and still loveable (Devenish-Meares, 2016a; Rohr, 2007). It also recalls the concept of inner-dialogue and the test as to whether self-talk is oriented towards solutions and healing or inner blame. Horn (2004) speaks of the possibility of positive self-talk as a choice that “focuses on solutions rather than fault, and set a positive precedent… that motivates others to respond in kind” (p. 3).

Although the literature has not made a significant connection to date, humility is not dissimilar to self-compassion in that is about noting one’s shortcomings and reality in a self-kindly way: things as they are, not how we would wish them to be (Rohr, 2007, 2010). It is worth noting that self-forgiveness and compassion have been mentioned once, very recently, with humility; however, the reference was singular and no exploration was undertaken (Maynard, 2019).

Summary: Criticisms, gaps, and opportunities from the literature

A critical gap is that almost all workplace spirituality literature is not about inner meaning or living better with stress in ways that address negative self-judgments or even self-hatred. The vast majority of research is about performance, issues to do with organisational culture, and workers’ values and character. Further, such examinations do not much consider the spirituality of incompleteness or to do with stress; i.e. when things go wrong. Stress arises or self-acceptance is lost, but these are not the primary foci in the literature. This leaves little room for extant research to consider let alone advance psycho-spiritual self-care, inner sense-making, and innate healing in times of stress at work.
Mindfulness certainly receives considerable attention but is not necessarily an action-oriented process let alone a heuristic process by which one could evaluate biased, irrational, or unhelpful thinking and actively search for new information and concepts to address what is happening (Bauer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1982). Overall, the literature gap highlighted is that simply noting or staying with ‘what is’, as mindfulness may suggest, is not sufficient. Thus, how does one go further and enact self-care choices of a reflective and conscious nature with the presenting issues or stress-related issue of phenomena still in mind, albeit self-tenderly? In other words, mindfulness does not by itself readily lead to self-care choices related to self-kindness and more active types of self-love.

The fact that mindfulness is one of three aspects of self-compassion is noteworthy and presents a research opportunity. As a result of this dearth of workplace research, I deliberately considered non-workplace material. What arose is that certain positive psychology elements and the spiritual literature both share a focus on a form of psycho-spirituality that is not pejorative and self-condemning, but rather is about “genuine self-confidence, self-love, and self-appreciation amidst the struggle of the divided self” (Charry, 2011, p. 291). From this, the three themes of self-compassion, humility, and a meaningful detachment or letting go arose again and again.

The literature review highlighted that, particularly from a psycho-spiritual self-care viewpoint, there is next to no evidence of the three themes having been examined together. Yet this should not preclude secular psychology dialoguing with spirituality. From this, a number of key themes emerged from the bricolage-centred literature search of both workplace and spiritual research and literature. Arguably, each theme would appear to extend considerations of how to support those who are suffering or stressed as they struggle to separate from and make inner sense of their circumstances. Moreover:
• Self-compassion is related to improved psychological health (Leach, 2017) but not much used for workplace stress considerations as yet;

• Psychological detachment is a self-care choice that appears related to aspects of self-compassion but in itself, does not assist in the how of meaningful letting go. Unexpectedly, humility and mindful letting go emerged as psycho-spiritual self-care choices that could be of use for workplace stress (Rohr, 2007). Psychological detachment literature hints that there a need for a different type of reflective detachment, yet I located no research which considered inner detachment in terms of work. This does not mean that people are not seeking to make sense nor adopt a healing-focussed sense of what has occurred;

• Humility, as advanced by Rohr (2007), bears similarity to self-compassion. However, both not been examined together alone or considered in workplace contexts. This is despite their mutual focus on self-kindly ways of noting one’s shortcomings and reality: that is, not work-life as it is, but how we would wish it to be.

The non-workplace related literature indicates that supporting people to detach self-lovingly and without negative self-judgment is a helpful way of de-identifying with stressful or anxiety-related events (Foulcher, 2010; Rohr, 2007). Notably too, the psycho-spiritual themes could assist someone to come to a non-judgmental view of what has occurred and may even assist the suffering with—in psychological trauma literature terms—stabilisation, safety, and coping strategies (Forbes, Phillips & Walker, 2009; Rose, Bisson et al., 2004).

Noting the role that self-compassion plays in positive psychology, it is surprising that it has rarely been used in a work stress context, nor has it been included with other psycho-spiritual ways to address lack of self-care, such as Rohr’s humility and ‘letting go’ motifs for health (Gilbert & Woodyatt, 2017; Neff, 2003; Roxas, Adonis & Caligner, 2014). In response, this research proposes a revision to the earlier, draft psycho-spiritual self-care framework.
proposed in Chapter One as a theoretical paradigm. This framework is now discussed more comprehensively in relation to the reviewed literature.

Revisiting the draft conceptual framework

The criticisms and gaps identified above led to a conceptual framework to guide the research and the publications in particular. Moreover, from the literature review discussed herein and, more comprehensively, from the five thesis-related published papers, it seems that self-compassion, humility, an intentional self-witnessing form of detachment, and letting go, possess some inherently similar, sense-making, and transformative characteristics that goes beyond ‘staying in the present moment’ as highlighted above. Building on the initial conceptual framework in Chapter One and noting the self-blame, negative self-judgement, and suffering related to stress begs the question: could these be integrated, at least conceptually, into a choice-based and reflective framework for researcher, carer, and the stressed and suffering?

It takes as key components the seemingly inter-related themes of self-compassion, psycho-spiritual detachment, building on psychological detachment and humility. From this, the peer-reviewed papers seek to demonstrate that self-compassion—in its self-acceptance and self-love—appears similar to humility in that both talk about self-caring, non-judgmental self-awareness, and self-acceptance. Much of this is also considered in writing on applied spirituality such as that of Ellen Charry (2007) and Darlene Fozard Weaver (2002).

The reviewed literature indicates that there is little research into psycho-spiritual self-care related to work despite workplace spirituality itself receiving considerable attention. Moreover, there does not appear to be a cohesive body of work that integrates approaches to deal with the more subjective, inner processes of the stressed that include: painful, inner rumination, increased self-blame and negative self-judgments and uncompassionate self-responding. Noting this, spirituality could challenge and enrich self-psychology and Christian
tradition could, in return, receive something back from the secular sciences in terms of self-love.

To guide the research and highlight the inter-operability of underlying factors, a draft conceptual framework has been developed. It explicitly guides the synthesis of certain, arguably interrelated self-care concepts and assists in pointing towards extensions of knowledge to give form to the inquiry (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018).

The literature reaffirms the potential of the draft, multi-dimensional self-care choice framework. This is about tenderly caring for oneself by being self-compassionate and humble: that is, accepting one’s incompleteness and meaningfully letting go. In fact, the literature inidicates there are at least some similarities between mindfulness and meaningful detachment, humility, and self-compassion; further, there is also the capability of each to be used alone or in combination as determined by the stressed to assist with psycho-spiritual self-care (Anderson, 2000). Both mindfulness and meaningful detachment are about noticing and some form of choice; however, the latter considers that “thoughts, feelings, and sensations are clouds that they watch passing by” (Bauer, 2003, p. 127). The thoughts may still be there and yet the concept that the thinker is not the thoughts comes into play (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

However, from the literature, one wonders if mindfulness could be augmented by other choices such as self-love and self-compassion as new ways to proactively navigate and heal from lived experience (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne & Davidson, 2008; Lutz et al., 2009). The potential extension beyond mindfulness is shown below in Figure 5. This is about “staying in the present moment”; this is about intentional and intuitive observation, enacted, hopefully in the form of self-care choices.
It is also suggested that these factors are connected and, while previously unexamined together, they could produce a synthesis that is of benefit to the stressed worker seeking to make self-caring sense of their circumstances. These relationships are described diagrammatically in Figure 6. It is noted that, given the complexity of the model, only these key relationships will be subjected to evaluation in the forthcoming three studies.

**Figure 5: Self-compassionate approaches extend mindfulness**

**Figure 6: The conceptual framework**
This conceptual framework posits self-compassion, humility, and psycho-spiritual detachment (‘letting go’) as psycho-spiritual, self-care choices. From this, the published papers of this author develop the framework. This addresses the dearth of psycho-spiritual self-care research into workplace distress; moreover, it recalls that self-compassion psychology is about mindfulness, self-kindness, healthy self-acceptance, and putting one’s failures into perspective. It is significant that wellness is positively correlated to happiness and conscientiousness, and negatively correlated to failure and depression (Neff, 2003a; 2007).

The way ahead

To guide the methodology, this framework was applied to link concepts and explicate and contrast research against the subjective human condition. Therefore, a series of papers are sequentially explored:

- Methodological considerations; Bricolage and the heuristic inquiry process
- Self-compassion
- Humility
- Detachment
- Extending heuristic inquiry process for self-care

While the themes have not been synthesised, they may be useful to support the sufferer’s self-care as well as inform managers, practitioners and chaplains (Neff, 2003b). Certainly, these themes need to be considered at various levels of interpretation and across disciplines, noting they may not normally converse with each other. This invites not only a reflective stance, given the highly subjective and deeply personal nature of the material, but strongly suggests the adoption of a bricolage-oriented approach as well.
Chapter Four: Methodology

Having briefly presented the salient literature, identified resultant research gaps and affirmed the research questions, this chapter describes the methodological considerations and the primary methods for the research. I note that a peer-reviewed paper (No. 4) articulates the use of the heuristic inquiry process in more detail.

Introduction

In the methodological process, Murcott (1997) served as an initial guide with his recommendation that crucial questions for a qualitative studies are: What overall strategy did you adopt and why? How did you go about your research? and What design and techniques did you use? From this, it is also important to acknowledge that my own reflexivity was a key methodological approach, namely, where I, as researcher, am constantly engaged in interior reflection, self-dialogue, and the synthesis and re-synthesis of emerging concepts that I too puzzle and agonise over (Findlay, 2003). This takes me to a central aspect, that of the researcher’s personal experiences being a key guide, as explored by Anderson here:

Especially in the study of complex human phenomena, the most robust research methods follow the ontogeny of the researcher's own experience of the phenomenon studied. Ontogeny, derived from the Greek word *einai* meaning "to be," and genes meaning "born," signifies a course of development. The researcher positions the inquiry from within her or his unique and personal experience. (2000, p. 34)

The above quote epitomises how the researcher’s interests guided methodological considerations. As stated in Chapter Two, my experience of caring for stressed workers focuses on an inner, intuitive, subjective inquiry into human experience. This researcher is strongly influenced by the ongoing study of psycho-spiritual responses to stress and suffering and, as Anderson (2000) notes, by the interpretation of experience, regardless of the appearance of objectivity: “Rather than bracketing the researcher's values and assumptions (as in established phenomenological approaches to research), the intuitive researcher employs her or his values
and assumptions as lenses to begin the interpretative cycles of analyses” (p. 35). Thus, the methodology for this research evolved during the course of the preparation and publication of the thesis papers, and it was guided by the conceptual framework.

**Bricolage**

Denzin and Lincoln say that an examination of the human condition requires exploration of personal prompts and focus on inner, personal questions replete with their idiosyncracies, search for meaning, self-perceptions and inner heuristics. Ideally, this is how any workplace carer or workplace ‘could’ respond to the presenting issues, however complex, subjective, and unclear they may be. It also requires co-opting whatever sources and themes are necessary (Mills, Wand, & Fraser, 2018). Bricolage is as a way to examine, complex, personal questions about the human condition and therefore is a key methodological influence.

It is defined by Rogers (2012) “as an approach to qualitative inquiry, [that] has gained popularity in academic circles. However, while conceptual and concrete precedents exist, the approach has remained relatively misunderstood, and unpopular, in broader research communities” possibly due to the approach’s complexity (p. 1).

The bricolage research method employed here is about opening up psycho-spiritual exploration and conversations and so I, as the qualitative researcher, become a bricoleur—a ‘maker of quilts’—engaging with a multiplicity of self-care issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). In fact, as Rogers (2012) says in terms of subjective meaning, exploration is based “on symbiotic analysis (which) appreciates how a multiplicity of complex ontological and epistemological factors shape phenomena” (p. 11). To achieve this aim, bricolage stimulates a deliberate search for newness or usefulness by making pre-existing norms or modalities explicit so that they can be challenged, changed, or augmented by new or other approaches. It does, however, remain hermeneutical in its approach. As Kincheloe (2004b) explains, "critical
hermeneutics is employed by bricoleurs to understand the ways that power operates to shape meaning and its lived consequences" (p. 11).

In this too, Carl Rogers is relevant, noting that the inner heustistics or rules can become unhelpful and may require support from disparate sources. He says that "experiences which, if assimilated, involve a change in the organization of self, tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolism" (Rogers, 1951, n.p). Moreover, and this connects such change to bricolage, Rogers (2012) suggested the “use (of) the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, developing whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand” (p. 4).

Reinforcing its usefulness in complex human care contexts, bricolage is described as a “metaphor to articulate how researchers embraced flexibility and plurality by amalgamating multiple disciplines (e.g. humanities, social sciences), [and] multiple methodologies” (Rogers, 2012, p. 4). Pointedly, it is about a movement beyond the “blinds of particular disciplines” which is necessary if we are to respond sensitively to the human condition at work (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 323). Yet openness to varying approaches does not mean that bricolage is a ‘free for all’ or that anything goes process. Rather, it is about sensible use of multiple sources (Kuhl, 2014). In the later part of the research, bricolage became more closely grounded in Moustakas’ (1994) heuristic inquiry process and could even be compared to Weick’s (1995) ‘sense-making’ approach. Thus, new perspectives emerge on psycho-spiritual self-care choices. It is about receptivity to cues and signs and new information so as to shine light on and synthesise solutions. While this is not without complexity, it offers potential to augment qualitative approaches (Rogers, 2012).

In terms of self-discovery, Shuster (2012) describes bricolage as recursive and interactive. Again, bricolage takes active note of the researcher’s preferences and experiences, and awareness of bias is factored into the research design. By combining and assimilating what
they have available, and what can be discovered over time via self-reflection and cognition, newer understandings of themes or issues can be gained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In sum, bricolage is relevant because it is not about embracing a known structure of way of thinking. It is about being ‘on the way’ to something new, as described by Jaspers (2003). This means that as the publications unfolded, this researcher sought additional illumination. This ongoing and revelatory process is useful in examining self-care choices relating to non-judgmental, self-acceptance and self-compassion.

The methodological process is supported by a learning journal, peer reviewed published papers, and regular clinical supervision related to my workplace pastoral work. These formed the basis of how I dialogued with various self-care choices and assisted in maintaining flexibility in the process (Rogers, 2012). Hermeneutically, this was a ‘sitting with’ and stewing over subjective human themes—with consideration of the literature—to continually re-assess my responses to workplace anxiety and stress (Moustakas, 1990). Of course, this is all inherently subject to bias, although the supervision and peer-reviewed papers assisted in this regard to ensure accountability, to test ideas, and to encourage rigorous reflection, all of which are vital to a subjective and innate study such as this (Richardson, 2000).

**Primary methods**

Guided by bricolage, the primary methods of the research were a wide conceptual search, inquiry, and synthesis using critical reading and heuristic inquiry, each of which have proven to be relevant to questions of inner meaning and self-care (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). In this, choice of method is driven by the need to immerse oneself in a real-life situation, and to explicate, reflect, and discern new information and responses (Moustakas, 1990). Such immersion and the search for illumination applies not only to the researcher, but to treatment
practitioner, even as it enables a self-kindly focus for the stressed. Thus, Figure 7 summarises the unfolding method:

**Methodological orientation**

Bricolage: researcher as “reflective” insider
*open to constant change, challenge, and criticism.*

Concurrent searching:
*constant and recurring literature scanning and review.*

**Methods**

1. **Critical reading and synthesis** (Meltzoff, 1998)

2. **Heuristic inquiry process** (Moustakas, 1990; 1994)
   (both supported by pastoral supervision and a reflective, learning journal)

**Figure 7: Progressive methodological process**

In the initial stages of the thesis, especially the first two publications, the main focus was critical reading and synthesis informed by bricolage. Later, this developed into use of the heuristic inquiry process.

**Critical reading and synthesis**

To strengthen the constant and recurring literature scanning and synthesis as a hermeneutic spiral, I engaged in critically reading selected texts at least twice. Meltzoff (1998) says critical reading is a key driver of personal illumination and reflection, calling it a “compelling and unshakeable proof for people” (p. 5). Yet, it also an idiosyncratic approach; as people self-determine, they may avoid some themes and overuse others.

Further, Spykerman (2017) of direct relevance to the thesis’ subject matter, found that self-reflection, supported processing time, and related wellbeing approaches, such as those preferred by mental health workers, offer “a sense of competency and mastery in work and
helped reduce stress and anxiety at work” (p. 56). The question remains: how are such self-care choices enacted? More pointedly, in the presence of stress or even anxiety, could self-care factors be used to enable sense-making, self-management, and healing?

Critical reading and synthesis can produce a meta-narrative review (Martin, 2017). This is about maintaining an overall research perspective while at the same time becoming deeply immersed in a phenomenon. Additionally, the act of writing and synthesis are themselves methods of inquiry. Of crucial note in this study, Richardson (2000) says writing is about finding about oneself and the topic. Uncannily, this seems to mirror the idea that self-care in the workplace is about a compassionate enabling of the worker to find out about themselves in self-kindly ways so as to improve self-care (Anderson, 2000; Neff, 2003a). This is particularly useful when the theme, construct or area of interest is multifaceted, ill-defined, constantly changing and may not meet the standards required for more organized reviews (Wong et al., 2013).

Overall, the research is integrated in the draft conceptual framework (Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier, & Singh, 2017). According to Greenhalgh et al. (2004, 2004b, 2005) and as succinctly summarised in the study of self-compassion by Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier, & Singh (2017), the reading and synthesis phases guide the five peer reviewed papers. The process includes the:

- planning phase: locating key texts; draw[ing] on feedback/review from colleagues to add depth to the plan;
- searching phase: where initial informal searches are used to identify domains that encompass self-compassion; electronic searches and citation tracking to identify seminal articles on self-compassion; constant scanning of e-databases to identify other empirical and theoretical articles on self-compassion;
mapping phase: findings from the search phase are used to establish key elements of self-compassion;

appraisal phase: the assessing of eligible articles to determine both relevance and validity;

synthesis phase: using articles “as the basis of a narrative account” to provide an overview of and critically examine self-compassion as a concept; and

recommendations phase: summarising the critical review and making “recommendations for practice, policy, education and research in self-compassion in healthcare providers.” (p. 4)

Each of these steps is made more explicit in the peer reviewed papers that comprise key parts of the study. Finally, noting Sinclair, Kondejewski, Raffin-Bouchal, King-Shier, and Singh (2017), I used a learning journal and pastoral supervision to reflect on, synthesise, and continually distill experience as well as responses to the literature. This researcher deliberately chose to be reflexive so as to advance research goals (Watts, 2007). This led to occasional adjustments, even the refinement of approaches, such as including the heuristic inquiry process, as the publications series progressed (Findlay, 2003).

**Heuristic inquiry process**

Heuristic inquiry research often commences with a personal issue or trial; here the focus is the stressed worker, with bricolage as the overarching guide. The intention is to uncover—through reflection, self-inquiry, dialogue and seeking new frames of reference—a more holistic depiction of what is occurring and what can change (Moustakas, 1991). One’s innate responses are able to be re-shaped. Moreover, recalling Gadamer’s (1975) iterative process and Kolb’s (1984) observational, learning, and testing approach, a healing-oriented heuristic approach specifically aims to augment the bricolage-oriented approach, noting that the latter seeks to:
steer clear of pre-existing guidelines and checklists developed outside the specific demands of the inquiry at hand. In its embrace of complexity, the bricolage constructs a far more active role for humans both in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it. (Kincheloe, 2004b, p. 2)

Heuristically driven, psycho-spiritual research is a complex, unfolding revelatory inquiry. It demands a continual openness to emerging methodological approaches. Again, this points to the need for a reflective learning journal to capture the unfolding reality, as described by Kincheloe, that can be incubated by way of less intense reflection (Moustakas, 1990; Watts, 2007). Such an approach also reflects Holliday’s (2007) work:

[Qualitative writing] becomes very much an unfolding story in which the writer gradually makes sense, not only of her data, but of the total experience of which it is an artefact. This is an interactive process in which she tries to untangle and make reflexive sense of her own presence and role in the research. (p. 129)

Noting Halliday (2007), the study adopts an adaptive and creative approach that supports the stressed to reflect on and make sense of complex, painful experiences, pointedly in a self-kindly way. As such, the research journey needs to be adaptable and exciting, especially when adopting a metacognitive approach (Bolton, 2004). Bolton claims that reflection is only effectively undertaken and grasped by becoming immersed in doing it rather than reading about it or following instructions. He adds that “reflective practice is a process of learning and developing” (Bolton, 2004, p. 4). Such an approach affirms use of the reflective journal, and continual refinement of approach and method.

Heuristic inquiry is a process of immersion, enlightenment, revelation and synthesis, which Moustakas (1990) says is “a conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension” (p. 16). Again, for this researcher, this is supported by continual reflection, clinical supervision, and a learning journal. In fact, Moustakas (1990) argues that the researcher immerses themselves in the topic which “requires alertness,
concentration and self-searching. Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion” (p. 27).

Again, such approach enacts the bricolage as a synthesis or an innovative assembly of ideas that inform theory, self-care choices, and meaning making. This is where the “the researcher is seen here as a bricoleur, a maker of patchwork, a weaver of stories: one who assembles a theoretical montage through which meaning is constructed and conveyed” (Yardley, 2008, n. p). Table 2 below summarises Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry process:

**TABLE 2: Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic inquiry approach**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>“Identification with the inquiry focus:</strong> The heuristic process involves getting inside the research question, becoming one with it, living it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Self-dialogue:</strong> Self dialogue is the critical beginning, allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one's own experience. Knowledge grows out of direct human experience and discovery involves self-inquiry; openness to one's own experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Tacit knowing:</strong> In addition to knowledge that we can make explicit, there is knowledge that is implicit to our actions and experiences. This tacit dimension is ineffable and unspecifiable; it underlies and precedes intuition and can guide the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Intuition:</strong> Intuition provides the bridge between explicit and tacit knowledge. Intuition makes possible the seeing of things as wholes. Every act of achieving integration, unity or wholeness requires intuition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Indwelling:</strong> This refers to the conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of a quality or theme of human</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
experience. Indwelling involves a willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration into some aspect of human experience.

6. **Focussing**: Focussing is inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the central meanings of an experience. It enables one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to make contact with necessary awareness and insight.

7. **Internal frame of reference**: The outcome of the heuristic process, in terms of knowledge and experience must be placed in the context of the experiencer's own internal frame of reference, and not some external frame” (pp. 15-27)

As shown, Moustakas’ approach is about the researcher’s innate involvement in the process. As per the seven steps outlined above, the researcher explores themes holistically and tenderly, recalling Anderson’s emphasis on the personal experiences of the researcher (2000). Given the subject matter, heuristics is particularly useful because it is self-focussed and self-directed and deals with understanding inner processes, deepen awareness, and develop new self-awareness. It also mirrors that both workplace carer and treatment practitioner are dealing with the self and self-awareness at a deeply personal level (Moustakas, 1990).

Underscoring this approach, Hiles (2001) adds that this explicit focus has a “transformative effect of the inquiry on the researcher's own experience… often achieved by a process called discernment” (p. 2). However, for an applied pastoral care researcher, the aim is to support change, meaningful discernment, and sense-making in the subject (Van Manen, 1990).

Thus, progressively, methodological processes came to be about grappling with three inter-related issues: (a) separating from painful emotions (detachment); (b) learning to live with incompleteness (humility); and (c) enacting non-judgemental, self-awareness and self-kindness.
(self-compassion). Certain self-psychology actively encourages self-compassion, however from a spiritual viewpoint it seems to ignore or even dismiss the opportunity to use relevant Christian spiritual resources. This is despite the fact that both approaches in their best iterations seek the best of human flourishing (Traina, 1999).

In essence, the whole thesis uses a hermeneutic process of repeated cycles of (re)referring to deeply personal material and noting one’s own responses as researcher and practitioner. This means considering and reconsidering innate, personal material and seeking caring-oriented illumination and explication (Moustakas, 1990). Such self-reference is most often located in a priori prejudices. Noting the constant revisiting of material called for in the heuristic process, Gadamer (2005) similarly describes the hermeneutic circle as “an iterative process through which a new understanding of a whole reality is developed by means of exploring the detail of existence” (p. 308), which, in this case, has to do with workplace stress.

Specifically then, by engaging with personal suffering and stress in the worker, I, as researcher, become immersed in what is occurring: namely, that suffering, self-blame and negative self-judgment which may impair self-care, self-love, and self-acceptance. Thus, Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic process puts a researcher on a personal, reflective journey from engagement, through immersion and incubation, and, finally, to explication and synthesis.

One also wonders: could the heuristic inquiry process, with adaption, also have direct applicability to the stress? Specifically, from reflection and revisitation, it is apparent that Moustakas’ (1990) process could, at least conceptually, be of direct use for the stressed. This is where one tenderly incubates, navigates their own reflections, explicates new meaning, and synthesises self-care ideas.

Overall, the draft conceptual framework from Chapter One, which is revised in Chapter Three, triggers questions about the parallel process of change, openness to new ways of integrated caring, and self-driven choices for the researcher as well as the sufferer based on
reflection, choices, and heuristics. For instance, heuristically related questions can, for the researcher, lead to opening up richer self-dialogue and newer frames of reference (Berkikker and McNabb, 2006; Oldman, 1993). The Moustakas-derived process of each party—researcher, chaplain and sufferer—is shown in Figure 8 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engages with a crucial subject</th>
<th>Immersion in phenomenon</th>
<th>Incubation</th>
<th>Illumination</th>
<th>Explication</th>
<th>Creative synthesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workplace suffering &amp; anxiety</td>
<td>Experiencing what’s occurring as catalyst for change—self-awareness</td>
<td>Retreating from intense forces—detachment —yet ‘living with the question(s)’</td>
<td>Open and receptive to truth knowledge &amp; intuition; integration of dissociated aspects (denialstage) to do with self-love and self-compassion</td>
<td>Focusing, immersing, self-searching &amp; self-disclosure; recognizes meanings are unique individual sense-making and self-care</td>
<td>New “wholeness” has been identified and experienced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: The movement from personal engagement to synthesis**

In summary, Moustakas’ (1991) heuristic inquiry approach assists one to get inside the research questions, noting that personal inquiry, reflection, and exploration will be agents of change. Such an approach is well established in the study of subjective human experience (Park, 2018; Sela-Smith, 2002). As a researcher engaged in this process, I engage with workplace stress noting the absence of integrated work to do with self-kindness and self-love in the literature. I also immerse myself in the phenomenon as it opens me up to other, external ideas (in this case, the three previously un-compared themes). This recalls Kenny’s (2012) description of the researcher as one who synthesises an “eclectic range of sources for a richer and fuller understanding of the experience being explored” (p. 9).
Openness to changing methodological needs

The subject matter demands an openness to changing approaches (Madsen, Kurtz, & Vigden, 2007). This is not only necessary in studying the human condition, it is also affirmed by Maxwell (2013, p. 40), who says about qualitative research, said “that any design component may need to be reconsidered or modified during the study in response to new developments.” In fact, as a researcher, practitioner, and one who experiences stress, I found myself constantly challenged by the complexities of the research, particularly the need to continuously consider the interrelationships between multiple methods, theoretical perspectives, philosophical orientations, stories of self-care, and sense-making strategies (Kincheloe, 2004a).

If we take the complexity and desire for self-care choices seriously, Moustakas’ (1990) method is “a conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension” (p. 16). This is useful for examining the self-care choices related to a stressed person trying to make sense of their circumstances and it mirrors Weick’s (1995) approach as well. Weick’s (1995) sense-making is useful as it connects psychology to spirituality whilst linking to what Moustakas (1990) would say is “the nature and meaning of experience” and growth in meaning, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. In short, Weick’s (1995) sense-making comprises:

- “one’s inner identity”;
- “reflecting on what has occurred, i.e. is retrospective”; 
- “organizational expectations or what others expect and think of us”; 
- “recursive and non-linear process” where new meaning and awareness arise;
- being “cue based”: i.e. what the person notices what has occurred;
- “perception be about what was plausible or seems satisfactory or sufficient”; and “(noting that) people create stories or dialogues to enact their environments” (pp. 24-30).
For instance, in the first two peer-reviewed papers which were exploratory in nature, and though heuristically informed, the methodological approach adopted was to about critically analyse, compare and begin to make sense of psycho-spiritual self-caring choices related to stress and suffering. Over time, the approach developed into one that was about the clear and deliberate use of the heuristic inquiry process.

From the third paper, it became evident after constant iterations and testing with colleagues that, guided by bricolage, the heuristic inquiry approach inherently informed the research and was now the key methodological guide. This necessitated the need for a clearer articulation of the study’s methodological approach: hence, the fourth paper. Pointedly, the heuristic process mirrors the eclectic and complex nature of stress and suffering and highlights a movement through the phenomenon to deliberately and creatively open one up to more than one theme or idea, however disconnected, provided it assisted self-care.

In terms of such openness, Weinstein and Weintstein 1991 (p. 161) state that bricolage is an “emergent construction" which appears to be well suited to the unpredictable challenges and intuitive possibilities that a self-care focus presents. Moreover, as Yardley (2008) says, “research work undertaken in this way inevitably tests the capacity of the methodology itself to move successfully beyond the boundaries of more formally documented and disseminated research practices’ (n. p).

For Weinstein and Weinstein (1991) and Yardley (2008), the coption of the heuristical methodological approach, in new contexts, were, in themselves, a research outcome. This is not only because it integrated aspects of positive psychology with applied spirituality, but also because adjusting the research triggers an awareness that Moustakas’ (1990) research approach could simultaneously guide the carer and the stressed. This is particularly relevant because the stressed, who are already immersed in the suffering phenomena, are seeking new discoveries
(illumination), searching for what these may mean to their sense of self (explication), and hoping to integrate (synthesize) these as self-care choices.

Over time, the research reflected a progressive accumulation of comparative knowledge for the sufferer’s self-care choices and for their care practitioner. Similarly, in terms of Moustakas’ (1990) heuristics inquiry process, this notes one’s own lived experience, one’s challenges and testing as a chaplain, as one seeks illumination and explication for the sake of the other.

Conclusion

This chapter explored methodological issues and particular ways of conducting what is highly subjective and reflective research. Noting bricolage, the chapter acknowledges the changing and eclectic nature of the subject matter as well as the heuristically-driven methodology, which is about immersion, illumination, and the use of previously unexamined self-care choices and themes to examine the subject.

While Moustakas (1990) was the primary guide, Weick’s (1995) sense-making approach clearly affirmed the intuitive trajectory or search for self-care choices from disparate sources. Both approaches are about an inner search, being reflective, tenderly exploring and adapting one’s inner story, and adopting a non-linear approach to self-care.
Chapter Five: The Papers Forming the Basis of the Research

This chapter provides a synopsis of the five research papers, all of which have been published in peer-reviewed journals. Each paper and its contribution to overall research aims and outcomes are now considered.

Introduction

The research was guided by specific questions, developed with consideration of self-awareness and non-judgmental self-acceptance. It looks at how the three self-care themes are included and synthesized into self-care considerations as presented in the published papers which naturally lead to the thesis’ conclusions and findings. From this, presenting a doctoral thesis by publication differs from a traditional thesis. Papers are prepared to stand alone in a variety of publications for different audiences, necessitating considerable repetition to provide readers the paper’s context. It is hoped that a progressive and incremental research process is demonstrated with the published papers.

Moreover, to ensure that each published paper was succinct and within the word limits required by journals, brevity in method descriptions was necessary. Thus, a paper on bricolage and the heuristic inquiry process is included to summarise the constant, yet highly adaptable methodological theme of bricolage; it details the iterative and constantly adapting research methods used in this study and has been accepted for publication subject to minor changes.
The published papers

Table 3 summarises the papers, their foci, and publication status at time of writing.

**TABLE 3: Summary of peer-reviewed papers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aimed at</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Title of Paper</th>
<th>Paper’s status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primarily, the researcher and care practitioner - so as to better understand the stressed</td>
<td>Self-compassion</td>
<td>Call to compassionate self-care: Introducing self-compassion into the workplace treatment process</td>
<td>Published 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Humility as a force enhancer: Developing leaders and supporting personal resilience and recovery.</td>
<td>Published 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>A newer form of psycho-spiritual detachment to support those suffering at work.</td>
<td>Published 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>The ‘tapestry’ of bricolage: extending interdisciplinary approaches to psycho-spiritual self-care research.</td>
<td>Published 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stressed themselves</td>
<td>Use of the heuristic inquiry process for the stressed themselves.</td>
<td>Extending the heuristic inquiry research process to enable improved psycho-spiritual self-care choices associated with workplace stress and suffering.</td>
<td>Published 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Synopsis of Paper 1: Self-compassion.**


In the context of workplace stress and suffering, this paper presented self-compassion in support of self-care choices. This self-care theme or choice arose from the literature review and it began the process of examining the thesis’ draft conceptual self-care framework. It took as its primary question:

How can self-compassion be used in conjunction with other self-care and self-management choices to address self-criticism, negative self-talk and help make meaningful inner sense of workplace stress?
In an ambitious undertaking, I explored “self-compassion psychology with its focus on mindfulness, common humanity, and personal well-being could augment existing treatments” (Devenish-Meares, 2015, p. 73). Noting that living with disappointment and failure is not much explored in workplaces from a psycho-spiritual viewpoint, this research paper was one of the first to examine self-compassion in a workplace context and locate it in terms of chronic stress.

This was about self-compassion’s interdisciplinary focus on self-care and sense-making. This is about how to intuitively “reframe experience, reduce self-criticism and increase self-acceptance and self-kindness” (Devenish-Meares, 2015, p. 73). Heuristically, Paper One indicated that self-compassion:

is useful in assisting people to understand and work through unhelpful thinking patterns, which again connects it to current military-related therapy settings. Neff, Hsieh, and Dejitterat (2005, p. 264) stated that this is because “self-compassion was found to have a significant negative association with self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination and thought suppression, as well as a significant positive association with connectedness, emotional intelligence, self-determination, and subjective well-being (p. 82).

Overall, the paper explored, albeit in a preliminary way, how self-compassion can support improved self-care choices and reduce pejorative negative self-judgments. Two examples highlighted praxis issues for chaplains and therapists and stimulated practitioner action.

The paper reinforced the need for interdisciplinary approaches not only for workplace pastoral care but to inform allied health treatment plans and improved sense-making and self-management. It also highlighted the need for business leaders to become more aware of and sensitive to psycho-spiritual, self-care choices. It did this by highlighting key benefits of incorporating spiritual values and themes related to treatment and time away from work. The aim was not to replace psychological and medical treatment, but rather to augment such approaches. The anticipated outcome is that practitioner and leader can be encouraged to

Finally, “a number of action outcomes and further research directions were offered to stimulate discussions in communities of research, pastoral care praxis, and management to assist those charged with recovery and treatment and those enabling resilience-building” (Devenish-Meares, 2015, p. 75). In particular, it was suggested that “self-compassion choices activate ways to attend to and reframe experiences in meaningful ways” (Devenish-Meares (2015, p. 83).

**Synopsis of Paper 2: Humility.**

“Humility as a force enhancer: Developing leaders and supporting personal resilience and recovery.” *ADF Journal*, 2016

The paper built on other published papers, not all of which are included in this thesis, by introducing and exploring applied humility as a self-care and inner sense-making choice. Similar to self-compassion, this emerged in the literature review as a psycho-spiritual self-care choice and, as such, it formed a part of the thesis’ self-care framework or conceptualisation. Keeping the interdisciplinary approach in mind, it proposed and explored a line of thinking that humility, in addition to psychological detachment, provided support for honest self-assessment and self-care. The paper took as its primary question:

How can humility as a non-judgmental self-awareness choice be used in supporting those who suffer, are stressed, or anxious or experience burnout?

The analysis highlighted the possibility of Rohr’s (2007) humility motif about non-judgmental self-awareness and how it could be extended beyond spiritual uses to aid the stressed worker. The relationship between humility and self-compassion was also noted. Breaking new ground, humility had not been used in this way nor had it been used to augment self-care; this is done by acknowledging imperfections, change, or failure without negativity. Recalling heuristics,
this view challenges negative self-perceptions and presented the option of an integrated approach for the stressed and their carers.

In terms of the thesis’ aims, such humility is a tender, self-awareness choice. As it pertains to the draft conceptual framework, humility assists in self-management and psycho-spiritual meaning making alongside self-compassion and meaningful detachment; further integrative research in conjunction with self-compassion is encouraged. Overall, and especially in the context of the Defence community, humility is highlighted as a self-care choice. It also reinforced the need for leaders to consider humility not only for psycho-spiritual soldier self-care, recovery and mental fitness, but also as an honest, albeit intrinsic, self-assessment tool.

**Synopsis of Paper 3: Detachment.**

“A newer form of psycho-spiritual detachment to support those suffering at work.” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 2017.*

In the context of those experiencing stress at work, this paper examined the third, psycho-spiritually focussed, self-choice aspect: meaningful detachment. The paper meets the need to offer a more comparative analysis of the detachment motif briefly introduced in Paper 2, bearing in mind it, too, came to form a part of the thesis’ emerging conceptual self-care framework. It took as its primary question:

In times of inadequacy, failure, and suffering, how can Rohr’s (2007) particular detachment motif support psychological detachment and what does it offer the sufferer? (Devenish-Meares, 2017, p. 7).

While psychological detachment is helpful in terms of workplace stress, recent literature says that that people may still ruminate painfully while away from work (Chopko, Facemire, Palmieri, & Schwartz, 2016). There is a risk that people may be alone, disconnected from support and not able to readily engage with or be supported in personal reflection; psycho-spirituality can help address stress.
The research extended ways an individual can engage with psycho-spiritual sense-making and, hence, meaningfully detach from stress as an enhancement to psychological detachment. Building on the earlier papers, the research used a bricolage-focussed approach and inner sense-making (Weick, 1995). It also further explored Richard Rohr’s spirituality of detachment as it relates to humility. Again, each theme was revisited in terms of the emerging conceptual model in support of a stressed worker’s self-care choices.

This paper meets the thesis’ outcomes by continuing the process of exploring and integrating what arose in reading and synthesis: humility, self-compassion (as a form of self-love), and detachment. This is about addressing negative self-perceptions, rumination and over-identification, and shifting (heuristic) awareness to seeing, knowing, without harsh self-judgment, and by letting go in a self-kindly way. For the first time, a self-compassionate form of meaningful detachment was proposed—ostensibly psycho-spiritual or simply meaning-related—to address the identified concern that psychological detachment is itself not enough because people may still ruminate problematically on their condition.

Breaking new ground, it was shown that Moustakas’ heuristic method enables the researcher to reflect critically and tenderly on the subject matter so as to assist the stressed struggling to live with and make sense of issues causing stress and anxiety. Again, noting previous research, those who are suffering may adopt a negative heuristic approach to their predicament. That is, they may be ruminating in an unhelpful way, engaged in problematic self-dialogue, and using pre-existing responses which are not working.

The paper also speculated that Moustakas’s (1990) approach could be used by pastoral and (allied) health practitioners, and the stressed, themselves. This is about noticing, encouraging new thinking, and turning inwards in a self-caring, self-kindly, and non-judgmental way so as to activate self-loving choices. It was suggested that given the researcher collects, examines, and re-interprets information in new ways, then why not the practitioner
and the stressed (Hiles 2001)? This requires more study; however, from a reflective viewpoint and in terms of my learning journal and supervisory feedback, it appears to have merit. This is about challenging long tacit knowing, improved intuition and developing more helpful, internal frames of reference (Moustakas, 1990).

Synopsis of Paper 4: Methodology.


This paper was driven by the need to further integrate the self-care themes, from Papers 1-3, methodologically, using a tender and intrinsic approach, given the self-directed nature of such choices and somewhat mirroring the nature of the human subject matter (Anderson, 2000). Overall, methodological considerations moved from an initial simpler comparative analysis and synthesis of themes to the use of bricolage in later papers to guide the qualitative research.

The qualitative method can evolve over time based on the researcher’s ongoing reflectivity and openness. Here, this adoption proved to be an unexpected outcome, not the least because the research learning journal was revisited constantly, and formed a key feature of the thesis. This is partially because bricolage and the associated heuristic method had not previously been used for workplace stress research, nor had it been used to synthesise self-compassion, meaningful detachment and positive humility as self-care choices.

This paper was written to address the dearth of research into and the complexities about ways to examine psycho-spiritual self-care. Of note, Anderson (2000) indicates that a compassionate inquiry “invites the researcher to structure the research method, procedures, setting, and context to maximize (rather than minimize) the very gateway through which the researcher understands or is inspired by the experience studied” (p. 34).
Therefore, in a deliberate search for the most appropriate research approach or structure and improving on what limited research was available, this paper sought to adapt a heuristic inquiry approach which is well suited to applied spiritual research (Gray, 2018). It also explicitly addressed the goal:

In terms of meaningful self-awareness and non-judgmental self-acceptance, how could self-care choices such as self-compassion, detachment and humility be included and synthesized into active self-care considerations?

Bricolage is about multi-dimensionality, personal researcher creativity and the innate search for meaning (Rogers, 2012). It draws from whatever theme, viewpoint or theme necessary to enable research. A reflective discussion points to the utility of bricolage for interdisciplinary studies of subjective sense-making and self-care, in this case, for the workplace. In conjunction with heuristics, it was shown that bricolage assists researchers to consider and, where necessary, challenge knowledge to move the researcher and the sufferer towards more beneficial self-care choices.

To stimulate bricolage’s use, a brief example was presented about self-care research that adopts the heuristic inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristics is about reflecting on, explicating, and developing inner awareness and becoming aware of pre-existing rules and inner, possibly unconscious stances. It draws on whatever is available and/or necessary to make meaningful sense. For the researcher, it is about a less intense inner focus on phenomena which is remarkably like what can occur in the suffering person if they can activate a form of inner reflection aimed at self-kindly awareness, reducing problematic rumination (Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Pastor, Sanz-Vergel, & Garrosa, 2009; Rohr, 2007).

A key outcome was the novel way in which the heuristic inquiry process, guided by bricolage, enables a researcher to make intuitive sense of stress-related self-blame and harsh self-judgments. The research is significant because it provides a way to reflect on and intuit self-care choices that may have been unconscious, unknown, or avoided. As such, the use of
heuristics in a workplace context and this self-compassionate way for both researcher and the stressed breaks new research ground.

In sum, the paper underscored a central thesis tenet that, while previously un-compared, self-compassion is remarkably similar to positive humility and connected to meaningful detachment. Theoretically, at least, it seemed that each self-care choice could inform inner sense-making and assist in the enactment of a psycho-spiritual self-care choice framework. The paper also points to further research possibilities which included the extension of the intuitive approach for use directly by the stressed. This is explored in Paper Five.

**Synopsis of Paper 5: The use of the heuristic inquiry process for the stressed themselves.**


The final in the research series, this paper adopted the heuristic inquiry research process from Paper One for use by the stressed so as to address negative self-judgment and make psycho-spiritual sense of their predicament, particularly where feelings of failure, inadequacy, incompleteness, and self-contempt arise. Thus, the stressed and not just the researcher “begins with the identification of a question that is deeply felt, a question that has an emotional effect on the researcher and cannot be ignored” (Kenny, 2012, p. 7). Such an approach engages with the innate perceptions even emotions of the stressed who may avoid or question helpful choices. As Kenny notes, both the researcher and the sufferer must “acknowledge these states (and) must live in and respond to the post-modern condition” (2012, p. 11).

The final paper engaged with the new tacit knowledge and intuitive choices that arose throughout the course of the thesis; these are: meaningful detachment, humility, and self-compassion. Underscoring this, chaplains and treatment practitioners often encounter what could be termed the “heuristics of stress” where people default to critical self-judgment and
suffering. This is where the sufferer takes a well-established, mental shortcut to negative self-talk, rather than actively engaging transformative choices associated with self-care. The paper also makes explicit reference to two ancillary research papers that explored self-love and self-compassion. Because they focussed on background, spiritual material they were not considered essential for inclusion in the final thesis. Here, I also intentionally recalled Rohr’s (2010) self-love motif which is related to positive humility connotations and helps address what is often missing at work: self-kindness and self-allowing, albeit from a more spiritual stance. These papers, as has been stated provided, important background to the thesis. The non-core papers were entitled:


Overall, based on intuitive use of self-caring options, the paper extends the use of heuristic inquiry process beyond researchers, to support self-caring and sense-making choices in the sufferer. It is also about ways to integrate psychological and spiritual thought to increase psycho-spiritual functioning (Bates, et al, 2010).

Mirroring Anderson’s (2004) intuitive approach—which is both tender and eclectic, matching the idiosyncrasies of human experience—the research posits that psycho-spiritual self-care can at least in part address problematic heuristics or thinking patterns and augment self-care. The heuristic inquiry process presents a step-by-step process that stimulates inner dialogue and reflection to bring about new perspectives and healing. Arguably, this produces a new set of helpful choices and even guidelines directed at self-kindly meaning-making. Such an approach is termed self-allowing and it combines self-compassion, self-love, and humility-type themes.
More particularly, in terms of self-compassion, meaningful detachment and positive humility are action-oriented approaches to workplace suffering (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). This reinforces the draft, conceptual framework. Then, as prevention factors against chronic stress and resistance to treatment, the framework offers chaplains and treatment practitioners practical strategies to support the stressed at work. The framework, if confirmed by further research, could form the basis of what I call proactive stress immunisation, that is, the enactment of choices before factors become problematic. This concerns self-kindly, non-enmeshed illumination of and reframing of one’s stress-based predicament, and building self-care expertise. Overall, intuitive choices that are affirmed in the heuristic inquiry process offer three practical outcomes:

1. A tender, inner appreciation of one’s real self, detaching from self-blame in a self-compassionate way;
2. Experiencing self-care, i.e. they are not defined by their judgments or so-called failures; and
3. A sense of stronger connection with themselves via the draft framework which can be used during times of stress and suffering.

**Potential future action focus: Workplace implications**

While the focus is self-care and meaningful transformation, an additional benefit of such reflective healing work could be workers returning to or persisting in work which may have personal even economic benefits. Additionally, re-reading the five published papers with consideration of supervisory feedback and self-reflection led me to wonder about workplace applications for self-care, that is, what action would look like ‘on the ground’. In the future this could lead to a set of practical and reflective questions that inform carer practitioner’s work with stressed workers.
Conclusion

The series of papers explore particular psycho-spiritual responses arising from the literature, and searching, tacit exploration and an illuminative process. It extends self-care conceptualisations to assist support people to address negative self-judgments. Adaptive methodological approaches based on self-reflection and intuitive also arose during the series which assists the researcher and potentially the stressed themselves. More integration is clearly needed, yet the initial conceptual framework offers a guide to further inquiry.

In the next chapter, a discussion of the various self-care factors ensues. Chapter Six is also where conclusions are drawn, contributions to and implications for theory and practice are discussed, some limitations are raised, and future research areas are highlighted.
Chapter Six: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter provides an overview of the research, discusses key findings, considers the implications for theory development and further research, and examines praxis for the stressed and practitioners. One notes that the discussion and outcomes aspect are progressively covered in more detail in the published papers. Finally, the chapter highlights some limitations of the research, as well as possible applications and research directions.

Research overview

This thesis explored gaps in psycho-spiritual self-care responses for stressed workers to address self-blame, negative self-judgments, and non-self-caring forms of self-talk that are the antithesis of self-kindly inner dialogue (Bassett, 1995; Neff, 2003a). This work breaks new ground by integrating selected psycho-spiritual themes or factors as deeply personal, meaning related ‘choices’ for the suffering or stressed worker in a workplace context, even when people are sent home and told not to ruminate on work. Arising from the literature review and the heuristic process, the thesis focussed primarily on self-compassion and a positive form of humility, which are both about meaningful self-acceptance and detachment. The aim was to synthesise these spiritual and positive psychology as personal self-care and sense-making choices.

Despite the themes not having been examined together much before in a workplace context, the research extended the understanding of responses to suffering using heuristics. Each self-care choice tenderly incubates, explicates, and re-frames what is occurring. Not dissimilarly, pastoral carers are asked to listen to experiences and stories on many levels and help in meaningful sense making and self-care. Yet, the stressed may not move to a healing heuristic process, but may remain fixated in terms of thinking and feeling or choose not to seek support; thus the stressed person is engage with a process such as “retreating from intense focus” in order to commence self-care (Moustakas, 1990, p. 33). Overall, the research
reinforced that pastoral researchers are not unlike the creative ‘listener’ let alone responder as they need to be open, heuristically speaking to sense-making and “draw their techniques from multiple perspectives, voices, and sources” (Rogers, 2012, p. 7).

Existing psychological approaches to workplaces, let alone treatment of workplace distress, are often about outcomes, separation and return to work fulfilment and do not automatically work holistically (King & Nicol, 1999; Petchsawanga & Duchon, 2012). This is notwithstanding the fact that a stressed worker may name inner meaning, spirituality and purpose alongside standard workplace goals (Devenish-Meares, 2019b; Rupert, Miller, & Dorociak, 2015; Sprung, Sliter & Jex, 2012). In real life, such issues are problematic and deeply personal and they call for an tender even intuitive response. Yet they are often poorly understood, let alone engaged with, noting that if one ignores such action it could exacerbate stress (Tzounis et al., 2016).

The research assists the stressed or suffering worker, and those offering treatment and conducting related research, to become more adept at combining or integrating seemingly disparate psycho-spiritual motifs in helpful, newer ways. This, was stated in Devenish-Meares (2020, p. 5), “is the epitome of bricolage which is about a varied, adaptive and wide-ranging search for relevant materials in and with which to conduct meaningful research” (refer also Levi-Strauss, 1966).

Affirming the importance of applied psycho-spirituality in terms of workplace stress, the thesis extended approaches beyond religion and belief by identifying and, where possible, combining humility, meaningful detachment, and self-compassion (Carter & Narramore, 1979; Neff, 2009; Scherer, 2016). This an intuitive dialogue between applied and positive psychology and spirituality and, as such, it ventures well beyond disciplinary boundaries (Chopko, Facemire, Palmieri, & Schwartz, 2016; Paterson, Whittle, & Kemp, 2015).
The thesis noted that “practical, inner meaning issues and spirituality can be overlooked, some research points to the efficacy of inner-meaning and sense-making as key themes for the workplace although it is not well understood nor comprehensively researched in the main” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 3). So, too, this thesis challenges two underlying notions. The first is that people need only to be treated medically or psychologically or removed from work (Sonnentag, 2012). This notion is exacerbated by the second: the possibility that people may choose not to engage with treatment in the first place. Each motif and theme will be examined in turn.

**Self-compassion and self-love**

Guided by bricolage, the research extended self-compassion into the area of workplace stress and suffering in a practical way, exploring Bassett’s (1995) “compassionate self-talk” imperative. A key outcome too is that some mental health responses could be better grounded in self-compassion praxis and related spirituality to assist workplace stress and suffering and possibly even inform aspects of PTSD care.

This study not only extended theory and praxis in terms of self-compassion as a key self-care choice. It extended Moustakas’ heuristics inquiry approach and found it relevant to psychospiritual self-care and inner-meaning, particularly to address inner self-critical rules as well as self-condemnation. It does this by allowing a new form of self-kindly inner focus and indwelling to bring about healing.

A crucial discovery, made through synthesis, was that positive psychology and modern Christian spirituality have much in common in ways that encourage self-kindness as a form of self-love and that liberate and strengthen the self (Charry, 2007, 2010; Schneiders, 2005). This is particularly so, once we ignore certain (and now largely debunked) earlier and negative theological-based self-love connotations (Charry, 2007, 2010). More pointedly, noting the two
preliminary papers on self-love, not included in the thesis, it seems that with further research this could inform positive psychological research and self-care praxis (Nolen-Hoecksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Affirming the draft conceptual framework, the thesis found that self-compassion from psychology, meaningful detachment, and humility each argue for gently holding but not being overwhelmed by stress and keeping one’s capabilities, and achievements or lack thereof, in perspective, and as part of the human condition i.e. that all people fail, suffer setbacks and experience stress. This outcome has positive implications for living with the sense of loss, failure or incompleteness of meaning that inevitably comes at work because each aspect supports people to come to a non-judgmental, self-acceptance of experiences as they are, not as we would wish them to be.

In the context of Weick’s (1995) sense-making, Rohr’s (2007) “letting go” motif and Neff’s (2003) practical self-compassion choices offer an approach to tenderly notice, address and reframe stressful experiences. This extends the efficacy of positive self-talk beyond education and community settings into workplaces (Bassett, 1995; Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael & Synder, 2006; Helmsetter, 1982). Specifically, self-compassion addresses such choices because it is about “healthier ways of thinking,” talking to oneself in a self-kindly way so as to address “perceived inadequacy [and] or harsh judgment and self-criticism “(Neff, 2003a, p. 224). This “could assist people to challenge maladaptive thoughts about trauma” and even stress (Devenish-Meares, 2015a, p. 83).

The research shows a connection between sense-making and detachment in terms of workplace scenarios. When considered in the context of self-compassion, Weick’s (1995) seven (7) inner, reflective, or cue-based aspects augment self-care particularly during times of painful rumination.
Overall, in the context of self-compassion, heuristics is useful and has implications for research into the human condition and how practitioners support someone to make positive choices during suffering. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) warn that any research is a ‘representation (i.e., a narrative)’, noting that “objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations” (p. 5). Similarly, Rogers suggests that “research texts can only represent specific interpretations of a phenomenon. As such, texts are always positioned from specific contextual perspectives” (2012, p. 6). Here, a key outcome was the self-kindly based opportunity to see how older inner rules can stymie self-care and how self-acceptance oriented spirituality could work with positive psychology, specifically, self-compassion psychology.

**Humility**

Use of bricolage provided illumination and increasingly uncovered possibilities around humility as a self-care choice in terms of Rohr’s spiritually related concept of “standing further apart” from symptoms and saying “that’s not all of me” (2007, n.p.); there is more to the stressed that pain and suffering. Of note, recalling Rohr (2007), I described what I term ‘compassionate explication’, seeking the truth or reality as incomplete as it is for researcher and for a worker. It points to reality about issues not as we want them to be rather how they really are so we can begin to tenderly reflect on them (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p.11).

Consequentially, guided by heuristics, inner experience and a prolonged focus the workplace phenomena make it clear that such choices are valuable. In particular, it was found that Ellen Charry’s and Richard Rohr’s work on applied spiritual choices and taking care of oneself are remarkably similar to self-compassion. These spiritual choices also relate to self-love which is particularly important to those who experience rumination and self-judgment, which can be key impediments to self-care and to recovery.
In essence, humility, as a self-kindly non-judgmental choice, is useful for those who suffer, are anxious, or experience burnout. A comparison between Tangney’s (2000) work on humility about seeing reality in a non-judgmental way and self-compassion, suggested these self-care choices can be a catalyst for supported inner change. In fact, my synthesis establishes the potential of humility as a personal resilience tool as much as it appears relevant to Bates’ model. In the sense that it is as contradictory as it sounds, it means that the recovering soldier can come to know and accept their incomplete or failed selves as a platform on which to build their recovery responses. (Devenish-Meares, 2016, p. 73)

Overall, the literature synthesis and heuristic reflection affirm positive humility as a caring and possibly, subject to further work, proactive protective factor against harsh self-criticism, over thinking, or even catastrophising an issue. Finally, humility, and certainly this is not easy, humility is “a sign of great courage and deep spiritual understanding” (Richmond, 2018, n.p.).

**Detachment**

Extant research is mostly about psychological detachment from work (Leigh, 1997; Sonnentag, 2012). This study advances a reflective, self-care choice model that includes meaningful reflection and which points to a different and less intense form of what Moustakas (1990) calls “focus”. Specifically, it addresses Moreno-Jimenez et al.’s (2009) question of what happens when “repetitive thoughts and feelings about past events are intrusive and aversive” and physical separation from work (stress) is not enough (2010, p. 360).

Another thesis outcome was the discovery that Rohr’s (2007) self-kindly “standing apart” motif—in which one engages in “observing oneself calmly and lovingly is remarkably like the incubation phase of heuristics, that is, a retreat from an intense focus” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 20). This different form of ‘focus’ is about noticing and standing further away from causation in a self-kindly, calm, and more objective way to note its effects (Rohr,
2007). Essentially, “detachment still takes place but with a choice to actively lower intensity using self-kindly choices” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 10). Again, heuristically, this approach challenges unhelpful cognitive processes such as “I am my pain”, “I can’t stop ruminating” or (metaphorically) “I didn’t know there was another place to stand.”

Summary

In summary, the research, albeit in a preliminary way, integrates interdisciplinary choices. This is supported by well-established critical literature and comparative analysis of psychological and spiritual themes to do with self-care. Overall, the thesis addressed the overarching research question:

- What psycho-spiritual choices can assist in workplace self-care, especially in terms of stress, self-blame and harsh self-judgments?

Then quided by this key question, using the literature, deeper inner reflection on stress and suffering, and heuristically-driven intuitive discernment, the themes that emerged were: self-compassion, humility, and meaningful detachment (Anderson, 2004). Each theme is related to a particular research question which were explored in the relevant published paper. In this final chapter were revisited and summarised in the revised conceptual framework. Overall, considering the specific research questions, Table 4 below shows how key findings relate to the research questions:

**TABLE 4: Linking the specific research questions to the papers and findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research questions related to self-care choices</th>
<th>Published paper that considers this aspect</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How could self-compassion, meaningful detachment, and humility enable improved inner sense-making in terms of psycho-spiritual self-care?</td>
<td>Papers 1-3 - individually &amp;</td>
<td>self-directed, self-care conceptualisation emerged that integrates/uses whatever combination of humility, meaningful detachment, and self-compassion that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 5 - collectively considered necessary or useful. This is an inner, intuitive dialogue focussed on self-care</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can self-compassion be used in conjunction with other self-care and self-management choices to address self-criticism, negative self-talk, and help make meaningful inner sense of workplace stress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>the research further extended self-compassion into the area of workplace stress. It helps address negative self-judgments and self-talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can humility as a non-judgmental self-awareness choice be used in supporting those who suffer, are anxious, or experience burnout?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
<td>positive humility was discovered and intuited as a self-caring, self-honest and proactive factor to address harsh self-criticism, over thinking, or even catastrophising an issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In times of suffering, failure or inadequacy, how can Rohr’s (2007) ‘standing apart’ detachment motif and ‘letting go choice’ support or complement psychological detachment? This acts on the possibility that detachment from work is augmented by a psycho-spiritual response related to sense-making and self-care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 3</td>
<td>meaningful detachment works alongside the other choices; Rohr (2007) says this is about a different, less intense form of noticing and yet letting go in what Moustakas (1990) calls “focus”</td>
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</table>

The research contributes to the emerging interest in interdisciplinary ways to support self-care and meaningful sense-making in that it incorporates a broad approach to modern spirituality with positive psychology. In practice, spirituality may or may not be about religion, but it is about the search for inner meaning and hope. Irrespective of the precise nature of the relationship between themes, which needs further qualitative exploration, there seems a notable connection between humility, meaningful detachment, and self-compassion (as seen in Breen, Kashdan, Lenser & Fincham, 2010; Williams, 2015).
Emerging conceptual framework

At the end of the publication series, the literature, critical analysis and intrinsic illumination affirmed the proposed conceptual framework for praxis and reflection. This helps build theory and points the way to further research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In essence, each successive paper explored the themes that were initially identified in the literature review and critical synthesis. As the publications worked progressively through self-compassion, humility, and meaningful or spiritual detachment there was a discernible affirmation as to how the themes interacted and contributed to the overall research goals.

In terms of theory building, the emerging conceptual framework highlights the interaction of key self-care choices from both conceptual and applied points of view. In fact, what arose was a parallel process that addresses the critical issue of a dearth of research into psycho-spiritual, self-care. Such a process also produced a methodological innovation: the extension of the heuristic inquiry process to support worker self-care research for the first time. In sum, some outcomes were thematically-based self-care choices whereas others were about methodological enhancement. Of note, the parallel processes took place concurrently.
The framework outlined in Chapter One now more fully recognises that the researcher and the stressed each in their own way are able to integrate self-care choices. This reflects a non-linear hermeneutic movement around the themes of detachment, humility, and self-compassion. The amended conceptual framework presented in Figure 9 highlights the integrative actions concerning self-care and methodological innovation.

![Figure 9: Amended conceptual framework](image)

First, theoretically, self-compassion, humility, and detachment work together. Second, on a practical level, the stressed takes the necessary self-caring choices that arise from reflecting, intuiting and seeking to make meaningful sense of things. The framework is intended to stimulate further research.

In summary, the updated conceptual framework highlights the contribution to knowledge arising from the new self-care synthesis and the heuristic inquiry process.
Specifically, it shows the various psycho-spiritual choices that can address self-blame and self-judgment. The framework also highlights opportunities to further explore the integration of theory and praxis along the following lines:

- **Theory**: The thesis explored and integrated humility, self-compassion, and meaningful detachment.

- **Self-care choices praxis**: On a personal level, the research offered a mode to support and guide allied health practitioners and the stressed themselves. This encourages reflection on, dialogue with, and learning from the painful results of stress and suffering.

The theoretical development and praxis choices connected to the framework are shown below in Table 5. One can see the heuristic-related conceptualisation in both columns and, as Pinchbeck (2006) notes, the table shows that both the researcher and the stressed are engaged in self-inquiry to become “perceiver[s] of patterns”; both the researcher and the stressed are encouraged to explore and re-frame experiences in a self-accepting way, not just in terms of theory and concepts, but in living with and through what is occurring (Van Manen, 1990). This is also an expression of focussed self-reflection and positive self-talk that works for the individual (Stanulis & Manning, 2002).
TABLE 5: Moustakas (1990) Heuristic process in terms of the conceptual framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moustakas’ heuristic inquiry process (1990, pp. 15-27)</th>
<th>Conceptual framework arising from the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Identify a phenomenon:** “involves getting inside the research question becoming one with it” (p. 15) | **Theory development: for the workplace researcher**  
The researcher is deeply engaged with the stressed/sufferer’s care; brings their own perspectives about stress, anxiety, and suffering | **Self-care praxis: choices for the stressed**  
The person “grapples with negative feelings, anger and loathing” (Murphy, 2003, p. 59) and self-talk. Navigates symptoms with self-compassion; they do not avoid them, nor do they ruminate painfully. |
| **Self-dialogue:** “speak directly to one’s own experience. Knowledge grows out of direct human experience; discovery involves self-inquiry, an openness to one’s own experience.” | **How much and what type of self-dialogue?**  
The researcher and/or carer becomes aware of their own experiences. There is a possibility that the sufferer’s hard self-judgments and rumination inhibit healing-oriented knowing and self-dialogue or inquiry (Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Pastor, Sanz-Vergel & Garrosa, 2009; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). | **Self-accepting, self-inquiry.**  
The person is actively encouraged to use self-awareness and self-acceptance to know and talk to personal circumstances but in a self-kindly and self-accepting way (Neff, 2003a). Involves dialogue with inner experience in a different way, possibly challenging painful or suffering-related heuristics. |
| **Tacit knowing:** Beyond explicit knowledge, here is a implied or “tacit dimension which may be “ineffable and unspecifiable; underlies or precedes intuition” Hiles, 2001, n. p). Significant in that, having adopted a bricolage approach, it “guides the researcher into untapped, directions and sources of meaning.” | **This aspect is connected to a bricolage-informed self-knowing** (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Researcher, using bricolage, draws on a variety of self-care knowledge from psychology and spirituality. They use sustained and open reflection to explore new meanings, explanations, and opportunities for self-care. | **Person is supported in the realisation of how self-care knowledge can be extended.**  
They are guided to new/different ways of seeing a situation and finding healing and inner meaning. It may be about how they have avoided a self-compassionate stance. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moustakas’ heuristic inquiry process (1990, pp. 15-27)</th>
<th>Conceptual framework arising from the process</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intuition:</strong> “provides the bridge between explicit and tacit knowledge… makes possible seeing things as a whole. Every act of achieving integration, unity or wholeness requires intuition.”</td>
<td>Theorutz development: for the workplace researcher</td>
<td>Self-care praxis: choices for the stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actively and intuitively, incorporate humility, letting go and self-compassion literature. Work heuristically so that a stressed person “recovers enough self-respect to recognize that (s)he is valuable in spite of what she has done” (Murphy, 2003, p. 75).</td>
<td>Movement from psychological detachment to a “knowing” detachment with self-compassion. Metaphorically standing marginally further apart to get perspective. This is Rohr’s (2007) stable witness motif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indwelling:</strong> “the conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of a quality or theme of human experience.” This “involves a willingness “to gaze with unwavering attention into some aspect of human experience (Hiles, 2001, n. p).”</td>
<td>Reflective research which considers that psychological detachment does not (yet) contemplate a new form of rumination nor enact:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• self-compassion (Neff, 2003a)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• self-love (Charry, 2010)</td>
<td>Maintain non-judgmental attention; being told not to think and associated rumination will not overcome negativity; whereas one may (yet) think on in a self-loving and non-judgmental way and detaching meaningfully from pain to observe one’s suffering in a self-kindly way (Rohr, 2007). This is about self-kindly talk as a form of self-management.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• humility &amp; self-kindly standing apart (Rohr, 2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focussing:</strong> “inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the central meanings of an experience… [This] enables one to see something as it is; make whatever shifts are necessary to make contact with necessary awareness and insight”.</td>
<td>Researcher maintains constant focus on: Neff’s (2003a) self-compassion theory; inner knowing and cues (Weick, 1995); heuristics (Moustakas, 1990); and psycho-spirituality. Gains insight in the use of self-kindness and mindfulness (not rumination)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The stressed are encouraged to see themselves as part of the human condition (Neff, 2003a, b).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They bring a self-kindly awareness to their experience and take a self-loving and non-judgmental stance (Rohr, 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They do not dwell on perceptions of self-inadequacy or failure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moustakas’ heuristic inquiry process (1990, pp. 15-27)</td>
<td>Conceptual framework arising from the process</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theory development: for the workplace researcher</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-care praxis: choices for the stressed</strong></td>
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<td>Interior framework: “outcome of the heuristic process in terms of knowledge and experience must be placed in the context of the experiencer's own internal frame of reference.”</td>
<td>Duymedjian and Rüling’s (2010) knowing, acting (practice) motif raises questions:</td>
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<td>- How will the suffering and their carers enact new approaches? (“underlying world view: metaphysics”)</td>
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<td>- What ideas and concepts do we draw on?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• New internal sense of knowing; choosing self-acceptance; honours experience as it is (Weick, 1995).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The concept of self-allowing which combines self-compassion and humility themes.</td>
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<td>• An empowerment approach “becoming their own expert (Corey, 2017, p. 482).</td>
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Summarising the above table, we are dealing with self-kindly treatment of oneself. This involves tenderly noting patterns and activating an intuitive search for self-care options. It is “about sensitively, intuitively and gently reflecting, dialoguing with the self, revealing new information and reframing what is possible, noting that all the while we are dealing with the lived and therefore subjective inner experience of people” (Devenish-Meares, 2020, p. 4)

**Some methodological lessons learned and contributions**

Aside from the conceptual self-care framework, another contribution of the research is the use of bricolage and heuristics to help the researcher make inner sense of experience and search for self-care choices. Bricolage guides the process of enabling the researcher to make sense of their experience in terms of self-care choices. This built on previous research and not only offers a new approach for researchers but provides an intuitive approach that the stressed themselves could use. Then, the heuristic inquiry process matches the complex and innate
nature of human suffering. The heuristic method is self-directed in nature and, importantly, focusses on deeply personal questions. This mirrors the experience of workplace carers and treatment practitioners who are dealing with the highly subjective self: searching for choices associated with inner knowing, intuition, and internal frames of reference.

Moustakas (1990) defines his method as “a conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension” (p. 16), which is useful to a stressed or suffering person seeking to make sense of their circumstances using self-compassion. In terms of heuristics “the components of Weick’s (1995) sense-making motif are relevant when one relates psychology to spirituality: (1) About one’s inner identity. (2) May be reflecting on what has occurred (i.e., is retrospective)” (Devenish-Meares, 2017 p. 9).

In retrospect, the first two published papers were more general and exploratory in nature as they were guided by a bricolage approach. Over time, due to the subjective and inherently complex themes examined, my own inner reflections came more to the fore as I paused to reflect and continually trialled what I was learning. Here I recall the earlier chaplaincy vignette, which presented a rich research opportunity as much as it contained potential risk ofr bias. Yet, the process uncannily mirrors the messy nature of explication and the search for meaning in the care practitioner, in the stressed person, and the applied psycho-spiritual researcher.

The risk of bias was ever present due to the innate nature of the study about the stressed and suffering self. Therefore, as the preliminary outcomes are personal, they will require validation in later research if they are to have more general applications. However, the clearer adaptation of Moustakas’ (1990) heuristic approach in later papers helped ensure a continual testing of assertions and preliminary outcomes, while at the same time maintaining a closeness to the individual sufferer while supporting them.
Adjusting research approaches in the workplace context

The research extended ways to make psycho-spiritual sense of stress in terms of Weick’s sense-making method. This is similar to Moustakas’ (1990) heuristics as they both consider how the inner person searches for new and more useful meaning. Similar to Moustakas (1990), Weick’s work is about inner identity, cues, reflection on what occurs and inner explication. It was found that such an approach offers the researcher and stressed approaches to reconsider and reframe their awareness and care. Such new perspectives allow for self-care to consider as many themes in whatever combination necessary and to challenge older, unhelpful thinking and illuminate and stimulate self-care choices.

A secondary level of reflection was driven by the key role that the researcher’s reflective journal played in the study and development of a draft framework. Writing and personal reflection as additional methods of inquiry, alongside synthesis and heuristics, identified useful connections.

Bias and the learning journal

Using a bricolage-oriented personal learning journal prompted revisitation of earlier synthesis. This led to evolution in my understanding of the complex, highly subjective human material (Maxwell, 1996). This not only introduced the risk of bias, but also the need for constant adjustments and refinement in the methodological approach. Specifically, the heuristic inquiry process emerged as the series of publications progressed (Findlay, 2003).

The learning journal, clinical supervision, and comparative analysis were deployed to ameliorate the bias that is inherent in all research. These checks and balances allowed for a continual openness, as far as possible, to self-care possibilities and the integration of knowledge from different disciplines (Moustakas, 1990). Noting the risk of bias, writing the learning journal was, itself, a method of inquiry as it enabled personal testing, reflection, and synthesis which were crucial to the intrinsic study (Richardson, 2000). This is about a compassionate
enabling of the worker to find out about themselves in self-kindly ways and choose improved self-care. As researcher, I deliberately chose to be heuristically reflexive to advance the research goals and subject the learning journal to clinical supervision with the aim of ameliorating blind spots and biases (Watt, 2007).

**Contributions and significance to industry and practitioners**

Using self-compassion, humility, and meaningful detachment, the research is the first attempt to establish theoretical and praxis links between making meaningful and psycho-spiritual self-caring sense to address harsh self-judgments. It also addresses the notion that simple separation or detachment from workplaces is inadequate because people can still ruminate painfully. This research offers a psycho-spiritual means to make sense of and, if necessary, stand apart in a self-caring way. This not only informs theory and praxis; it extends the uses of self-compassion, and encourages psychologists and chaplains, for the first time, to consider positive humility.

The unique contributions to research and praxis is evidenced by the five, peer-reviewed papers. This was also affirmed by the 24 papers and studies which reference my research to date. The latter demonstrates the key issue for intrinsic research, that of sympathetic resonance from researchers (Anderson, 2004). Overall, the thesis contributes to:

**Theory development**

- Self-compassion from positive psychology. The thesis identifies that self-compassion, albeit from a psycho-spiritual viewpoint is not unlike positive humility and self-love; each can be a self-care choice.

- **Humility.** The research extends it as a key, positive self-care option for the self-judgmental worker. Arguably, humility supports holistic mental treatment regimens because people are encouraged to take realistic and self-kindly stock and then enact
recovery action based on sound information. This helps address negative self-connotations.

- **Detachment.** Noting that some people still ruminate painfully when separated from work, the research offers new perspectives on psychological detachment research and, specifically, separating with tenderness and self-acceptance. This extends the concept of detachment using non-pejorative and even nonreligious connotations of spirituality. It is about seeing, noticing, and choosing to let go in a positive and reflective heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990).

- **Self-care self-choice framework.** The thesis synthesises self-compassion, humility, and detachment into a preliminary, reflective, self-choice framework for the workplace to inform practice and reflective research. It presents, over a series of published papers, a systematic analysis of similarities and dissimilarities about how the themes engage with each other and speak to one’s innate sense of being. This form of reflection contributes to an individual’s choices in responses to stress-based failure and imperfection.

- The conceptual framework contributes an integrated way of reflecting on and encouraging self-care. It provides a way to augment self-awareness and kindly self-acceptance choice. Additionally, it suggests a theoretical basis for further studies into workplace spirituality studies related to stress. The implications for personal healing, sense making, and training are significant because the research provides new perspectives about self-care and stress.

- The new multi-theme framework invites researchers to more holistically theorise and reflect on self-care choices in conjunction with extant treatment options. This breaks down theory-based barriers between spirituality and psychology.
Relevance to practice

The thesis contributes to improved organisational responses and approaches. Traditionally, most responses to stress, burnout, and suffering are about separation from work, extant treatment, or exclusion which can lead to sense of being overlooked or further isolated. The thesis shows ways to support responsive, reflective, and compassionate cultures that honour peoples’ personal or inner aspirations and proactively work to avoid unnecessary suffering, negativity, and resentment. In particular, humility, often viewed negatively or as a character trait, is shown to be a caring personal choice for the stressed, yet can also be fostered in leaders who must oversee systemic responses to stress.

In fact, this research stimulates practitioners to think more broadly and encourages leaders to promote worker (self)care and policies as well as activate a positive and reflective workplace climate. Further, the research, indirectly at times, encourages leaders to reflect and act compassionately on decisions that enhance human care culture and the inner lives of workers. These decisions are respectful and enable people to reflect, heal and grow.

Developing a “worker care” culture

Organisations ostensibly promote values, mission and work/life balance, but these are not necessarily noticeable in times of disaffect, suffering, or worker anxiety. Business, treatment regimens, and carers could make more systematic use of reflective tools to develop a quality worker care culture to support both its HR strategy as well as enhance compassionate responses within the institution. The research stimulates leaders and practitioners to find new ways to interact with workers sensitively, noting personal affect, aspirations, and consequences and allowing them the time and space to reflect, restore, engage treatment, and heal.

Applied spirituality is significant here; the research extends meaning and spiritually-based detachment, humility, and self-compassion into the area of workplace spirituality
research and praxis. Importantly, bricolage and heuristics have not been extensively used before to synthesise self-care choices especially as related to individual stress.

**Methodological development**

The heuristic inquiry process was extended to psycho-spiritual research about the workplace. This intuitive and inner reflective approach for researchers is based on the heuristic inquiry process. While much confirmatory work will be necessary, the study affirmed the potential of the heuristic inquiry-based methodological approach, in that it seems to develop and strengthen approaches to self-care research. Specifically:

- **Heuristic inquiry process.** Moustakas’ heuristic inquiry process assists the researcher and practitioner in re-thinking lived experience in a self-compassionate way (Moustakas, 1990; Neff, 2003a). This is not so introspective as to be self-defeating. Of particular note, the process (at least in part) is also remarkably similar to Rohr’s “standing further away” or letting go motif. As Moustakas puts it, “this involves a retreat from the intense, concentrated focus, allowing the expansion of knowledge to take place at a more subtle level, enabling the inner tacit dimension and intuition to clarify and extend understanding” (1990, p. 27).

- **Extending heuristics from researcher to subject.** The research suggests, for the first time, that the heuristic inquiry process can be used by the stressed and their carers to address inner, self-critical “rules” that lead to self-judgments and suffering.

- **Practitioners’ and stressed workers’ propensity to engage.** In terms of workplace self-care, the research challenges practitioners to recommend physical separation which includes forms of self-acceptance where indicated and if circumstances make it safe to do so. In practice, for many reasons, people may decide not to seek support or treatment as I have discussed (Devenish-Meares, 2015).
Looking ahead, while keeping in mind Moustakas’ heuristics, a key step would be workplace education that considers how personal, situational, and contextual factors influence one’s willingness or not to enact meaningful self-care, self-acceptance, and self-love.

**Recommendations for practice and implications for further research**

This section summarises recommendations for practice and, noting the research gaps, considers implications and proposes options for future research. Although this research limited its focus to three highly individual choices or conceptualisations of meaningful self-care in times of stress, opportunities for further research are many. Notably too, quantitative research into the draft framework lay outside the scope of this research.

An area of further research would be to consider the benefits of how self-determination, self-compassion, and humility could relate to and be incorporated into other self-management choices, such as self-forgiveness. In particular, one wonders how trigger events and issues result in stress, anxiety, and suffering, which could be introduced as independent variables. Other areas of possible research include:

- **Self-regulatory behaviour.** In conjunction with self-compassion and humility, investigate the role that the human endocrine system activity plays in terms of self-caring and self-soothing behaviours in times of stress (Lee, Gino, Jin, Rice, & Josephs, 2015).

- The possible **correlation of applied spirituality choices** such as humility with self-compassion and its relationships to adaptive psychological functioning. Quantitative research may support indications that some combination of such self-care could be helpful in times of self-criticism, depression, and work-related anxiety.
An extension of the heuristic inquiry process from researcher to subject. While this research used heuristic inquiry to strengthen approaches to self-care using self-compassion, combined with humility and meaningful detachment, quantitative approaches could be used to explore if and how the stressed and their carers could apply the heuristic inquiry process directly themselves; this is on the basis that such self-care choices could transform inner, self-critical ‘rules’ that lead to self-judgment.

Other research approaches, with appropriate variables to operationalise psycho-spiritual choices, could be adopted to generalise the findings using both case study and quantitative approaches.

This research also points to opportunities for further qualitative and quantitative research, particularly to develop the self-choice model, by thematic analysis or linear regression, respectively. Moreover, considerably more is needed to confirm the self-compassion and humility, in combination or separately.

The preliminary self-care conceptual framework could be confirmed using a case study approach.

Psycho-spiritual self-care choices in terms of, or in conjunction with, the establishment of therapeutic or other psychological or psychiatric support mechanisms. This has the potential to extend or confirm the draft, conceptual framework. The current study is theoretical in nature, albeit through the experiential lens of the research. Therefore, quantitative approaches would be valuable to explore dependant and independent variables associated with the causes of stress and suffering and psycho-spiritual responses. An examination of variables would provide pre-intervention and post-intervention benchmarks.

Self-forgiveness. Although mentioned in the literature review, this theme emerged late in the research as a potentially useful additional concept. Self-forgiveness addresses
self-blame and reflects on perceptions of failure and stress causation in tender, self-forbearing ways. Here, potential theoretical and praxis considerations may be relevant. The circumstances that gave rise to stress may produce self-condemnation and have the appearance of self-transgression suggesting that self-forgiving is necessary. The extant literature on wrongdoing, irrespective of its focus, may be useful, particularly when examined in the context of a positive self-view (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000).

- **Workplace cultural studies.** While the self-care choices are inherently personal, they take place in interpersonal and environmental contexts. Future research could consider how such contexts enable or support self-care or indeed if workplace values assist a person to find or recover personal meaning. Moreover, examination of differing types of workplaces that are either supportive, neutral to, or hostile to personal recovery and transformative initiatives such as self-care and personal, inner reflective work, could be useful.

- **Business leader and human resource manager awareness.** Further research could include the development of training mechanisms that extend leaders’ and human resource practitioners’ awareness and engagement with psycho-spiritual sense-making and pastoral care issues.

To assist encapsulate the outcomes, a summary of the thesis’ recommendations related to practice and future research are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6: Practice-oriented and research recommendations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Themes or concepts</th>
<th>Practice recommendations</th>
<th>Research recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Draft framework - The three themes of self-compassion,</td>
<td>Use interdisciplinary approaches to explore how support self-care and meaningful sense-making in</td>
<td>Conduct qualitative and quantitative research into how the stressed or suffering worker, and those offering</td>
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<td>humility and detachment collectively</td>
<td>that it incorporates a broad approach to modern spirituality with positive psychology. Devise workplace education that shows how personal, situational, and contextual factors influence one’s willingness or not to enact meaningful self-care, self-acceptance, and self-love.</td>
<td>treatment and conducting related research, can combine/integrate the three psycho-spiritual motifs in support of self-care and sense-making. Specifically: (a) Need for improved multi-factorial analysis using appropriate independent variables, research any effect that humility, detachment and self-compassion have on adaptive psychological functioning and stress alleviation (b) research the effect (if any) of the self-care choices on the causes of stress and suffering (c) conduct qualitative and quantitative research to investigate the effects of the self-care choice framework, by case studies and quantitative approaches such as correlational studies (d) explore the three self-care themes relationship(s) with self-forgiveness, self-forbearing and self-condemnation</td>
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<td>Effects on stress</td>
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<td>Case studies</td>
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<td>Correlational analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore potentially related themes of self-forgiveness, self-forbearing and self-condemnation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-compassion</td>
<td>Integrate the use of self-compassion in self-care related treatment regimes</td>
<td>Explore how positive psychology and psycho-spiritual connotations around self-compassion encourage self-kindness practices which could strengthen self-care</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
<td>Extend practice using positive humility as a caring and proactive protective factor to guard against harsh self-criticism, over thinking, or even catastrophising an issue</td>
<td>Research positive humility as a self-caring and proactive protective factor that could guard against harsh self-criticism, over thinking, or even catastrophising an issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaningful detachment</td>
<td>Encourage practitioners to work with the stressed and</td>
<td>Conduct research into meaningful psychological</td>
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suffering about how to separate/detach meaningfully from issues and symptoms

detachment and, specifically, separating with self-kindness and self-acceptance

| Methodological innovation | Conduct research into the efficacy or otherwise of the heuristic inquiry process to support worker self-care. This would need to be qualitative research as the heuristic method is self-directed in nature and focusses on highly personal questions. |
| Adopting the reflective method for direct use by care practitioners and the stressed | Conduct research to explore if and how the intuitively focussed, heuristic research method could be adopted as practitioner and worker-based reflective tools |
| Self-regulatory behaviour & human endocrine system | In conjunction with self-compassion and humility, investigate the role that the human endocrine system activity plays in terms of self-caring and self-soothing behaviours in times of stress (Lee, Gino, Jin, Rice, & Josephs, 2015). |

Summary of recommendations

The research and in particular, the discussion and table immediately above has highlighted a number of topics as changes to practice or for further research. This seeks to address research gaps highlighted in the literature review and arising from subsequent analysis about how to improve psycho-spiritual choices.

While practice and further research recommendations are summarised in a preliminary way in the thesis and highlighted in the published papers, all remain untested empirically. In
particular, there is the need for correlational research, case study and observational studies about if and how the self-care choices work separately or together as a framework.

Future studies could consider how treatment practitioners and managers can become better informed about inner and intuitive sense-making and how organisations develop reflective and supportive culture(s) to give effect to psycho-spiritual self-care choices. They could also examine the use and effect of self-forgiveness and self-regulatory behaviours which are possibly related to the three self-care choices advanced in the thesis.

Overall and in summary, there are a myriad of future practice and research options. This research, nevertheless, is a first practical step in considering psycho-spiritual approaches to self-care and sense-making. The research stimulates interest in psycho-spiritual self-care, both from conceptual and practical viewpoints, and future research can confirm the nature and usefulness of various interventions.

Limitations of the Research

A major limitation of this research lies in its narrow qualitative and subjective nature. The self-reflective and potentially biased nature of this thesis was, however, partially addressed by its continual supervision, as well as the use of a learning journal, and constant peer review in successful academic journal submissions and by fellow researchers and practitioners.

Another significant shortcoming is the absence of case studies or sampling to test the emerging psycho-spiritual synthesis and the reflective conceptual framework. To address this, one could explore a representative sample of stressed workers to consider their psycho-spiritual self-care. This is important because so often the stated aim of corporations and government employers is employee engagement and support, values-based work, and worker dignity.
A further issue is the theoretical nature of the study and the experiential lens of the researcher is based on critical reading of the literature and a heuristic inquiry approach. While a researcher’s approach—that of immersion in and prolonged engagement with personal and subjective human studies—is affirmed by Anderson (2000, 2004) and Moustakas (1990), this does not confirm generalisability. A research design using established measures of stress compared Neff’s (2003) self-compassion variables, a positive humility approach, and Rohr’s (2007) stand apart motif could strengthen academic rigor and the research findings.

The thesis predominantly adopted a well-established psycho-spiritual approach as its core frame of reference. However, noting definitional challenges and the fact that most workplaces are markedly secular and researchers and practitioner interact with a wide variety of spiritual choices and connotations, it must be stated that the approach has potential limitations and hence, a more extended research approach to this topic in the future should be considered. Limitations include the myriad of spiritual conceptualisations, contested effect of spiritual themes in at least some workplaces and the identified improved, multi-factorial analysis (Garg, 2017; Ranasinghe & Samarasinghe, 2019).

Further, there a possibility that factors other than the ones being included in the draft self-care framework are at play, that the “real answers” may lie elsewhere, or the data did not confirm what was found (Hagner & Helm, 1993, p. 298). However, the five year duration of the study strengthens the preliminary, albeit reflective and conceptual outcomes. Further, the research validity is strengthened by the extensive references to the thesis’ outcomes in other research, a continual literature search, detailed and thick descriptions, consistency in methods, a lack of refutation of emerging concepts by newer literature or practitioners, and the search for contradictory theories and concepts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).
It is acknowledged that the thesis is a personal discourse and, in this, my experience could lead me to impose my personal standpoints. Then there is the issue that my research experiences are grounded in my work as a Christian minister, prompting me to see religious and related spirituality as holding a key place in workplace pastoral care. However, Schneiders (2005) notes that spirituality must also be open to modernity and new approaches, where each discipline informs the other; and neither religious spirituality nor psychology is preeminent.

A researcher can guard against these limitations through continual openness, supervision, and constant review as was practised throughout the research (Schneiders, 2005). It calls to mind Moustakas’ (1994) reflection that a researcher “understands that research is an interactive process, shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting” (p. 6). As such there is a perceived limitation in the research’s ‘critical subjectivity’ despite the use of a constant review process. This reflects the need for “quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process” (Reason, 1988, p. 12). Again, there was a necessity to remain open to peer-review and clinical supervision in terms of one’s learning and reflective journals, and in ongoing dialogue with relevant psychological and medical practitioners.

Moreover, eight publications—of which five are included in the thesis—complemented by three conference presentations, constant referral to practitioners, and clinical supervisions produce what Anderson (2004) terms “sympathetic resonance”. While this informs reflective outcomes via various audiences such as journals, chaplains, and conference participants, it is not a substitute for the findings one would glean from a direct study of the stressed and suffering worker (Hagner & Helm, 1993).
Conclusion

To address the dearth of psycho-spiritual, self-care choices, this research offers a self-caring, even non-religious approach where certain applied spirituality and positive psychology collaborate for the benefit of responding to workplace stress.

Guided by the psycho-spiritual research questions, overall, the study extends self-care conceptualisations to assist support people to address negative self-judgments and the prolongation of negative self-judgments. Adaptive methodological approaches based on self-reflection and intuitive also arose which assisted the researcher and, potentially, the stressed themselves. Further integration is needed, yet the initial conceptual framework is proposed to guide further inquiry that I certainly will, and others may, undertake.

Yet, Wilber’s statement that spiritual experience, is "repeatable, reproducible and confirmable" strongly suggests the need of further qualitative and quantitative research (1999, p. 43). These endeavours are necessary to more closely examine the place of self-compassion, detachment, and humility, and their posited inter-relatedness and usefulness for the suffering self and their carers.

Although more work is necessary, this paper contributes to research by extending earlier self-care conceptualisations into a self-care choice framework. It also assists approaches to theory development by using heuristics as a reflective method. Yet, in this, any heuristic inquiry is only going to explore what comes to consciousness or tacit awareness. The initial outcomes of this paper—albeit highly subjective in nature—are affirmed by what Anderson (2004) calls “sympathetic resonance” in and from various reader groups, such as academics, researchers, and workplace care practitioners. Specifically, this is evidenced by 24 academic or industry papers which, to date, reference the research paper series that comprise the thesis.

Certainly, there is much more to do. This includes an exploration of the conceptual self-care framework, perhaps later adding self-forgiveness and, possibly through case study,
methodological and quantitative approaches; even a regression analysis may produce further fruitful insights. Such approaches could include Neff’s (2003) self-compassion variables (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) as variables alongside humility and detachment measures, all of which could be contrasted with stress and suffering indices.

This is not to replace medical or psychological care, but the research speaks to the search for inner meaning, intuitive options that address negative self-talk, and harsh self-judgments. In this context, the research used deliberate themes, critical synthesis, and a heuristic inquiry process to reveal multidisciplinary self-care choices which can work together or separately; these were self-compassion, a positive form of humility, and meaningful detachment. These themes offered ways to support an individual to engage tenderly and meaningfully with their stress and suffering in a non-blameful, non-judgmental way with the aim of “separating themselves from, or letting go of, problematic symptoms and painful affect. This is while they may, crucially, still think on the stress or event, yet are able to do so in different and more self-kindly ways” (Devenish-Meares, 2017, p. 23).
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Devenish-Meares: Workplace psycho-spiritual self-care


Rohr, R. (2001). Healing our violence through the journey of centering prayer [CD]. Albuquerque, NM.

Devenish-Meares: Workplace psycho-spiritual self-care


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Appendices

Appendix A: Published papers

**Paper 1. Self-compassion**


**Paper 2. Humility**


**Paper 3. Detachment**


**Paper 4. Methodology**


**Paper 5. Thematic integration through use of the heuristic inquiry process**