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Exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace

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Abstract

Stoic philosophers understood that "everything is perpetually in process of changing and becoming something different than it was before" (Staniforth, 1976, p. 10). This perspective remains as relevant today as it has ever been. As our workplaces continue to change at an ever more rapid pace, the question I set out to explore through this study was, 'In what ways are the principles of Stoic philosophy being applied in the workplace and to what effect?'. This contemporary look at an ancient practice was designed to better understand the potential applications of the Stoic principles within our workplaces and the benefits and challenges we might expect to encounter through this approach.

Stoic philosophy is based upon the ontological perspective that we all should aim to live a life of virtue in accordance with nature, guided by the practical application of the three main principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics*. In my own interpretations of the Stoic principles, the practice of *physics* allows for greater acceptance of where we fit within a much greater whole, how best to respond to circumstances through the development of experiential wisdom in applying the principle of *logic* and fostering a broader awareness of our contribution to the common good through the application of the principle of *ethics*. This study contributes new knowledge to our understanding of how the application of these principles are used in contemporary workplaces by exploring how the Stoic principles have been and continue to be applied by professionals from a wide range of professions, countries and cultures.

The methodological design of this study allowed for Stoic practitioners' experiences of applying the principles in their own workplaces to be captured and interpreted through *a priori* Stoic doctrine. A sequential exploratory mixed methods approach was used, comprised

of a qualitative/quantitative survey, reflective interviews and inductive/deductive interpretation of the data, allowing for a broadening of our understanding on the application of the Stoic principles within actual contemporary workplaces. With study participants ranging in age, gender, profession and location, the results of this study begin to build a picture of how the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy might be experienced within our workplaces.

Challenges and benefits alike were identified by study participants as they shared their experiences of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces. There emerged a sentiment that the practice of Stoicism within workplaces was limited, which proved challenging for Stoic practitioners attempting to approach their workplaces in different ways to what might have been expected of them or within cultural norms. The benefits of facing these challenges were that those applying the Stoic principles within their workplaces expressed how they felt better able to deal with challenging circumstances, remaining calm and more compassionate and accepting of themselves and others, which led to greater clarity and focus in decision-making and adapting to change.

The main findings of this study showed that the principles of Stoic philosophy applied within a variety of workplace environments and cultures appear to help individuals to manage their responses to challenging circumstances, reducing stress levels and building confidence, which in turn seemed to have contributed to improved colleague/stakeholder interactions, decision-making capabilities and adaptability to change within the workplace. Further research which builds upon these findings may inform the design of a framework for applying Stoicism in the workplace. Future research foci may also extend to comparative studies of Stoic practice with regard to location, gender and workplace culture.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to explore the application of the ancient principles of Stoic philosophy within contemporary workplaces. Stoic philosophy became the prominent philosophy of the Greco-Roman era as the focus on community collectiveness and universality served the political and societal objectives of those times (Asmis, Bartsch, & Nussbaum, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) and, arguably, maintains a relevance and influence within our societies and psyches today. The intention to live a life of virtue is central to the practice of Stoic philosophy, transcending all areas of our lives and remaining relevant regardless of changes in circumstances.

> The philosophical achievement of the Greek Stoics … was enormous: the invention of propositional logic, the invention of the philosophy of language, unprecedented achievements in moral psychology, distinction in areas ranging from metaphysics and epistemology to moral and political philosophy. (Asmis et al., 2014a, 2014b; 2015, pp. x, x & xii)

The Stoics saw all that happens in life as opportunities to practice and utilise our faculties; if we were not to do so, what would be the point of such opportunities or, indeed, the possession of such faculties (Epictetus, 2000a., 2008). References are made throughout this thesis to complementary and at times contradictory philosophical perspectives from antiquity including those of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates as these perspectives were foundational and integral to the evolution of philosophy, therefore contributed to the Stoic doctrine. Despite the

prominence of this philosophy in antiquity and the influence it has had on our lives today, there exists extensive literature on interpreting the written work of Stoic philosophers but less attention dedicated to the practical application of this philosophy generally and, more specifically as it relates to this study, within contemporary workplaces. As there has been little empirical research done in this area, in the first instance there was the need to develop a better understanding of how contemporary practitioners of Stoic philosophy were experiencing the application of the principles within their own workplaces. Thus, this study set out to explore the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy through the research question:

In what ways are the principles of Stoic philosophy being applied in the workplace and to what effect?

My interest in exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace began with what I perceived to be a great need to change the narrative of common leadership dialogues which depicted 'leaders' as individual figureheads standing/rising above all else. I saw this interpretation of leadership as sorely misguided and, indeed, detrimentally problematic within the workplace dynamics I both experienced myself and observed others experiencing, through attempts to enact leadership and interact with leadership. As I read and considered the extant literature on leadership development which expressed similarly critical views in so far as acknowledging a change in perspective was needed with regard to how we enact and exemplify leadership, it became clear that while common sentiments were shared, suggested approaches differed widely.

Initially, when embarking on this study, I was focused on exploring the practicality of a Stoic philosophy approach to leadership and leadership development based on previous research undertaken through my masters degree and experiences I was having within my corporate management and leadership roles. Based on what I saw as extreme individualism and ego driven behaviour by those occupying leadership positions, the need to integrate a greater appreciation of enactments of leadership beyond individualistic endeavours became a key area I wanted to focus on. It became clear as I explored various approaches and frameworks that the notion of 'leadership' itself was only a part of a much wider context of how Stoicism might be applied to workplace dynamics generally. Through my readings on Stoic philosophy, I realised that a focus on leadership specifically would capture only one facet of a richer and more diverse phenomenon associated with this applied philosophy.

Extant debates within leadership studies have rightly raised important questions as to the validity, and indeed desirability, of common leadership practices, which have predominantly focused on and encouraged the development of the individual characteristics, skills or traits of specific leaders rather than the enactment of leadership in practical terms (Bolden, Witzel, & Linacre, 2016; Grint, 1997, 2005b, 2010; Kodish, 2006; Küpers, 2007; Ladkin, 2010a; McKenna, Rooney, & Boal, 2009; Sarros, 2006; Souba, 2011; Western, 2013; Witzel, 2016; Youngs, 2017). Ontologically, the sentiment expressed or implied throughout the literature is that leadership should, in normative terms, be enacted for the common good regardless of, or as a response to, the changes in circumstances we may face. Thus, the justification for the approach taken in this study is that a specific depiction of leadership, as such, was deemed to be secondary to the underlying philosophy of how we choose to interact with and within our workplaces. Indeed, the etymology of the term 'leadership' has been expressed in a variety of ways, however there is some agreement that it is a relatively recent

term and has early associations with the Latin term *ducere,* referencing 'to travel' (Grace, 2003), focusing on a sense of continuous discovery of personal experience, as the Greeks would say, within the *polis*; as is intended with the practice of Stoic philosophy.

Thus, while a Stoic approach to leadership remains an area for further inquiry, the broader interactions throughout organisations beyond leadership processes became the primary focus of this study. Through this thesis, I contribute to the growing exploration into contemporary applications of ancient philosophies (Bowden, 2012; Case, French, & Simpson, 2011; Case & Gosling, 2007; Flanigan, 2018; Kodish, 2006; Ladkin, 2010b; Souba, 2011), by exploring how workplaces more broadly are experienced through the application of Stoic principles.

This change in focus away from the context of leadership allowed me to capture a more holistic exploration of participants' application of the Stoic principles within workplace contexts. Stoic philosophers valued a life of happiness as one guided by virtue; one which flows with nature (Arius as cited in Annas, 2007, pp. 64-65) and, therefore, part of a much greater whole. The ancient Greek term *politikë* referred to society as a whole (Aristotle, 1962, p. 4, Book One, 1094b) which offered the opportunity to explore societal interactions from a much broader interpretation of politics than the modern definition expressed primarily with reference to governments. We are encouraged to remind ourselves that we are only in control of our own actions, not of other happenings (Hadot, 1995) and to accept this. Case and Gosling (2007) explored the commonalities between Stoic and Buddhist philosophies whereby each incorporates the intention and wisdom to think, act and speak morally and ethically while

maintaining mindfulness or attention on the contribution one makes to situations, rather than an attachment to attempts to control the outcomes.

Wisdom in the Workplace

Stoicism suggests actions would be taken based on wisdom gained through experiences. Case and Gosling (2007) contemplated the understanding and practice of wisdom in society and organizations over time; considering the interpretation of wisdom as it relates to Stoic philosophy in maintaining equanimity and understanding the influence one has, but also a level of acceptance for what is outside of one's control. Despite differences among the ancient Stoics as to the order in which the principles of Stoic philosophy occur in practice, a common thread throughout their work was based on "the wise person" and the associated connection with ethics through our contributions to the whole (Annas, 2007, p. 60).

Attention to developing wisdom has been recognised as being of value to inform decision-making within increasing complexity, knowledge, ambiguity and change occurring in our workplaces (McKenna et al., 2009), suggesting that wisdom may well provide a more sanguine and sageous approach than the comparatively inflexible command-and-control tactics. For example, Stoic philosophy might allow for greater attention on causes or possible contributing factors as these may be "minute differences in 'initial conditions' – that is, 'causal noise' – [but] can yield great differences in effects" (White, 2003, p. 140). These minute interactions contribute to the invisible absences, or unseen influences, that can have great effect on what is valued and experienced in practical terms (Ladkin, 2010a). As such, "to study the

actual progress of exegetical thought is to begin to realize that thought can function rationally in many different ways" (Hadot, 1995, p. 76).

The element of causal determinism in Stoic philosophy, in so far as everything that happens is caused by conditions that precede it and, therefore, what is happening in this instant acts as a supporting condition for future happenings (White, 2003), is useful when considering the nuances of workplace experiences and changing circumstances. Stoic philosophy is continuously transformational as practitioners reflect on their experiences (Annas, 2007; Saunders, 2018) and the broader affectivity of their decisions and actions. The *practice* of Stoicism consists of exercises aimed at enacting and reflecting upon philosophical principles rather than solely adopting a belief structure or set of intellectual positions (Hadot, 1995). Through practice, "[u]nder normal circumstances, the only state accessible to man [*sic*] is *philo-sophia*: the love of, or progress toward, wisdom" and, as such, never actually attaining it (Hadot, 1995, p. 103; original emphasis); a perspective that allows for greater fluidity to emerge within perpetually changing workplace dynamics. As Küpers (2007) notes,

> … wisdom is not something individuals "have". Rather it is a process of enacted inter-relations by engaging in interior individual dimensions complemented by a corresponding behaviour, communal activities and systemic structures and functions. Interdependently, all together these integral processes co-create and generate an emerging wise knowledge and action that realises an ethically reflected judgement and its corresponding manifestations. (p. 181)

This draws to mind that "wisdom is knowledge having to do with certain principles and causes" (Aristotle, 1998, p. 6; Alpha I) and thus, is a comprehension of the causes, beyond simply that it is so. In Stoic practice, wisdom is guided by the enactment of the virtues of temperance, courage, justice and *phronesis,* the act of practical wisdom (Aristotle, 2006) and "[t]he art of detachment of wisdom resembles an attempt to overcome the natural biases in ones phenomenological orientation" (Küpers, 2007, p. 174). As such, there is both a temporal and an experiential nature to the application of wise-reasoning within the practice of Stoic philosophy that allows for intellectual and emotional evolution through experience. The evolving and transformational nature of philosophical interpretation is valuable when it comes to exploring how Stoicism might relate pragmatically to contemporary workplace environments and experiences through greater consideration of factors such as the affectivity of emotion.

Emotion in the Workplace

Emotions are often viewed as the result of external influences, such as changes or interactions that occur in the workplace, were they perhaps would be better considered in terms of transient "evaluations of oneself" (Ashkanasy, Zerbe, & Härtel, 2015, p. 6). The key difference between 'wise-reasoning' and cognitive abilities is that wisdom is malleable to different situations and positively linked to wellbeing, whereby cognitive ability is considered procedural with limited contextual variability (Grossmann, Gerlach, & Denissen, 2016). The ancient Greek interpretation of wisdom was focused on the application of intellectual understanding into practice in order to lead a life of virtue (Case & Gosling, 2007). Here, the connection between wisdom and wellbeing has been interpreted through factors that indicate

greater understanding and appreciation for emotional complexities through wise-reasoning, resulting in greater ability to regulate emotions and "report less negative affect" in various circumstances (Grossmann et al., 2016, p. 2).

A tendency to regard emotion as nonsensical within contemporary workplaces has been criticised as contributing to limited research efforts focused on the efficacy of emotion in the workplace (Küpers & Weibler, 2005). Despite a contempt of sorts toward displays of emotion in the workplace, "emotions are an inherent part the workplace" which contribute to both disruption and progression depending on how they are managed and experienced (Ashkanasy et al., 2015, p. 3). A Stoic approach addresses a need to consider emotion as an integral human component of workplace dynamics, albeit from a different perspective to how emotion is comprehended today (Brennan, 2010; Graver, 2007). Our comprehension of emotion and corresponding process of wisely regulating emotion is an important element with regard to building an awareness of the effects of decisions made within workplaces and our ability to adapt to changing circumstances (Côté, Miners, & Moon, 2006).

Aristotle mused that "we have direct experience of particular objects and events (cognitive ability)" and then, "in certain circumstances, [are] able to derive general propositions from our experience of particulars which go beyond the content of any thoughts just about particulars (wise-reasoning)" (Lawson-Tancred, 1998, p. 3; Alpha I). Thus, Aristotle highlighted our ability to regulate our own response and control over acting on opinions formed through initial sensory indicators or, alternatively, choosing to engage with further inquiry; in other words, "the act of assent 'will be in our power'" (White, 2003, p. 145). However, Plato distinguished between three, at times conflicting, motives of the mind; impulse or instinct,

reasoning through reflection and a regard for self (Plato, 2003). Impulse is the "irrational appetite" associated with "satisfaction and pleasure" which is different to reason and yet both are processed through the mind; and "don't we often see … instances of … desires … trying to force … something … reason disapproves of … ?" (Plato, 2003, pp. 147-148). Aristotle understood that the regulation of one's own emotions to resist action was required to obtain knowledge of what is 'good' and that this ability is developed through practice (Aristotle, 1962, p. 6; Book One, 1095a).

Hankinson (2003) explored the debate between the Stoics' reasoning and criticism by the Academics who questioned our ability to discern between true or false impressions. Spoelstra and ten Bos (2011) drew upon Henry C. Link's assertion that what is good exists beyond intellectual reason. This is an important element to the Stoic practice as we can never be certain we are assenting to impressions as they truly are, hence the terms 'belief' and 'opinion' were used rather than 'knowledge' which is only gained, from a Stoic perspective, where no uncertainty remains (Brennan, 2010). Inherent to Stoic philosophy is an overarching perspective of acceptance of what is within our control, namely our own actions, values, beliefs and thoughts, in order to maintain equanimity with "living in accordance with experience of what happens naturally" (Chrysippus as quoted in Annas, 2007, p. 64). Of significance is not to be imprudent based on a belief in our ability to control situations through our actions but rather to embrace the value placed upon a wider contribution that a virtuous life and an intrinsic sense of wellbeing beyond one's own welfare (Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos, & Thoene, 2018).

The Common Good

The development of wisdom to regulate emotion within the workplace must also be considered through the lens of what constitutes wise emotional regulation, hence drawing attention to a lack of wisdom displayed through an intention to suppress rather than rationally express emotion through our actions, contextualised within workplace contributions (Côté et al., 2006). The fulfilment of duties to one's community exists within the *ethics* component of Stoic practices as inclinations are acquitted as just actions (Hadot, 1995). Aptly stated, "it is perhaps time for a position that gives moral philosophy, and the character traits associated with the ideal of service, priority over other considerations" (Sinnicks, 2018, p. 744). Thus, a virtuous intent, such as that afforded through Stoic philosophy, warrants further exploration and consideration of the values attributed to the enactment of the common good within workplaces.

In Aristotle's view, the "attainment of the good for one man [*sic*] alone is…a source of satisfaction; yet to secure it for a nation and for states is nobler and more divine" (Aristotle, 1962, p. 5; Book One, 1094b). However, Aristotle acknowledged that there was no precise measure of 'good' but that experience and the attainment of knowledge better place an individual to judge what is good (Aristotle, 1962, pp. 5-6; Book One, 1095a). Aristotle went on to debate the meaning and context of what is 'good', highlighting that the act of good does not necessarily relate to doing a better job. In Book One of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle provided the example of a physician who assesses the health of a body based on medical knowledge and that a definition or enactment for the common good will not make them "more of a physician" (Aristotle, 1962, p. 14; 1097a). Acknowledging this sentiment, the development of wisdom for the intended purpose of contributing to the common good may well serve as an holistic approach to how we choose to interact phenomenologically with the complex and transformational nature of workplace scenarios (Küpers, 2007).

Hadot's (1995) observation that ancient philosophy was always "practiced in a group … [and] … required a common effort, community of research, mutual assistance, and spiritual support" (p. 271) resonates with a collective practice and emergence of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. Case et al. (2011) further highlighted the importance of identifying with what matters "through the collective *deliberation* of those whose shared concern is the welfare of the polity" (p. 250; original emphasis). It is worth drawing attention to the social grounding of philosophical discourse in this regard, and to the aspiration to serve the common good through collective contributions rather than individual achievements. To explore this concept properly requires an appreciation of the social and psychophysical experiences within workplace scenarios and, thereto, an understanding of how to propagate a mindset better able to engage collective ethical judgement in decision-making.

Embracing the reflective philosophical approach of Stoicism may provide the guidance required to ensure exploitation of self-interest does not constitute the motivation behind actions but rather it is the common good that prevails. Kodish (2006) drew upon Aristotle's view of the importance of perception and experience in developing practical wisdom through action, as evident in the following quote:

> Action or 'doing' requires an open, inquisitive, and creative stance, an orientation toward learning, reflecting, and a deeper understanding of the world. Thus, it provides a basis for far-sighted deliberation and practice and a basis for conceptualizing and actuating leadership. (p. 461)

Philosophical practices may help to shift normative practices and open our appreciation for "learning to regard both society and the individuals who comprise it from the point of view of universality" (Hadot, 1995, p. 242). However, simply relying on common research techniques, such as surveys or experiments, to evaluate ethical conduct will not serve the intent of understanding how Stoicism is *experienced* (Flanigan, 2018). It is suggested here that greater depth of understanding of the empirical experiences of the application of Stoic philosophy in the workplace is required to enhance our ability to progress our understanding of the values and beliefs evident in the enactment of the common good.

In essence, the Stoics believed "that the goal of all inquiry is to provide a mode of conduct characterized by tranquillity of mind and certainty of moral worth" (Saunders, 2018, Introduction; para 1).

> Virtuousness has been described as the processes and practices that support the best of human condition, the most ennobling behaviours and outcomes, the excellence and essence of humankind, and the highest aspirations. (Arjoon et al., 2018, p. 144)

In simplistic terms, to attain this state of being, one must undergo a systematic process (Bobzien, 2014) of logical interpretation of each circumstance, an ethical reflection and a measured response which is devoid of passion (Annas, 2007) and therefore non-emotive. Such beliefs are captured within the three principles of Stoic philosophy, *logic*, *ethics* and *physics*,

valued as interconnected aspects of the whole philosophical perspective (Annas, 2007; Bobzien, 2014).

In the context of the application of the Stoic principles within the workplace, the principles of *logic, physics* and *ethics* are a necessary equilibrium of wise-reasoning, place and benevolence. *Ethics* is the awareness that, whilst there is much that is outside of one's control, everyone is in control of their own actions, values, beliefs and thoughts (Annas, 2007; Staniforth, 1976) and that "action in pursuit of the good" is the ultimate concern (Case et al., 2011, p. 248). Aristotle argued that "moral virtue … is a disposition by which one chooses what is good" (*ethics*) and therefore, one must be capable of making a "rational choice" (*logic*), and Zeno adds, to live in "harmony with nature" (*physics*) (Rist, 1969, pp. 2-3).

It is clear from this perspective how all the parts of Stoic philosophy contribute to an awareness of contributing to the common good through understanding that an ethical action requires the wisdom of *logic* and an acceptance of the *physics* of what one's choices are; thus, how to act through intention. Consideration of the intent behind the contribution of individuals is consistent with Arjoon et al.'s (2018) definition of virtuousness. Detailed attention is given to the ontology and epistemology of Stoic doctrine as these relate to the principles of Stoic philosophy in the following chapter.

Aristotle and the Stoics believed that virtue arose from reason and that a virtuous person would *choose* to live a life of virtue by the nature of their disposition (Aristotle, 1962; Rist, 1969). According to Rist's (1969) interpretation, a life of virtue is exactly that, *a life*; meaning

there is no end point whilst one is living and therefore, one is engaged in a continuous process of transformation. Value placed on negative capability creates "a mental and emotional space, in which a new thought may emerge that can itself become the basis for decisive action" (Simpson, French, & Harvey, 2002, p. 1211), contributing further to an intentional decision to contribute to the common good through reflection upon what a reasonable response might be. The choice to engage with and apply the principles of Stoic philosophy within the workplace formed the basis of practitioners' participation in this study which afforded space to reflect upon and share experiences.

Thesis Structure

According to Hadot (1995), there is inherent risk in engaging with philosophical scholarship in our modern world as there is a tendency to privilege discourse over lived experience. The aim of this study into how Stoic philosophy is *experienced* in the workplace was to address a gap in empirical and normative knowledge of the potential existence and contribution of Stoic philosophy within workplaces. Thus, my focus here is on the experiences of individuals applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces, in order to gain a greater depth of understanding of the practical application of the principles and the effects this may have within the workplace. In order to explore the experiences participants had through their application of the principles of Stoic philosophy within the workplace, the following objectives were set:

1. To capture circumstances under which participants choose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace;

2. To understand why participants apply Stoic philosophy in their workplace;
3. To identify the specific principles of Stoic philosophy participants have applied in their workplace;
4. To explore the beneficial and challenging elements participants experienced when applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace;
5. To determine the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace.

Workplace experiences were contextualised through this study as encompassing common scenarios encountered in the workplace, such as change management, conflict management, communication, decision-making, project management, stakeholder and colleague interactions. Using a reflective ethnographic sensibility to inform an interpretive analysis, this thesis contributes new insights into the values, beliefs and experiences that might better inform our understanding of how the principles of Stoic philosophy are being enacted within workplace scenarios with the intent of future exploration into how these might be further integrated into contemporary workplaces.

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis progresses in the next chapter to explore the ontology and epistemology of Stoic philosophy, providing the necessary and relevant grounding for an interpretive study into the application of the Stoic principles within contemporary workplaces. The ontological position of Stoic philosophy focusing on enacting 'the common good' as a guide to responding to perpetual change underwrote my justification for exploring this philosophy, in particular. The main principles of Stoic philosophy are also further conceptualised as the core epistemological elements to the practice of Stoicism

informing my analyses. In this next chapter, my interpretations of the practical applications of the Stoic principles of *logic*, *ethics* and *physics,* as these relate to the development of wisdom through experiences, a greater awareness of our contribution to the whole and an acceptance of our place within the whole, respectively, form the *a priori* basis for the deductive interpretive methodology applied to this study.

Exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace necessitated that I devise a methodological approach that would allow for the reflective expressions of experiences by those who were applying Stoic practice in their own workplaces to be analysed initially through inductive interpretive methods to allow for themes to emerge from the data. Using this approach, I was able to undertake both inductive and deductive analyses to extract the main themes that emerged from personal experiences with the application of the Stoic principles in the workplace and then align these themes with the components of my *a priori* Stoic framework. This methodological approach and the specific data collection methods used are presented in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, before progressing to the results, presented in Chapter 5. Thick descriptions of my interpretations of the study results are then presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, which contribute to my interpretative analysis, presented in Chapter 9, of the virtuous intent of study participants through the application of the Stoic principles in the workplace.

Through applying Stoic practice within their workplaces, it will be shown that study participants came to a place of acceptance of what was within their control, developed the wisdom to regulate their responses so as to improve their decision making and gained greater awareness of their contribution to the common good. Based on the findings of this study, in

Chapter 10 I extend proposals as to how a Stoic approach might further inform professional development initiatives as well as potential future studies aimed at furthering our understanding of the application of this philosophy more broadly within contemporary settings and workplace contexts.

Chapter 2: Stoic Philosophy

In this chapter, I provide background to the ontology and epistemology of the three main principles of Stoic philosophy, *logic (logikê)*, *ethics (êthikê)* and *physics (phusikê)*, and how virtue has historically been and can potentially be developed through the enactment and experience of these principles. As discussed in the introductory chapter, an understanding of wisdom, awareness, and acceptance as interpreted by the Stoics provides the grounding for the ontology and epistemological thinking behind the practice of this philosophy. The components of a practice of Stoicism in the workplace are expanded upon in the sections of this chapter, and indeed throughout this study, as interconnected and fluid concepts which are practiced congruently. Thus, the introductions to Stoic ontology and epistemology in the sections that follow are expressed in terms of how these have influenced the construct of the principles rather than the more definitive alignments offered through the deductive analysis undertaken later through the presentation of the findings of this study.

It is important to first develop an understanding of Stoic ontological and epistemological thought which are fundamental to the Stoic principles formed through the establishment and subsequent dis-establishment of the school of Stoic philosophy, discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter. Consideration is then given to establishing a deeper understanding of the development of virtue, both historically and how virtue might be developed in contemporary workplaces.

Stoic Ontology and Epistemology

The three Hellenistic schools of thought that emerged during the expansion of the Greek world in the late B.C.E. and early current era centuries were Stoicism, Epicureanism and Scepticism (Luce, 1994). Unlike Epicureanism and Scepticism, the ontological position of Stoicism was the attainment of being 'one with nature' rather than the more individualistic perspectives of the other two schools of thought (Luce, 1994). The ontological and epistemological grounding of Stoic philosophy emerged from the core virtue of 'for the common good in accordance with nature' and how this might be enacted within and throughout our lives. Thus, the core of our 'being', ontologically, was to live virtuously through our ability to flow with our environment, whatever that environment may be or what it might bring to our attention.

As a product of the ontological position of Stoic philosophy, fundamental concepts to the practice of Stoicism that were based on one's enactment of virtue for the betterment of communities included: creating equality within societies, encouraging the education of the practice of Stoicism for all members of society including women and slaves, albeit within their 'positions' in society at the time, and working to break down hierarchies (Asmis et al., 2014b). Thus, Stoic philosophy focused on our contributions to society with principles applicable to all areas of life. By way of example, Epictetus encouraged society "to instil in young women that their best option in life is to become a whole person with high aspirations", taking the focus away from their physical attributes alone (Epictetus, 2011, p. 62) and instead focusing on everyone's contribution to society as a whole.

Despite a clear virtuous intent within the practice of Stoicism, the Stoics did not associate perfection with a perfect human, but rather with the "divine administration of the

world, visible in the whole world process", which is inherently rational and that humans are just a part (Jedan, 2009, p. 29); a concept expressed through the principle of *physics* and expanded upon later. This distinctive element of the intent to do what is right and for the common good (i.e. virtuous) through the application of the principle of *ethics* within the practice of Stoic philosophy creates some contention, and confusion, over what, indeed, is 'right' or 'good'. Here we might consider Epictetus' assessment that when an affection (emotion) is consistent with reason, then both are considered in accordance with nature; therefore, 'right' and 'good' (Epictetus, 2000a, 2008). Thus, what is right or good is that which is in alignment with the natural occurrence of things and which an emotional reaction, if not tempered, would disturb; expressing the distinct interconnectedness of the principles of *ethics*, *physics* and *logic*, respectively.

To act in accordance with the natural occurrence of things we are asked to accept and express gratitude for what it is we are given (*physics*) and focus on our response (*logic*) rather than complaints about what we would prefer (*ethics*). Our actions, therefore, are solely our own choice and will. If we are distracted, for example, we are choosing to be distracted. Equally, we have the choice and free will to choose not to be distracted. Thus, we also possess the free will to act for what is right and for the common good and to scrutinise our beliefs, thoughts and behaviours.

The basis of Stoic Philosophy is our ability to respond appropriately (i.e. virtuously) to the circumstances we face in our environment through the application of the Stoic principles. Stoic epistemology recognises that external occurrences leave appearances or impressions on our mind from which our mind develops an understanding based on prior experiences;

however, our understanding must be continuously brought into question and scrutinised in order to truly develop knowledge, beyond opinion (Luce, 1994), in other words, developing acceptance, wisdom and awareness through experiences. From an epistemological perspective, it was necessary for the Stoics to ground, and be able to defend, their methods of attaining this content state of mind through virtue of our actions.

The Stoic approach to developing the acceptance, awareness and wisdom to attain and maintain a content state of mind was to systematically consider our psyche and how we respond or react to changes in our environment. The first step of this process was to be able to distinguish between what is and is not a real impression that one might be required to respond to. Hankinson (2003) explained the conditions that define a 'cataleptic' (i.e. real), impression as:

1. It derives from an existent object;
2. It accurately represents that object; and
3. It is 'stamped and imprinted' on the sensoria. (p. 61)

What these criteria exclude are false impressions given by the object as well as fantasies created in one's mind with regard to the circumstance or object (Hankinson, 2003). Thus, an important component to the epistemological position of Stoic philosophy is the ability to discern between what is real and what is not. The discernment between real and false impressions is problematic, however, due to the notion of what is impressed upon us and what we create from our own attention; "Of the conceptions, some occur naturally by means of the … modalities and without conscious effort, while others come about by our instruction and

attention" (Hankinson, 2003, p. 62). Thus, 'preconceptions' are recognised as ways one might fabricate circumstances beyond what is so and, therefore, must have a means by which to scrutinise impressions.

Stoic thinking is that we progress from perceptions to experiences [*empeiria*] and finally the technical ability [*technê*] to navigate circumstances effectively (Hankinson, 2003). *Prokopê* was the term used to describe this moral and cognitive process we progress through as circumstances arise (Hankinson, 2003). Perceptions are assessed at length by Stoic philosophers in the form of stages, essentially, that we progress through in the process to developing knowledge and by extension wisdom. The initial perceptions are merely unconscious impressions 'on the soul' that must be true but are not understood until there is greater stability and structure to form knowledge (Hankinson, 2003). The initial assent to an opinion that we form is considered weak or false until self and social scrutiny is applied to gain broader and fuller understanding of the impression. This process formed the grounding for the application of the principle of *logic* beginning with our *assent* to *impressions*, followed by the *conviction* of our assent to obtain *knowledge,* expressed by Staniforth (1976, pp. 11-12) as follows:

Impression – "the impact of things or qualities on the senses"

Assent – "the power of the mind to pass judgement on what the senses report" so as to draw an opinion

Conviction – to then "be submitted to the scrutiny of reason"

Knowledge – finally, compared with experiences of others and "confirmed by the general verdict"

Zeno, the founder of the school of Stoic philosophy, was apparently of the mind that assent was voluntary, meaning that we had the ability to put our mind to forming an opinion and so the "cataleptic impression merely presents itself as worthy of endorsement; it is still up to the mind whether to accept its credentials" (Hankinson, 2003, p. 65). The intent to act with virtue theoretically, therefore, should allow for rationalisation of emotional responses accordingly. There was, however, some debate and difference of opinion among the Stoics as to the degree of control we had once an emotional response had been formed. Seneca, although in the later philosophical era, adopted an orthodox view in that emotions "depend on the rational assent of the person involved but that, once formed, they can outrun rational control" (Gill, 2003, p. 49). Despite, or perhaps as a result of, differences in opinion on how much control we have over our emotions, the Stoics created systematic processes which created the opportunity for rationalisation.

Within the systematic process of response, lies "*vivere beate*, to live happily, [which] is just to have a perfectly content and satisfied mind" (Descartes cited by Rutherford, 2004, p. 179) and to do this one must follow the following three conditions:

1. "always try to employ [one's] mind … to discover what [they] should or should not do in all the circumstances of life";

2. “have a firm and constant resolution to carry out whatever reason recommends without being diverted by … passions or appetites”; and
3. “bear in mind that while [one] guides [themselves] as far as … by reason, all the good things which [one] does not possess are one and all entirely outside of [one’s] power”.

Each of the above three conditions is expanded upon further in the following sections through exploration of ‘The Logic of a Stoic Mind’, ‘Emotion and Stoic Ethics’ and ‘Stoic Physics of Natural Occurrences’, thus advancing the fundamental conceptions of wisdom (*logic*), awareness (*ethics*) and acceptance (*physics*), respectively. The first of the above conditions is expanded upon in the next section through a greater depth of understanding of the Stoic mindset which is applied to developing wisdom through the principle of *logic*. The second condition is addressed by exploring how the Stoics viewed emotion from the perspective of having greater awareness of contribution to the whole through the principle of *ethics*. Finally, the third condition is expressed through the principle of *physics* as we discover and form an acceptance of the natural flow of things.

The Logic of a Stoic Mind

> When walking, you are careful not to step on a nail or turn your foot; so likewise be careful not to hurt the ruling faculty of your mind. And, if we were to guard against this in every action, we should undertake the action with the greater safety. (Epictetus, 2000b, p. 11)

Epictetus explored the notion of freedom from mental anguish in great detail in his work *Encheiridion* (Epictetus, 2018). A key element of a free mind, according to Epictetus (2000b), was "if you desire any of the things which are not in your own control, you must necessarily be disappointed" (p. 2). This expresses two primary principles of Stoic philosophy in so far as a Stoic mind and the principle of *physics*. The former of these aligns with the principle of *logic* with regard to one's ability to master one's own thoughts and is explored in this section. The latter, with regard to *physics*, is considered in more detail later but also forms an integral part of maintaining mental equanimity through the practice of *logic*. In this thesis, I have used the terminology of 'developing wisdom' to describe these matters of the mind which help us to respond appropriately to the circumstances we face through the application of the principle of *logic*.

The concept of mental equanimity intrinsically rests within the Stoic principle of *logic*. From a Stoic philosophy perspective, our own mental state is entirely within our control; as such, we "are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which [we] form concerning things" (Epictetus, 2000b, p. 2). As stated above, if we wish for things to not be as they are, we will surely be disappointed and disrupt our mental stability. Instead, we are encouraged to see things as they are and ask that we acknowledge our control is only of how we think of and choose to respond to these things. An acceptance of happenings and circumstances, whether perceived as good, bad, fair or unjust, is at the core of maintaining a Stoic mindset. If we are to achieve and maintain a Stoic mindset, we must be able to develop the wisdom to distinguish between what is of natural order and when we are acting against nature, thus creating imbalance.

As stated by Epictetus (2000a), "[it] is not possible that what is by nature free can be disturbed by anything else, or hindered by any other thing than by itself [but] it is a man's [*sic*] own opinions which disturb him" (p. 25). The Stoics understood that one was in control of their own thoughts and that another cannot control their will unless they choose to allow it. Epictetus furthers this in relation to any desire to please anyone outside of ourselves. In the words of Epictetus (2000b), "[if] you ever happen to turn your attention to externals, so as to wish to please anyone, be assured that you have ruined your scheme of life" (p. 5). When we make ourselves vulnerable to the opinions of others, we place our mental stability at risk. A Stoic mind is one that remains unperturbed by other's opinions of ourselves, as these are outside of our control, and continues to develop wisdom through actions that transpire from robust character in accordance with the natural occurrence of things. We are asked not to give up our mental wellbeing to the acts or words of others and to approach our lives with the intent of not drawing unnecessary attention to ourselves so that we live within the natural flow of things, allowing us to focus our attention on how *we* should be acting.

Similarly, if we are to pass judgement on others without an understanding of "the principle from which anyone acts", we place our own minds at unrest instead of acting as we should act ourselves and letting be the actions of others (Epictetus, 2000b, p. 12). In this way, one is focused on 'digesting' their own musings and acting in accordance with what they have learned rather than outwardly expressing what they think they know. However, we can also find in some cases that what we have learned becomes a hinderance that must be unlearned, as can be the case after a long illness, for example, where one must relearn how to be well again (Seneca, 2005).

In *Encheiridion,* guidance is also given as to mental preparation for endeavours one choses to embark on, recommending that one should give thorough consideration to what must proceed the activity as well as what may follow (Epictetus, 2000b, 2011, 2018). It was considered childish to pursue an activity without understanding what is involved, else one is unable to commit or to maintain their course. Further, many minds become restless with boredom when the pursuit fails to provide the desired level of satisfaction, leading to distractions rather than the necessary perseverance and steadiness of mind (Seneca, 2005).

A final note from Epictetus comes in the form of encouraging one to spend more time in contemplation and adjusting their own actions than in discussing what ought to be done. This is reiterated by Marcus Aurelius, "waste no more time arguing about what a good man [*sic*] should be, be one" (Aurelius, 1976, p. 157; Book Ten. 16). Regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in, they will change and continue to change due to measures outside of our control; and so, we must remain flexible and adaptive to changes as they happen, as these add necessary variety to our lives (Seneca, 2005).

Seneca also contributed to the discussion of mental strength in so far as we must defend our happy state of mind and not neglect our mind in favour of pleasures (Seneca, 2018). Regardless of what changes in circumstances arise, our minds remain a constant and enduring 'possession' and therefore our mental wellbeing must be prioritised (Seneca, 2005). It was not seen as mental strength to avoid unpleasant things; rather pleasure was described by Seneca as existing quite separately from virtue and that to maintain a steady mind toward virtuous action and not engage our vices, regardless of the context of circumstances, was the path to happiness (Seneca, 2018). To be enticed by the pleasures or pains life presents to us was seen as

distracting from what is important in life: to live virtuously in accordance with nature. Succinctly put, pleasure naturally follows virtuous action but virtue will not follow pleasure (Seneca, 2018). We must, therefore, develop the wisdom to discern between the two and act accordingly.

As highlighted in Plato's *The Republic* through Socrates' conversation with Cephalus, it is questioned why some contend with old age with dismay and seem to blame 'old age' for their mental wellbeing (Plato, 1892). Cephalus, as someone in his later years of life, expressed how foolish it was to lay blame on an external happening outside of one's control.

> The truth is, Socrates, that these regrets, and also the complaints about relations, are to be attributed to the same cause, which is not old age, but men's [*sic*] characters and tempers; for he who is of a calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, but to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden. (Plato, 1892, p. 36)

Our emotional attachment to pleasure, or pain for that matter, merely creates a dysfunction in our lives whereby we continuously seek that which will never fulfil us. However, this discussion goes beyond seeking pleasure as such. The intention to live a life of virtue requires the mental adjustment to no longer desire that which is not within our power and, therefore, to never feel the need to seek pleasurable things. The act of doing the right thing is often misconstrued as that which will reward us with all we desire; the Stoics cautioned that to live a life of virtue was not to be approached with the intent to 'get what we want' but rather

for the sake of doing what is right, regardless of the rewards or punishments that may follow. This being a critical concept presenting a challenge with integrating this approach through a Stoic approach within contemporary workplaces that have been structured with the intent to achieve specific results through performance metrics deliberately created to measure individual accomplishments.

Thus, the *logic* of a Stoic mind is to develop the wisdom to maintain equanimity of thought and action, regardless of what happenings are occurring around us or what rewards or punishments might befall us, but also that which is emotionally stable in taking actions that serve our natural state of being. To desire that which allows us to live well was seen as in accordance with nature; however, this makes the discussion around emotional wellbeing interesting as we must discern between the emotions of desiring pleasure versus that which will allow us to live well and contribute well to society. In the next section, I explore the interconnection between emotion and Stoic *ethics* in so far as being able to contribute what is right and good to the larger whole through the wisdom we have developed in the application of the principle of *logic*.

Emotion and Stoic Ethics

In Stoic practice, "emotions were all regarded with suspicion because they tend to disturb and upset the mind and make it lose the calmness and balance of reason" (Luce, 1994, p. 136), as discussed in the previous section. In the practice of Stoic philosophy, a disturbed mind is one that is swayed by emotion and therefore not rational. Seneca built on the work of

Plato and Aristotle in so far as emotions being viewed as a product of one's own judgement of a situation rather than a necessary or uncontrollable response (Seneca, 1995). Our determination to develop the wisdom required to navigate our impressions through the application of the principle of *logic* thus interconnects with how we ultimately choose to respond to situations with an awareness of our contribution to the larger whole through the application of the principle of *ethics*.

Cicero's work in the area of practical ethics considered Stoic guidance with regard to making appropriate decisions, including an understanding of where one might be inclined make decisions that seem preferable based on an emotional response, rather than based on what is 'good' or virtuous (Gill, 2003). Stoic detachment from emotion was for the purpose of ensuring an apathetic but appropriately 'good' response (apathy in this sense relating to a calm state of mind rather than disinterest or detachment) (Luce, 1994). The view of emotional containment did soften, however, in the later years of Stoicism, allowing for an acknowledgement of experiencing affections (Luce, 1994).

Importantly, for the most part, the Stoics recognised emotion as a natural, and potentially uncontrollable, part of being human, particularly the momentary shock of our initial impression of happenings (Asmis et al., 2014b). However, the practice of Stoic philosophy inspires us to maintain control of our responses to our emotions and ensure our emotions are not driving responses which are not appropriate or in line with what we ought to do. Emotions are activated through external happenings and our interpretations of these happenings; as such, the Stoic view was that the primary focus of a rational being was to be of their own mind, not subject to external events (Seneca, 1995).

Indeed, the practice of emotional regulation is enhanced, in the Stoic's view, through traumatic experiences, expressing that the more trauma one has to endure in their life, the less affected they are by the more minor happenings in life (Seneca, 2005). Thus, the aim of Stoic philosophy, ultimately, is to reach a state of mental stability whereby emotional responses to external events are minimised to those events which warrant a response, as determined by a rational being (Seneca, 1995), and which align with virtuous action. The view that Stoicism provokes a state of being which completely lacks emotion is, in part, true; however, it must be observed that the Stoics viewed emotion as irrational, excessive responses, not as natural desires (Seneca, 1995).

There are differences between the Stoic view of emotion and current interpretations of love, for example. Becker (2004) explained the misconception of Stoic detachment or a perceived inability to love. For Stoics, to love is to love as you would love yourself and therefore wish that others would also live a life of virtue within which they are healthy and prosperous. To love with detachment refers to an alternative to the romanticised love of our current time whereby there is a co-dependence of happiness and the loss of someone is actually more relevant to the wellbeing of the other than that of the one lost. From a Stoic perspective, a detached love means that one wishes for the best for the other and does not forego their own wellbeing for another nor do they expect this of the other.

The Stoics were predominantly concerned with the effect of violent or aggressive emotions on our responses to circumstances (Luce, 1994). Seneca (1995) took particular issue with the emotion of anger stating it as "the most hideous and frenzied of all the emotions" due

to its impulsiveness and the consequences to others of acting upon it (p. 17). Anger, according to Seneca, represents a state of insanity as it renders one incapable of rational thought or action. A pivotal question Seneca asked was whether anger is natural and, as such, would be deemed in accordance with being. Seneca established that because anger is in opposition to man's [*sic*] natural tendencies as being calm, caring and helpful, that anger must then be in conflict with nature. Seneca further expressed the need to differentiate between the emotion and the required response to circumstances; "'Tell me then, is not chastisement sometimes necessary?' Of course! But chastisement without anger, chastisement aided by reason." (Seneca, 1995, p. 23). Here we begin to see the connection between emotion and Stoic *ethics* in so far as building an awareness of how our responses to circumstances contribute to the larger whole.

So, it would seem the case that emotion in the broad sense was not to be avoided but rather *emotive reactions,* such as acting out of anger in response to a situation or another's behaviour or the forming of an attachment to another that might disturb our own wellbeing and disturb our awareness of our contribution to the situation. Our natural desire for safety, food, shelter, comfort and the like would be considered reasonable aspirations in line with satisfying our human needs in accordance with nature. Emotion was seen as most destructive where one acted irrationally against their better judgement (Seneca, 1995), a view not unlike contemporary views of emotion.

The Stoic approach to emotion, therefore, was not to pretend that it does not exist but to be aware of one's emotions and to rationally explore our emotions without succumbing to them, allowing for an appropriate response that is in moderation with the slight modification of character actually required for the circumstances. It was the extremeness of emotive

responses, particularly with regard to natural occurrences outside of our control, which the Stoics repelled. This concept of greater awareness of our emotions and developing the wisdom to be able to form an appropriate response further contributes to the formation of a Stoic approach in so far as being able to make decisions for the common good rather than being self-serving. Our contribution to the greater whole was of importance to the Stoic ontology of accepting what occurs naturally and epistemologically acting for the common good through the wisdom of our actions. In the next section, the principle of *physics* is explored as the Stoics related to our acceptance of and interactions with natural occurrences.

Stoic Physics of Natural Occurrences

The Stoics saw our natural way of being as rational and that our inability to navigate assent from rational impressions was the cause of the passionate responses described above, which do not align with what occurs naturally (Jedan, 2009). So, here we must delve further into the Stoic principle of *physics* as a means of accepting that which occurs naturally outside of our control and that which is within our control. As it relates to Stoic philosophy, *physics* is the expression of the dichotomy of control in so far as what is within and outside of our control and how we 'fit' with nature. If we again consider Epictetus' (2000b) contribution to the act of developing freedom of mind, it becomes clear that to obtain a mind free from anguish, one must accept what is within their control and what is not. *Physics* introduces us to the natural flow of perpetual change in our lives which is outside of our control and, therefore, should not be resisted but rather accepted.

The Stoics used nature as their guide to understanding the happenings around them and the psychology of human nature which is also continuously changing (Seneca, 2005). As we are a part of nature, we must accept that our lives flow with change and that struggling against the changes of nature causes disruption to our mental equanimity (Epictetus, 2011; Seneca, 2005, 2014, 2018). Nature was seen as the ultimate destructor of human beings, creating a cycle of destruction and rebirth whereby each cycle formed a clean slate, so to speak, to developing virtue; which was inevitably clouded by the ease at which vices were adopted compared with the relatively more challenging exercise of developing virtue (Seneca, 2014).

At the time Stoic philosophy was becoming more prevalent in Greek society, natural occurrences were interpreted as acts of the divine (i.e. the gods or a god); however, more comprehensive understandings of nature and the universe had started to be considered and questioned. Seneca (2014), for example, expressed an inquisitive approach to understanding nature, beyond the divine, which exemplified a philosophical way of understanding the world while developing knowledge through observation and inquiry. The Stoics saw that nature balanced itself through active and passive interactions between the elements of air, fire, water and earth; none existing without the others and all interconnected within continuous change (Seneca, 2014).

> Since the corporeal world at the level of the elements is in a constant flux the only way to retain a sense of stability and permanence is to identify oneself with, and try to take the perspective of, the eternal, rational, world-controlling divine principle. (Jedan, 2009, p. 12)

The above quote refers to the Stoic view that if everything that is considered an element (i.e. passive) is always changing, then we must look to the basic principles (i.e. active) for stability. Thus, the Stoics encourage us to adopt the balanced approach of nature to maintain equanimity of thought in our own lives as things shift and move around and within us through an understanding of where we can be active versus when we must passively accept what occurs outside of our control. The approach we take to our lives was seen as either wasting the gift that had been given to us by succumbing to our vices or, alternatively and preferably, living a life well lived through virtue (Seneca, 2005). Further, our lives were seen as such a small part of the wholeness of nature and the universe, none of which are within our control, that to squander our time with complaints was viewed as pointless (Seneca, 2005). We should, therefore, according to Stoic philosophy, develop an understanding of the activities which best suit our nature and pursue those, whether they be quiet pursuits or active engagement in public life (Seneca, 2005).

Indeed, how we spend our lives and allocate our thoughts is of utmost importance to a Stoic way of living a life of virtue. We must not waste the time we have been given on that which does not serve a virtuous life free from mental anguish (Seneca, 2005). We should focus our attention on the present moment and not on ambitions or fears that may only be realised in the future, of which we do not control (Seneca, 2005). Spending time pursuing a lavish life, for example, was seen as wasteful and an unnecessary grab for attention given what we actually need for our survival and contentment is quite minimal and provided easily by nature (Seneca, 2005).

In *The Discourses*, Epictetus examines the gift that we possess in the ability to engage our rational faculty to determine what we should and should not do (Epictetus, 2000a, 2008). He further delves into the debate as to what constitutes rational thought, concluding that one's rational thinking may differ from another's but what stands regardless is that we are only in control of our own thinking, not of external happenings or others' thoughts, behaviours or actions. As such, when we take action or make a decision, we must accept the consequences of these that are outside of our control even if we are not satisfied with what follows (Epictetus, 2000a, 2008). Of importance is that we practice our rationale through our experiences and test our resolve to living a life of virtue, as the Stoics would have it; it is not enough to understand rational thinking through the work of others, we must be able to learn from the application of it (Epictetus, 2000a, 2008).

In practice, the principles of Stoic philosophy, *logic*, *ethics* and *physics*, discussed here, exist as fluid and interconnected in so far as no one principle being foundational to the others but all contributing to the whole experience of this practice, as the Stoic framework depicted in Figure 1 shows. Thus, a wise response based in *logic* requires an understanding of the principle of *ethics,* in so far as an awareness of how our emotions might misguide our contributions to the common good, as well as an acceptance of the *physics* of what we do and do not control. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how the ontology and epistemology of Stoic philosophy, introduced in this chapter thus far, should be considered in the context of the *a priori* Stoic framework applied in this study.

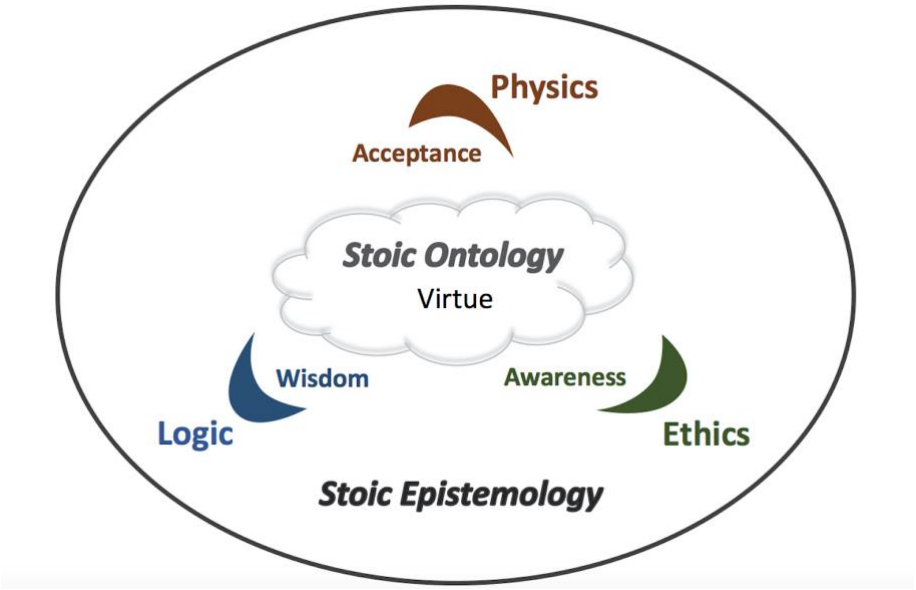


Figure 1: Ontological and epistemological representation of the principles of Stoic philosophy

Ontologically, the Stoic way of being is to live in accordance with what occurs naturally with the intention of living virtuously through doing what is right for the common good. The principles of Stoic philosophy provide the epistemological framework and guidance required to live as the Stoics would have us live and, in the context of applying the principles to contemporary workplace environments and how we might develop virtue within our workplaces. The following sections explore this potential for application of the principles within contemporary contexts, in part through understanding the history and evolution of the School of Stoic philosophy, but also through developing a deeper understanding of how virtue is developed through the enactment of the Stoic principles.

A Contemporary Practice of Stoic Philosophy

> … if the most gifted minds are subjected to a bad education, they become exceptionally bad. (Plato, 1997, p. 31; Quoting Socrates)

In Plato's *The Republic*, Socrates' views were expressed on the influence society had on the quality of, or lack thereof, leadership present in politics and, by extension, organisations (Plato, 1892, 1997). Plato wrote of Socrates' impressions on how it was often the most influential, aggressive or impressive members of society who were projected into leadership roles; rather than those most qualified or knowledgeable who possessed potentially more honourable intentions. As Socrates cautioned, the persuasive ability to influence may only be serving to appease or manipulate "the masses" rather than being grounded in what is 'good' or 'right' (Plato, 1997, pp. 33-34).

Leadership development is a multi-billion dollar global industry (Raelin, 2004). In the UK, indications are that the demand for and supply of leadership and management development programs has increased substantially since the mid 1900s and especially early 2000s, possibly due to views on the value of effective leadership in corporate and political environments (Bolden, 2010). Similarly, in the mid to late 1990s there was an identified need to invest in the development of leadership capabilities in Australia in order to build the human capital required to transform organisations facing a changing global economy (Avolio, 1996). Bolden (2010) noted a shift toward programs delivered by higher education providers as the demand for an integration of advanced theory and practical work-based application became more desirable than traditional approaches that had limited contextualisation or demonstrable value.

Raelin (2004) outlined some common problems with approaches to leadership development including: setting up individuals for developing leadership capabilities then returning them to an unaccommodating organisational environment; focusing on aspirational development into leadership positions resulting in divisive organisational structures supporting follower mentality; distinguishing between managers and leaders, further dividing responsibilities and role purpose; and attempting to develop motivational leadership skills in order to invoke an altruistic movement from within the ranks, as it were. These sentiments were confirmed in this study as participants shared similar challenges in their applications of the Stoic principles under circumstances which were not accommodating to changes in approach. These identified problems suggest an alternative approach is required to professional development than common well-meaning but naively simplistic implementation strategies; a Stoic approach which engages more with the nuanced intrinsic value of reflexivity, emotional regulation and the development of wisdom might go some way to changing the ontological narrative of leadership from individualistic to a collective contribution to the *polis*.

Avolio (1996) provided recommendations in 1996 for how Australia should approach leadership development in an organisational context, suggesting the approach needed investment in continuous development throughout all levels of the organisations with high level understanding of the interconnectedness of all units. Some years later, Bolden (2010) similarly provided a suggested framework for leadership and organisational development which integrated and contextualised the individual, group/team and the organisational elements of interplay throughout the process of developing leadership capabilities within organisations. Bolden identified factors to consider in succession, including direction setting, structure & processes, leadership development, learning transfer and evaluation & review.

Rightly so, the framework outlined by Bolden (2010) highlighted the complexities of building leadership capabilities through the provision of development programs. Of clear importance was an understanding of the organisational practices and processes that may encourage or inhibit the leadership capability development of individuals and teams within the organisation through pathways or barriers, respectively. Jarvis et al. (2013) also identified with the same issues encountered by participants of a development program whereby learnings were found to be difficult to implement due to a lack of understanding, support and/or vision within the organisation to allow changes in approach to infiltrate organisational practices. To change the perception of leadership and the role of leaders in an organisation we must allow for an understanding of and belief in the need for change *throughout* the organisation (Avolio, 1996), possibly by skirting the terminology of leadership for a time. I have taken this approach in this study, so as to better focus on wider ontological perspectives and epistemological contributions rather than titles or expectations associated with the term 'leadership', before returning later to the discussion of leadership armed with new insights.

The Stoic ontological way of being in so far as living a life of virtue for the common good in accordance with nature seems a contradiction to a contemporary workplace environment; however, the shift in sentiment of late toward greater collective contribution has provided an opportunity to explore how principles such as those practiced through Stoic philosophy might inform alternative approaches to how we participate within our workplaces. Guiding our path to this state of being is a Stoic epistemology encompassing wisdom through logical thought processes, awareness of ethical actions versus emotional reactions and the acceptance of the physics of what is naturally within and outside our control. However, to live

and act as the Stoics would have us is a practice which must be developed through practical application and experience. As believers in the value of practical teachings of these concepts, the Stoics created a School of Stoic philosophy where students could learn about and discuss their experiences of their application of the three main principles of *logic*, *ethics* and *physics* depicted in Figure 2.

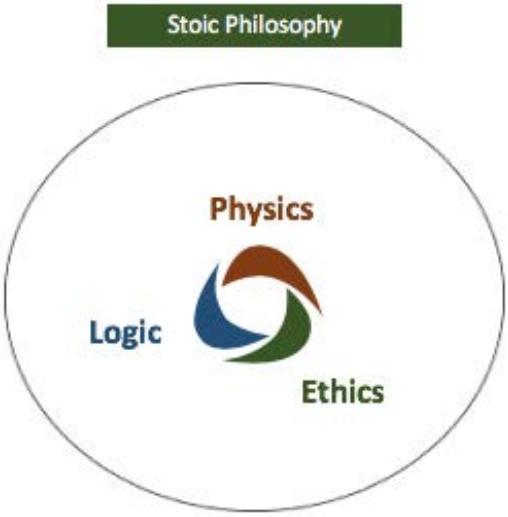


Figure 2: The three parts of Stoic philosophy

The teachings of Stoic philosophy were based predominantly on the methods and curriculum written by Chrysippus, the third head of the Stoic school, following the three-part philosophical curriculum of *logic*, *physics* and *ethics* (Gill, 2003). These teachings took the form of both formal written texts applied directly within a teacher-student context as well as public presentations and essays (Gill, 2003). The principles of Stoic philosophy were observed by the Stoics as a field protected by the fence of *logic*, the earth being the interaction with our environment (*physics*) and the crops being our responses to the various circumstances we might face (*ethics*) (Luce, 1994). It is in this order, *logic*, *physics* and *ethics*, that Zeno first developed

the practice of Stoicism (Saunders, 1966; SVF I, 46 Diogenes Laertius translation). However, Chrysippus held the view that *ethics* should come before *physics:*

> For first it is necessary to make the mind sure so that it will be an invincible guardian of the teachings. And dialectic serves to make the reason secure. Second we must subscribe to ethics to improve our character, for the study of ethics is without danger to one who has previously mastered logic. And finally we must proceed to physics, for it is more divine and requires more profound attention. (Saunders, 1966, p. 61; SVF II, 44 Sextus Empiricus translation)

Plato writes of Socrates' expression that we must appreciate the limitations of our understanding of others' actions in so far as making assertions that they are not acting in accordance with a particular philosophy or belief without considering how their actions may actually align with said beliefs (Plato, 1892). Our interpretations of philosophy to suit our own way of living and what we are capable of ourselves may cloud our judgement of how others might enact the same principles. Thus, the Stoic principle of *logic* asks that we continually look to develop wisdom through experiences and refrain from passing judgement based on our own opinions so as to engage the principle of *ethics* to contribute to the common good through greater awareness; a potentially useful strategy in the application of Stoic philosophy within rapidly changing and complex contemporary workplace environments.

With regard to understanding the principle of *physics*, the Stoics believed in fate due to their philosophical position of the influence of happenings (Luce, 1994); all happenings are

created from previous happenings, all that will happen has already happened, thus, it is fate. It is a continuous interconnected occurrence of all that has or will happen that has already been set in motion. According to the Stoics, nothing happens randomly or without effect on other happenings (Luce, 1994). We have free will to decide how we respond to happenings but we cannot stop them from happening. This foundational element of the *physics* principle of what is within our control and what is not is also theoretically applicable to contemporary workplace dynamics as various factors outside of our control contribute to changing conditions and sentiments.

The teachings of the School of Stoic Philosophy may provide insight into how a Stoic approach may be enacted within contemporary workplaces while also providing strategies for introducing these practices through experiential learning opportunities. The school itself underwent many changes and transformations as the philosophy evolved through time. The experiences of those practicing and teaching the principles informed and progressed this evolution and may again play an important role in a transformation of our workplace environments.

The School of Stoic Philosophy

Zeno of Citium (Cyprus), as the founder of the school of Stoic Philosophy, circa 300 B.C., applied the name of "'Stoa', or colonnade" (Staniforth, 1976, p. 9) based on the space Zeno lectured to his disciples called the 'Painted Porch' which was a covered colonnade held up by columns (Luce, 1994), becoming representative of the foundational principles. The school was "to become the most dominant school of the Hellenistic Age" primarily due to

Zeno's intent to restore ethical substance within society (Sedley, 2003, p. 11). As such, the Stoics were originally named the 'Socratics' because "their ethical system, characterised by its intellectualist identification of goodness with wisdom and the consequent elimination of non-moral 'goods' as indifferent, was thoroughly Socratic in inspiration" (Sedley, 2003, p. 11).

Originally, "Zeno's philosophy was formally tripartite, consisting of ethics, physics and logic", with ethics encompassing "a socially respectable revision of Cynic morality", physics developing from Plato's *Timaeus*, having duality of matter and "an active force" as corporeal interactions within the world, and logic forming the basis of epistemological thought (Sedley, 2003, pp. 12-13). The three parts of Stoic philosophy, *logic*, *physics* and *ethics*, were reformed from the original foundational concepts by the second founding father of the school, Cleanthes, as Stoic philosophy transitioned into the Roman Empire, circa 200 B.C. (Staniforth, 1976).

The School of Stoic Philosophy underwent continual change itself and whilst it is unclear exactly how each successor of Zeno of Citium was appointed to the head of school position, what is clear is that, once appointed, they would hold the place for the rest of their lives (Sedley, 2003). Despite the School of Stoic Philosophy being founded in Athens circa 300 B.C., which became *the* philosophical hub of activity, the early contributors were not native Athenians, primarily coming instead from the eastern Mediterranean region, particularly Turkey (Sedley, 2003). Zeno of Citium drew upon the Hellenistic thought of Cyprus at the time as well as his early studies of Cynic ethics (Sedley, 2003). While, the school of Peripatetic, founded by Aristotle, held its prestige through this time, Stoa and Epicurean became the dominant schools of thought at the time of Zeno (Sedley, 2003).

Philosophy became influential in Rome circa 150 B.C., some 150 years after the Stoic school had been formed, when philosophers from the main schools of thought, including Stoa and Plato's Academy, were invited "to represent Athens in negotiations with Rome" with regard to a fine imposed on Athens (Sedley, 2003, p. 19). The philosophers made a lasting and impactful impression on the Romans through public seminars (Sedley, 2003). The dissemination of philosophical thought in the late B.C.s allowed for philosophy to become more widely engaged, with Augustus, the Roman Emperor of the time, even taking council from various philosophers, including those practicing Stoic philosophy; and so, the era of Roman Stoicism began (Sedley, 2003).

The middle era of the school of Stoa saw a return to Platonian and Socratic, and by extension, Pythagorean, influences with regard to the doctrine that 'what is virtuous is good' (Sedley, 2003). Panaetius and Posidonius are credited with this revisiting of the Stoic origins of thought from the Socrates, Plato and Aristotle eras which resulted in a synchronising of sorts of the three main philosophical positions of the time; these being Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism (Sedley, 2003). To this end, Stoic epistemology became more prevalent throughout Rome as the Academy philosophers engaged more with the Stoic philosophers and presented similar epistemologies to those in Roman power (Sedley, 2003).

In the first century B.C., the philosophical strength within Athens was dispersed to Rome and Alexandria, primarily, as political tensions within Athens rose against the philosophers who sided with the Turkish Mithridates against the Romans (Sedley, 2003). The school of Stoa is not recognised within Athens beyond this time with Panaetius being the last recorded head of the school (Sedley, 2003). Whilst this period saw the loss of the centralised

schools of philosophy, it was also the time when philosophy was more widely dispersed beyond institutionalisation (Sedley, 2003).

During the Roman Empire the teachings of Stoicism continued as the dominant philosophical thinking within the "distinctive three-part Stoic educational curriculum" of *logic*, *physics* and *ethics*, despite a shift away from an established school as such (Gill, 2003, p. 33). The first and second centuries of the Roman rule saw a rebirth of philosophy with Marcus Aurelius, emperor from 161 to 120 C.E., establishing "four chairs of philosophy at Athens [for Stoicism, Epicureanism, Aristotelianism, and Platonism]" (Gill, 2003, p. 35). While Stoicism remained a key feature of the Roman Empire, there appeared to be a favour of philosophy in general at that time with the various schools of thought being applied to the Roman way of life (Gill, 2003).

During this time, as philosophy dispersed beyond institutionalisation, Christianity was gaining prevalence with the overlap in ideologies between philosophy and religion continuing to evolve today. In the mid to late 1500s, for example, Michel de Montaigne, a Catholic, expressed his divergence from religion toward philosophical thinking, represented by Hartle (2003) in terms of, "[for] Montaigne, what it means to believe is precisely not to know" (p. 121) extending his thinking back to philosophical musings of the 'why' behind every inquiry rather than simply accepting the interpretations religion, or indeed science, offers. Montaigne expressed his disapproval of scientific inquiry as well, claiming it had become a means of representing a particular line of enquiry rather than a free exploration to discover the very foundations of said enquiries (Foglia & Ferrari, 2019) that Seneca had initiated through his musing in *Natural Questions* (Seneca, 2014). Montaigne is represented by Foglia and Ferrari

(2019) as a humanist who liberated philosophy from its theoretical constructs to a practical application of judgment, which seems to be a retracing back to the original intent of Stoic philosophy as a practice; a concept that was perhaps lost in some interpretations as the philosophy circulated more broadly.

More recently, inspired by Classical philosophy, Hadot (1995) encouraged a philosophical approach to inquiry, through the view that the "love of wisdom" (p. 265) was forever transformational and that the aim of philosophy was not to reach definitive answers but to continuously evolve our understanding. The practice of Stoic philosophy is at the fore of these views in so far as there is no end to the evolution of our knowledge so long as we remain inquisitive and resist the temptation of 'knowing'. Montaigne's desire being "to escape the stifling of thought by knowledge" (Foglia & Ferrari, 2019, Section 3. A Philosophy of Free Judgement; para 4), instead imploring continuous exploration beyond what we might think we know and reflection on our experiences. Montaigne understood that "[human] life cannot be turned into an object of rational theory" (Foglia & Ferrari, 2019, Section 3. A Philosophy of Free Judgement; para 5), as so many contemporary models of human behaviour attempt to do; it must be experienced.

Montaigne purposefully expressed opposing judgements to demonstrate alternative points of view and the relative subjectivity of truth and justice as moral illusions created by customs that cloud one's thinking and prevent mental freedom (Foglia & Ferrari, 2019); perhaps luring us back to a Socratic approach to inquiry.

> "It is a sort of madness when we settle limits for the possible and the impossible." (Foglia & Ferrari, 2019, Section 3. A Philosophy of Free Judgement; para 5)

Montaigne, however, challenged the doctrine of Stoic philosophy on several occasions, taking the philosophy into a literal context. Hartle (2003) provided the example of Montaigne challenging Seneca's statement that we must rise above humanity; Montaigne expressing that it is not possible (perhaps ironically given the quote above) to be more human than we are. The Stoics were more likely referring to our intellectual and virtuous ability to expand our capabilities; whereas Montaigne was considering this from a more physiological perspective, perhaps, that we are what we are as humans and unless there is 'divine intervention', cannot be more that this (Hartle, 2003).

These interjections of thought and perspective through time are precisely what Hadot (1995, 2002) purported as the phenomenon of the evolution of philosophy. We continue to perpetuate this evolution with our quest to express philosophical perspectives in contemporary environments and within what each of us sees as 'possible'. In effect, we will always be somewhat limited by what we consider possible but also possess the intrinsic capabilities to progress our understanding beyond our current state of comprehension. Montaigne attempted to reconcile the parts of his religious faith with the parts of Stoic philosophy that made sense to him so that they could exist together in his own life; a balance each of us seeks within our own beliefs, often without knowing we are doing it.

It may sound a bit too convenient to allow for such diversion from the original intent of either philosophy or religion, or any other belief for that matter; however, my observation would be that the liminal space created *between* thoughts or beliefs is more attuned to our 'human' existence than that of extreme or fixed views. Further, if we again consider Hadot's assertion that there is a continuous evolution of thought, it would follow that we are continuously in the midst of such evolution and that things will never fit neatly into the present or the future.

If we consider Montaigne's perspective that we cannot be more human than we are and combine it with the Stoic perspective that we must continually transcend our thinking to higher levels of understanding, we may start to see a more agreeable way of being than trying to force ourselves toward extremes that are perceived as unattainable. Here we open the door to the exploration of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy within contemporary workplaces through the ongoing development of Stoic virtue, as an alternative to more fixed approaches such as character tests or competency and performance assessments. In the next section, this contextualisation of developing Stoic virtue in contemporary environments is extended.

Developing Stoic Virtue

Aristotle's (2006) view of virtue ethics encompassed the acknowledgement that it is the agent behind the action that is of value and that the development of a good character from which such agent would emerge was through the development of good habits. Aristotle (2006) was focused on exercising intellectual rationality more than our capabilities to rationalise our

desires to live a virtuous life. Aristotle (2006) did focus on social virtue; however, intellectual excellence was the primary exercise. Aristotle (1962, 2006) outlined in *Nicomachean Ethics* how the development of virtue was through the practice of habits which become one's character. The development of intellect, on the other hand, according to Aristotle, was through teaching and learning.

Further developing Aristotle's position on living a virtuous life, the Stoics used the term *epistemē* which, summarised in my own terms based on the description/definition provided by Jedan (2009), is both a system and a certainty of knowledge whereby the relationship between what we know, based on our assent of impressions, and our own relationship with what we know and how we came to know it. In explaining the differentiation made by the Stoics between technical cognition and *epistemē*, Jedan (2009) stated that from a Stoic perspective, "it is one thing to be able to do or produce useful things, but quite another thing to know what is truly useful in life" and, thus, in accordance with nature (p. 72). Technical cognition can potentially lead us to assenting to either what is good or not good for ourselves or the common good; we therefore need virtue, *epistemē*, to hold us to the path of what is right.

Where Aristotle saw virtue as a means determined by choices, the Stoics saw virtue as a way of being with no choice in the matter (Rist, 1969). One was either virtuous or an aspirant to virtue, according to the Stoics. The grounding of both perspectives was that "it is not what one does but why one does it that matters" (Rist, 1969, p. 16); however, where "for Aristotle virtue is defined as a disposition to make choices, the Stoics define it as a fixed disposition that is consistent" (Rist, 1969, p. 15). In effect, from a Stoic perspective virtue cannot be lost, but one can slip into an intermediate disposition under conditions outside of their control, such as

illness (Rist, 1969). As such, one may make choices that are neither good nor virtuous by way of ignorance, for example, without intending for their choices to have a 'negative' impact on others but the intention of Stoic practice is that choices are made with virtuous intent (Pigliucci, 2017).

A sense of community was also intrinsic to a Stoic perspective of developing virtue. Jedan (2009) expressed the development of virtue as it relates to "the sage's *eudaimonia* [suggesting] that a change of perspective, coming to share God's [*sic*] perspective on the world was a pivotal ingredient of the Stoic conception of virtue as knowledge" (p. 109). One translation of the debate of *eudaimonia* as a dominant feature of life or as inclusive within life is that the "full account of *eudaimonia* … contains both inclusive and dominant aspects, since its dominant aim is excellent rational activity, but it also includes external goods" (Aristotle, 2006, p. xiv).

The context of this is whether we are to pursue *eudaimonia* for the purpose of doing what is rationally good and right for the sake of it (Aristotle's approach) or if achieving this state is through the act of living a good life (the Stoic approach). Whichever way it is interpreted, the result *should* be that we are living in accordance with nature and acting for what is right and good. The focus, however, is different with respect to the attitude behind how or why something was done in so far as whether it was virtuous intent in line with natural law rather than on what was done specifically (Jedan, 2009). In presenting the views of Cicero and Seneca on natural law theory of the Stoics, Jedan (2009) expressed their view as "a careful observation of the reasonable structure in nature leads to a correct appreciation of non-moral things and hence to virtue" (p. 128). However, the Stoics were under no illusion that it is an

easy process determining what is right and acting with virtue. Debating the right course of action under various circumstances was part of the Stoic philosophical process; thus, the focus in Stoic philosophy remained on how and why actions were taken above what action was taken.

Highlighting the connection between living a virtuous life and happiness as well as the need to examine each situation on its own merits rather than following the actions of those before us, when expressing his views on happiness, Seneca (2018) urged "let us therefore inquire, not what is most commonly done, but what is best for us to do" (p. 4). Indeed, the intention of developing virtue was not that it was a self-gratifying end in itself but rather a means through which we are continually developing and learning through our best intentions for the common good so as to make a meaningful contribution to our communities (Seneca, 2018). However, as Luce (1994) explained, the original perspective that all attachments to personal gratification were to be avoided did soften as the view changed to acknowledge that decisions that contributed to one's good health over poor health, for example, not only served personal gratification but were also in accordance with nature and, thus "has an appreciable positive value short of being absolutely good" (Luce, 1994, p. 137). It is reasonable to then determine that it is our body and mind's natural state to be healthy and maintain homeostasis; an unhealthy body or mind sends signals, in the form of illness, distress, disease or the like, that a rebalance is required and action therefrom is in accordance with our natural state.

> According to Zeno and Chrysippus, advantages such as health and wealth are naturally 'preferable', even though their value is substantively different from that of virtue, which alone can count as 'good'. A related distinction … is that between the perfectly right

> actions … of the perfect wise person and the 'appropriate' or reasonable actions … that can also be performed by imperfect, non-wise people (Gill, 2003, p. 40-41).

Zeno believed that it was within our nature to pursue a 'good life' which meant that we would naturally want health and wealth, not for their material value but for the purpose of living well, and therefore we align with nature when we pursue these (Sedley, 2003). Virtue was articulated by Chrysippus as a form of knowledge expressed by humans through rationality, "the single characteristic which defines the nature and thus the excellence of human beings" (Jedan, 2009, p. 53). As explained by Jedan (2009), "for rational entities, living according to nature is living according to reason and virtue is the perfection of reason" (p. 60). Further, the idea of living according to nature implies the intent to live each moment with virtue, rather than solely focusing on events that may challenge our character (Jedan, 2009). Within this idea of a singular unity of virtue exists 'subordinate' virtues which were later suggested in the Middle Stoa as being developed intellectually or 'non-intellectually' depending on the nature of the specific virtue (Jedan, 2009).

The highest generic virtues in Stoic philosophy forming the 'superstructure' of the philosophy comprised the three parts of *ethics*, *logic* and *physics* (Jedan, 2009). Jedan (2009) presented Stobaeus' account of how "all the virtues make being happy their end, which consists in living in agreement with nature, but they achieve this in different ways" (p. 78). Secondary or subordinate virtues were identified as existing within each of the main principles of Stoic philosophy to give greater expression to living a virtuous life. From the information available and not lost through history, *ethics* is the most well-formed principle with regard to the application and evaluation of the development of virtue. Secondary or subordinate ethical

virtues to the primary Stoic virtues as outlined in Stobaeus and attributed to Chrysippus are highlighted in Table 1 (Jedan, 2009, p. 82, adapted) and account for how we interact with our circumstances and life happenings. Plato's four primary virtues of *ethics* - practical wisdom, courage, temperance and justice - were considered "different yet inseparable" and were carried forward by Zeno as the founder of the school of Stoic philosophy (Jedan, 2009, p. 73).

Table 1: Secondary virtues relating to the primary ethical Stoic virtues. (Jedan, 2009, p. 82, adapted)

Primary Virtue	**Secondary Virtues**	**Descriptions**
Practical Wisdom *Appropriate actions & what should be done*	Good judgement	What we can do and how we can act advantageously
	Good practical overview	Balances and sums up what is happening and what is performed
	Quick moral sense	Finds the appropriate action at the moment
	Discretion	What is worse and better
	Shrewdness	Able to achieve the aim in every case
	Inventiveness in difficulties	Able to find a way out of difficulties
Temperance *The quality of our impulses*	Good ordering	When something should be done, and what after what, and in general about the order of actions
	Propriety	Seemly and unseemly behaviour
	Sense of Honour	Careful to avoid conduct that could result in just blame
	Self-control	Not transgressing the bounds of what appears to be correct according to right judgement
Courage *Endurance*	Perseverance	Sticking to what has been judged correctly
	Confidence	According to which we know that we do not fall prey to anything terrible
	Magnanimity	Makes one be above those things whose nature it is to happen to good and bad persons alike

	Mental Stoutness	The soul that represents it to itself as unconquerable
	Industry	Able to accomplish what is due to be dealt with, undeterred by trouble or pain
Justice *Distributions*	Piety	Of service to the gods
	Kindness	Doing good
	Sociability	Equality in social intercourse
	Blameless companionship	Socialising blamelessly with one's neighbours

Logic and *physics*, as virtues, were considered necessary to ensure we do not assent to false conclusions and that we maintain our oneness with nature, respectively (Jedan, 2009). Logical virtue also was represented by specific subordinate virtues (albeit less well articulated by the Stoics than the ethical subordinate virtues in the information available). The generic virtue of dialectic, for example, is represented in Table 2 and adapted from Jedan's (2009, p. 86) presentation of Diogenes' statement in *De finibus,* which allowed the wise person to converse infallibly and to not be distracted by untruths, disorder or careless thought as a representation of the development of virtue through the practice of *logic*. The second component of logical virtue is that of rhetoric which was developed for the purpose of articulating these thoughts accurately and with flawless presentation (Jedan, 2009).

Table 2: Subordinate virtues of logic. (Jedan, 2009, p. 86, adapted)

	Subordinate Virtue	**Description**
Dialectic	Non-precipitancy	When one should and should not assent
	Uncarelessness	A strong rational principle against the plausible, so as not to give in to it

	Irrefutability	Strength in argument, so as not to be carried away by argument into the contradictory of one's own thesis
	Non-randomness	Impressions to the correct rational principle

As stated by Jedan (2009), the "whole schema of virtues in the three fields of Stoic philosophy powerfully brings home an intellectualistic conception of virtue as knowledge"; "in order to know what to do [*ethics*], the agent has to know the place in nature allotted to human beings", *physics*, and "needs dialectical virtue in order to deal correctly with his [*sic*] impressions and attain correct judgements" as well as "the ability to talk well or correctly presupposes the perfection of the agent's character", *logic* (p. 89).

The Stoic's perspectives were radical in a time where the 'gods' were seen as divine and possessing virtue unattainable by humans; instead they encouraged humans to look around themselves, rather than looking up for divine intervention (Jedan, 2009). However, being virtuous was a state that the Stoics themselves conceded was basically unattainable despite there being Stoic practices that encourage a continuous awareness of and progression toward virtuousness, which was seen as something that could be taught and practiced but never fully attained (Jedan, 2009).

Through this study, the need to shift focus away from workplace conduct in finite terms of competencies or traits in contemporary workplaces constitutes another radical shift in perspective as expressed in terms of applying a Stoic approach within contemporary workplaces by way of our contributions to the common good through virtuous intent. This

study explores ways in which this change in perspective is achievable by expanding our knowledge and understanding of how the Stoic principles are being applied and to what effect.

Summary of Stoic Ontology & Epistemology

In this chapter, I have provided a detailed synopsis of the principles of Stoic philosophy and in following chapters will employ this as a theoretical basis for exploring an alternative approach to understanding workplace dynamics. The Stoic ontology of living virtuously in accordance with nature through the epistemological grounding of the principles of *logic*, *ethics* and *physics* forms the foundational understanding for the enactment of Stoicism within contemporary workplaces. Through this study, I explore how the introduction of a Stoic approach into contemporary workplaces, applying the Stoic principles in the development of virtue, might constitute an alternative approach to current behavioural adaptation approaches predominantly aimed at manipulating or influencing outcomes.

To gain a better understanding of how a Stoic approach could be introduced to workplaces, the experiences of professionals currently applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces was explored through this study. This chapter provided the foundational understanding of Stoic philosophy for this inquiry of individual professional experiences with the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy within workplaces. The methodological approach which allowed for meaningful exploration and interpretation of these experiences is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodological philosophy applied to this study was governed by the aim to develop a more comprehensive understanding of **the ways the principles of Stoic philosophy are being applied in the workplace and to what effect**. This chapter begins with an overview of the mixed methods research design of this study, progressing then into greater depth of understanding of the study components of reflective practice and interpretive analysis.

Research Design

Applying a mixed methods research design has been considered to be a useful construct for exploring "complex questions about aspects of social practice", particularly when studying human reasoning (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 385). This study was designed using Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Research Methodology design (Terrell, 2012), as outlined in Figure 3. This approach allowed for a progressive exploration of the application of the Stoic principles addressing each of the study objectives from a broad context using a survey, progressing to specific individual experiences through semi-structure reflective interviews and, finally, interpretations of the applications of Stoic philosophy in the workplace through inductive and deductive data analyses.

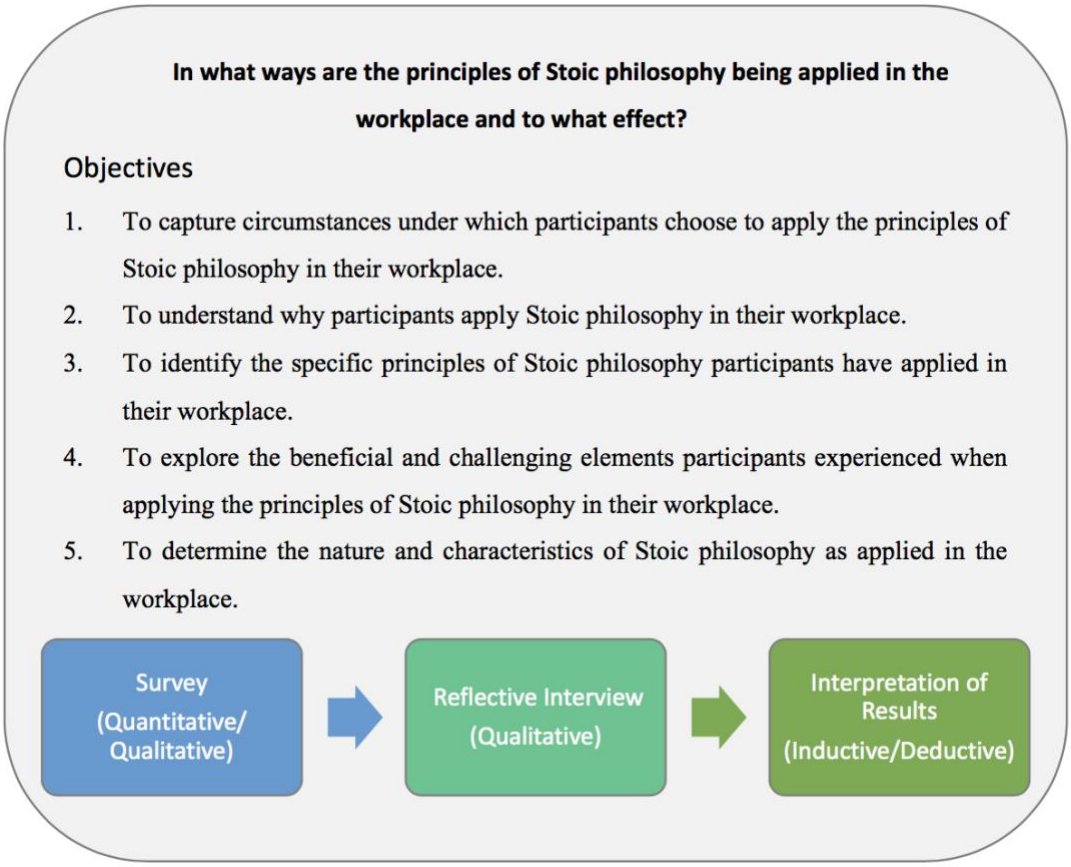


Figure 3: Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Research Methodology

The specific objectives of this study were explored in each stage of the research design by progressing the inquiries into greater depth and specificity of understanding how the principles of Stoic philosophy were being applied in the workplace. The sections of this chapter outline the specific methodological application of each component of the research design starting with the quantitative/qualitative survey and the reflective practice approach to the interview stage followed by a presentation of the inductive/deductive analyses used to guide my interpretations of the findings as these related to the principles of Stoic philosophy. Considerable attention is given in this chapter to reflective practice as a key component of the research design which allowed for more advanced and in-depth exploration of the objectives of the study and interpretations of the data. In the first instance the next section outlines the

design of the quantitative/qualitative survey which provided the initial broad insights into the application of the Stoic principles in the workplace.

Quantitative/Qualitative Survey

The survey administered in the first stage of the research design had both quantitative and qualitative elements. This quantitative/qualitative survey stage of the design was aimed at collecting responses from multiple participants engaged with the principles of Stoic philosophy to gain initial insights into the prevalence and intentions of their practices within the workplace. The quantitative element allowed for a better understanding of the workplace circumstances participants were choosing to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy, which principles they were applying and the prevalence of the circumstances and principles applied among survey respondents, predominantly contributing to Objective 1 (To capture circumstances under which participants choose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace), Objective 3 (To identify the specific principles of Stoic philosophy participants have applied in their workplace) and Objective 4 (To explore the beneficial and challenging elements participants experienced when applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace).

Social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn were used to promote the survey through groups specifically focused on connecting individuals with an interest in Stoic philosophy. As such, the survey also included elements designed to collect information on the use of social media by group members engaging with the Stoic philosophy and the usefulness of said groups. The quantitative/qualitative design of the survey allowed for straight forward analysis of multiple responses to simply structured survey questions (Vogt, Gardner, &

Haeffele, 2012) as well as providing opportunity for more detailed and personalised responses through open-ended questions.

As the initial stage of the study was aimed at efficiently collecting a large volume of data which respondents could provide directly (i.e. without the need for observation by or interaction with the researcher), a survey was considered an appropriate method to apply (Vogt et al., 2012). The survey was designed to allow participants to voluntarily provide anonymous responses to questions relating to a topic area that interested them (i.e. the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace); thus, it was reasonable to assume that participants would answer the questions truthfully rather than appealing to socially desirability biases (Vogt et al., 2012) that may be present through social media or personal interactions.

The quantitative/qualitative survey was designed to gather information on the broad applications of Stoic philosophy in the workplace, including some demographic data, from a wide range of practitioners, allowing for the study to then progress into deeper and richer insights as interviewees shared their experiences with applying the principles in their workplaces, expanding the study design to address more fully Objective 2 (To understand why participants apply Stoic philosophy in their workplace) and Objective 5 (To determine the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace). In the next section, I outline the design of the interview stage of the methodological design for this study.

Semi-structured Reflective Interviews

A semi-structured interview design was used in this study to allow interviewees to share their experiences of applying the Stoic principles within the contexts of their specific workplaces while ensuring each interview was conducted using a consistent approach. This approach allowed for the exploration of and further inquiry into the experiences of interviewees using interview questions which aimed to provoke reflection and emergent questioning, by the interviewees and interviewer (Brinkmann, 2014; Eppich, Gormley, & Teunissen, 2019).

The Relevance of Reflective Practice

Dewey, as cited in Redmond (2004), stated that, "Reflection [is] the discernment of the relationship between what we try to do and what happens in consequence" (p. 10). Reflective practice has been identified as a legitimate methodological approach to conducting research, particularly where philosophical or phenomenological elements form the primary epistemological perspective (Oeij, Gaspersz, van Vuuren, & Dhondt, 2017; Redmond, 2004), as is the case with Stoic philosophy. Reflection upon how our habitual responses may need to be regulated allows for a transcending of routine so as to develop greater awareness and intentional purpose of our actions (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015). Through the use of specific questions that encouraged reflective practice, the qualitative interviews in this study were designed to encourage participants to reflect upon their experiences in applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces. To develop greater depth of understanding in addressing the objectives of this study, reflective practice allowed for more in-depth exploration of participants' experiences with applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces.

Reflective practice challenges and broadens perspectives and potentially contributes to modification of actions (Redmond, 2004) as "most people tend to be unaware of how their attitudes affect their behavior and also unaware of the negative impact of their behavior on others" whereby "theories-in-use help them remain blind to the actual degree of their ineffectiveness" (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. viii). The approach taken with this study was to structure the interviews around participants' application of the principles of Stoic philosophy 'through' workplace opportunities rather than 'for' or 'at' work and that the reflections were based on reflection-*on*-action following the events rather than reflection-*in*-action as the events were happening (Cox, 2006). Indeed, "reflection forms the bridge between a course of study and personal experience" and is "often [a] very motivating learning activity" (Cox, 2006, p. 461).

The use of reflective practice as a guide for the interview structure applied in this study was intended to engage participants in a level of understanding of interpersonal interactions, with peers or clients for example, that transcends technical expertise, despite this study being of the nature of reflection-*on*-action retrospectively. As such, participants were encouraged to share their experiences while being given the opportunity to articulate their own perspectives, beliefs and actions, both retrospective and aspirational. The opportunity to express insights gained through their experiences allowed interviewees to reflect upon and make sense of the various 'storylines' that existed within their experiences, enhanced through their study of scenarios depicted by ancient philosophers and mythology that allowed for imperfection (Schedlitzki, Jarvis, & MacInnes, 2015).

Reflective practice is fundamental to the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy as it allows the practitioner to incorporate an understanding of one's own beliefs and knowledge. The process of reflection within the practice of Stoic philosophy is engaged predominantly through the process of *logic,* as outlined in the previous chapter. One must progress from the initial sensory response of an occurrence through to a level of 'self-scrutiny' and awareness of alternative perspectives or contradictory consequences in order to experience a transformation in one's own beliefs or actions (Redmond, 2004; Staniforth, 1976). Extending this thinking, Cox (2006) noted that, "the regular use of a reflective practice tool or model makes learning from experience a more reliable and faster method of gaining access to necessary knowledge and wisdom about our work processes and about ourselves" (p. 460).

By way of example, in a study conducted by Redmond (2004), healthcare professionals working with parents of intellectually challenged children were encouraged to broaden their perspectives using a reflective teaching and learning model developed by Redmond and published in the book, *Reflection in Action*. To propel learning opportunities beyond technical expertise, Redmond (2004) created the time and space, in the form of 'practicums', for participants to develop reflective practice skills. Redmond's approach applied reflective practice methods from the participant, group and researcher perspectives. In addition to creating reflective practice development opportunities for participants, Redmond explored reflective practice development techniques as a university lecturer and the researcher of the implementation of reflective practice in the healthcare setting using an underlying ethnographic narrative. A similar approach was applied to this study as I interpreted the experiences participants reflected upon and shared in their interviews which informed my ethnographic observations, discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter.

Reflective practice is a more complicated, yet intuitive, methodological approach than that of standard scientific methods. As Redmond notes, Boud's three characteristics of reflection (experience, reflection and learning) acknowledge that "reflection is a complex activity composed of both thoughts and emotions – positive and negative perceptions of the self" (p. 26). As such, "fostering of a positive self-image is an important step towards transformative learning" (Redmond, 2004, p. 26). Hence, in reflective practice as applied in this study, participants were encouraged, using a reflective cycle informed line of questioning, to articulate their thoughts and emotional responses in relation their enactment of Stoic philosophy and to share the learnings stimulated by their experiences.

Schön's Reflective Cycle

Appreciative of a reflective practice approach to learning, philosopher and scholar of reflective learning, Donald Schön, expressed that an overreliance on scientifically based, 'technically rational' approaches to the education and practice of professionals has created a disconnect between theories and the practical application of these (Oeij et al., 2017; Schön, 1991). Schön (1991) deliberately considered the epistemology of practice beyond what learning often entailed through primarily theoretical or technical competency which, through Schön's observations, was limited with regard to application. Redmond (2004) explained by saying "Schön suggested that such a background produces professionals who may be incapable of either recognizing or valuing the seemingly intangible qualities of practice wisdom and that this has caused an artificial and profitless division between theory and practice" (p. 35).

Siebert and Walsh (2013) also reference Schön's insights with respect to the need for placing greater emphasis on learning through reflection of experiences rather than uncontextualized theory. Much criticism has arisen around the rise of 'professions' and the associated perpetuation of knowledge and information for perceived status, power and remunerative benefits over practical application for altruistic community purposes (Schön, 1991). Schön articulated that what was learned through education systems could never be fully preparative for the complexities and inconsistencies of actual events and, therefore, professionals needed to learn how to work through problems adaptively with no certainty as to the actual or desired outcome.

A normative education system provides a model for what *should* happen and how professionals *should* respond to such happenings. However, a system based upon constructed and overly simplistic models can never fully represent true reality which is indefinitely variable and perpetually changing and therein lies the disconnect (Schön, 1991). When we try to replicate patterns of behaviour through the development of models or frameworks, for example, we will forever fall short of full comprehension. In essence, it is argued that a lack of comprehension of, and indeed research into, the idiosyncrasies involved in professional interactions is overlooking the true nature of professionalism which is in fact much more dynamic than simple applications of theories through a technically rational lens (Schön, 1991).

Reflective practice provides the opportunity for deeper understanding of, and considered responses to, personal interactions and reactions. Argyris and Schön's (1978) concepts of *theory-in-use* and *knowing-in-action* are relevant here as I explored how individuals applied what they had learned and were asked to reflect upon their experiences;

however, there remained a missing element of observation on my part where I was unable to observe the behaviours and actions of the individuals in their workplaces directly for the purpose of considering where they might have been applying the principles without realising they were doing so (Kinsella, 2007). I could, however, observe how they described their experiences despite them perhaps not explicitly articulating these in Stoic philosophy terms; thus, not realising the extent to which they were applying the principles. Further, how the participants described their own evolution of their 'world views' provided an opportunity for me to make explicit that which had remained implicit to the person practicing the principles, recognising that they too were undertaking this process either intentionally or inadvertently (Kinsella, 2007).

Despite the complexities of professional reflection, Schön's (1987, 1991) proposed process of reflection was a structured process of experimental learning applying different approaches depending on the specific circumstances or reactions that initiated the need for an alternative action (Redmond, 2004), more so as the 'art of practice' than of technical competency (Kinsella, 2007). This art of practice was highly relevant to this study pertaining to the practice of Stoic philosophy within the workplace as the concept formed the core epistemological distinction of this study which moved away from applying pre-constructed management models toward exploring a practice through experiences.

Reflective Practice in Action

Articulating the epistemology of practice, Argyris and Schön (1978) introduced and made a distinction between single- and double-loop learning whereby, single-loop learning was

limited by "the individual's desire to continue behaving in a certain way [which] may outweigh his/her disappointment at such behaviour not achieving a desired goal" (Redmond, 2004, p. 43). In other words, participants may try harder to implement theories into practice that are not suitable and not producing the desired results or outcomes, rather than considering alternative approaches that they may find uncomfortable. This being a remnant learned behaviour of the normative approach applied to common educational structures (Schön, 1991).

To realise the benefits of reflective practice, one must engage with double-loop learning whereby the feedback and reflection occurs through the engagement with alternative perspectives (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The consideration of alternative perspectives may in fact result in alternative theories being trialled and, thus, an emancipation from long held beliefs (Redmond, 2004). Again, I can align this to the Stoic principle of *logic,* wherein one moves beyond their own opinions, beliefs or judgements to gain a better understanding of alternative perspectives to developing knowledge while also engaging with the principles of *ethics* and *physics* as they seek to explore the contributions of others and themselves, respectively, to a much greater whole. This practice may have allowed participants to "become aware of facts, problematising their effects, finding solutions that are within their reach in order to re-assess their behaviour" (Thiollent & Toledo, 2012, p. 153), contributing to more comprehensive perspectives of their social interactions.

Schön (1991) articulated that social interactions are too complex to rely on an evaluation of technical competency and that, instead, reflective practice, whether intentional or intuitive, is an epistemological approach to professional practice (Oeij et al., 2017; Redmond, 2004). An example of the application of this was where Oeij et al. (2017) explored

the practices of innovation project managers and theoretically aligned their behaviours with Schön's approach to reflective practice. Oeij et al. (2017) were interested in how professionals enacted reflective practice without realising they were doing so. In some respects, this was similar to the approach taken in this study whereby I was looking for the enactment of the main Stoic principles whether the interviewees realised they were enacting them or able to articulate their actions in these terms. Future empirical studies focused on reflection-*in*-action may identify where the principles are being enacted without concerted effort to do so or expressed knowledge of the principles; this may be particularly relevant during unexpected events which create the need for change management. This study, however, remained focused on reflection-*on*-action with participants who were aware of the principles and asked to reflect upon how they had purposefully applied them to their workplaces and their intentions in doing so.

Despite some evidence of unintentional reflection-*in*-practice, reflective practice is generally considered a learned skill which "provides the link between an experience and learning from that experience" (Roberts, 2009, p. 634). Due to its very nature, reflection is ever evolving as circumstances change and practitioners implement adaptive responses based on their reflections. The evolutionary nature of reflective practice again draws further alignment with the Stoic perspective that everything is in a perpetual state of adaptation. Thus, the application of a methodological approach that explores participants' reflective adaptation was appropriately applied in this study.

Applying a Reflective Practice Methodology

Reflective practice encompasses a learning process that encourages continuous pursuit, if you will, of revised approaches that achieve results not previously realised or aligned with desired results (Oeij et al., 2017); further solidifying the alignment with the practice of Stoic philosophy. Oeij et al. (2017) expand Argyris and Schön's single- and double-loop reflective practice to include a third loop extending the initial minor adjustments within the governing parameters made in the single-loop and the adjustments made to the governing parameters in the double-loop to the triple-loop where completely new paradigms and governing values are learned.

Roberts (2009) provided a summary of the history of reflective thinking and application from Dewey to Schön, Kolb to Mezirow; all of which build on previous expressions of what reflective practice entailed. Regardless of the specifics of each approach, all reflective practice requires a subjective assessment of the action taken within a particular experience to enhance one's learning, creating the opportunity for transformative understanding.

> In the case of reflective practice a model was needed which would simulate, and potentially enhance and expedite, the metacognitive processes involved in learning from experience. In this way it would be possible to achieve an increased understanding of a situation and thus gain real insights into how to control or improve that situation. (Cox, 2006, p. 463)

The perspective expressed in the above quote highlights the importance of exploring the learning process participants went through in their experiences in order to further our

understanding of their application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. Specifically, the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy should, in normative terms, enhance participants' ability to transform their thinking as they reflected upon their experiences. This then served as an indication of their understanding of the principles when applied to workplace situations. Essentially, given I undertook the interviews at various timeframes following participants' experiences, the reflections were more aligned with developing and expressing critical understanding, through the opportunity to tell their stories, than engaging with a reflective practice cycle in the moment (Cox, 2006). Further, it was anticipated that interviewees would be 'natural reflectors' (Roberts, 2009) rather than sceptical of reflective practice given the inherent reflective nature of practicing Stoic philosophy.

There are two conditions that Redmond (2004) suggested participants need to be exposed to in order to develop reflective abilities. The first is that participants are exposed to alternative views from which they can reflect on their own perspective with a deeper contextual understanding of how others view their approach. The second condition is that they are able to intellectually or emotionally position themselves to see the situation from alternative views; the extent of which was explored through the reflective design of the interview process, outlined in the next chapter. Both of these conditions are inherent within the practice of Stoic philosophy.

The importance of these conditions is that the participants are: firstly, able to broaden their understanding of the circumstances through consideration of how others are experiencing their approach; and secondly, able to themselves 'experience' the situation from alternative positions. The primary difference between these two conditions is that in the first instance the

participant is viewing the situation from their own perspective whereby in the second instance a deeper understanding is gained of how the situation is being, or has been, experienced or perceived by others. In this study, the consideration of the Stoic principle of *ethics* allowed for an interpretive analysis of the experiences to be explored from the perspectives of the participants as they related their own experiences to the perspectives, actions or behaviours of others.

"[The] key to effective experiential learning is an ability to reflect upon our actions" and to engage with learning as "an objective process within a subjective experience" (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004, p. 31 & 33, respectively). The methods applied in this study extracted data that provided an indication of whether participants were able to identify with how others were experiencing, or had experienced, an event that had been shared through the interview process, giving rise to an indication of their understanding of the application of the *ethics* principle of Stoic philosophy.

Despite these intentions, the tendency of practitioners to lean toward practices that have been criticised as organisational conformity whereby their experiences are influenced by what was deemed to be expected and that their responses through self-evaluation and self-discipline were in fact not internal reflections but reflections of their external environment has been a criticism of reflective practice (Siebert & Walsh, 2013). Further, Siebert and Walsh (2013) referred to Argyris and Schön's assessment that "we all use personal theories to inform our practice and that these are both taken for granted and implicit" creating a "normative template of reality" (p. 173). There was also the danger that, through reflection only, practitioners become "objects of study" rather than truly experiencing a situation through 'practical

reflectivity' entailing greater depth of comprehension of experiential learning beyond existing held boundaries; and thus, shifting from an epistemological sense of the experience to being ontologically grounded, shifting our way of 'being' (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004, p. 34). If through reflective practice we merely self-regulate our actions without an associated foundational change occurring within our beliefs, then any enlightenment achieved is superficial rather than epistemological, or indeed ontological, in nature.

Thus, to be fully comprehensive in one's interpretation of their experience of reflective practice, there is the need for meta-reflection. Meta-reflection is a requirement in the process of developing reflective practice capabilities in so far as "reflection upon reflection" (Redmond, 2004, p. 63). Meta-reflection potentially highlights subtle signs of self-deception on the part of the participants claiming to have implemented adaptive approaches (Redmond, 2004) when in fact the method may have changed but the underlying epistemological beliefs and ontological perspective have not; thus, the motivation may remain as individualist self-regulation or externally conforming rather than a genuine transformation through reflective practice.

In this study, my interpretations of the interviewees' experiences played an important role in postulating the genuine applications of the principles of Stoic philosophy for the purposes of learning the practices versus those applications made for self-gain or influence. At the outset, it was accepted that the development of *self* is intrinsic to contributing to the broader context; however, indicators of the perpetuation of self-interest without corresponding intention or desire to contribute beyond one's self was considered in my assessment of 'the common good'.

My role in the interpretation of reflective practice undertaken by participants of this study required that I also undertake regular self-reflection (Liamputtong, 2009b). Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith (2004) describe practical reflexivity as a more subjective approach to experiential learning whereby there is greater attention on the practitioners' way of constructing and "making sense of their situations" beyond merely an objective analysis of what happened (p. 39). Reflexivity involves the researcher's ability to reflect on how their own biases, situation or cultural beliefs may influence the interpretation of a reflective process as well as the methods they have applied (Holloway, 1997b; Liamputtong, 2009b).

Thus, my epistemological perspective was particularly important as an interpreter of the experiences shared by participants of this study. In qualitative research, the researcher must be able to reflect on their biases and assumptions and be self-critical of the analysis of the data (Holloway, 1997b; Liamputtong, 2009b). Reflective practice techniques and an ethnographic sensibility provided an opportunity for me to not only conceptually comprehend the dynamics of participant experiences but also to undertake reflection of my own approach, experiences and biases when interpreting the results. In the following section, I outline the approach I took to interpreting the data through inductive and deductive analyses.

Interpretation of Results

The final stage of the study's research design relied on my interpretation of both the quantitative and qualitative results, individually and comparatively, and how the results might

inform future applications of the principles of Stoic philosophy in workplaces more broadly. Thus, the nature of the methodology applied to this study affirmed that interpretations would be conducted through the specific paradigm of Stoic philosophy so as to gain insights into others' experiences with the application of the Stoic principles (Tracy, 2019). Further, it was important that throughout the data collection and analysis stages, I engaged in self-reflection on how my own experiences and interpretations may have influenced how I viewed the participants' experiences and what I chose to focus on in my assessment of the results. Essentially, theories-of-action (Argyris & Schön, 1978) were considered with regard to the experiences described by participants through an interpretive approach (Küpers & Weibler, 2005; Tracy, 2019) guided by the principles of Stoic philosophy.

An interpretive approach allowed me to engage with a community of Stoic practitioners who espoused and enacted the principles of Stoic practice within the workplace and gather data to create a story around applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace in ways that constructed, through inductive and deductive analyses, a relatable and authentic approach to experiencing the workplace, with all that entails (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). The unique nature of the experiential data collected using this approach means replicability is limited beyond this study due to changing conditions and behaviour of the individuals under observation (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Specifically, within this study, the context of Stoic philosophy formed the cultural and community elements under observation while my own practice and interpretations of the application of the principles influenced my experience throughout the study and assessment of others' experiences. Culture in this study, therefore, was defined as "a mental phenomenon; that is, as consisting in what people know, believe, think, understand, feel or mean about what they do" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 33) when applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

Thus, the *culture* in this study that was common to all participants was the practice of Stoic philosophy itself rather than a place of work, as such. Since I was assessing the workplace environments within which the interviewees were applying the principles of Stoic philosophy without actually witnessing these workplaces or interactions with others, my assessments were inductive and extrapolative based on what the interviewees chose to share with me. For example, where an interviewee shared the contextual environment within which they had been applying the principles, I was reliant on this description alone to form my assessment of that workplace environment. The place of work and experiences within the workplace merely provided the context within which the principles were practiced. Furthermore, as the participants were not working in the same workplace as each other, any assessment of the work environment was secondary to the cultural element of applying Stoic philosophy within a workplace setting. The primary focus of the methodology, therefore, was the experiential phenomenological cultural element of participants beyond the *physical* working environment.

Of equal relevance was that there was no chance of me becoming immersed in the workplace cultures the interviewees were experiencing as I was not a part of nor directly experiencing their workplaces, nor were they experiencing each other's workplaces. However, my own immersion with the principles of Stoic philosophy was a necessary component to the design of this study and would introduce a required level of subjectivity to create a unique story from my own perspectives based on my observations, while articulating the various perspectives and experiences of the interviewees (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). As I was not directly *observing* Stoic practice within the workplace for this study, a formal ethnographic study was not practicable; however, ethnographic sensibility informed the interpretive

approach for my analyses. The inductive analysis phase of my interpretations relied upon the extraction of themes in the data while motives and assumptions emerged through my deductive analysis of how the themes aligned with the practice of Stoic philosophy and associated intentions driving participants' Stoic practice.

Summary of Methodology

The methodological research design applied to this study allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research question, '**In what ways are the principles of Stoic philosophy being applied to the workplace and to what effect?**' through multiple phases of data analysis and reflection (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013), addressing each of the research objectives. Thus, a deep appreciation of the principles of Stoic philosophy was required to conduct this study with adequate insight into the experiences of participants and their application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. The analysis of how participants in this study experienced the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, *logic*, *ethics* and *physics*, in the workplace was grounded in their understanding of said principles and my interpretations of their understanding. The research methodology applied in this study, therefore, aimed to capture not only the participants' experiences, but also to gain insight into their understanding of the principles in practice, as interpreted through my own understanding of the principles.

Developing a deep understanding of the three main principles of Stoic philosophy informed the design of the research methodology and the associated data collection methods applied in this study. By applying a mixed methods approach to data collection, I was able to craft my analysis around inductive exploration of the themes that emerged from the data which

could then be interpreted through the deductive *a priori* Stoic framework introduced in Chapter 2. In the next chapter, I outline in detail the specific data collection and analysis methods I applied as these relate to the methodological design of this study.

Chapter 4: Methods and Analysis

The data collection methods applied to this study allowed me to further my understanding of how the principles of Stoic philosophy are being applied and where consistencies in experiences might inform further integration of such practices in workplaces more broadly. Through inductive and deductive interpretative analyses of the survey and interview results and by developing ethnographic and autoethnographic sensitivities, I was able to interpret participants' responses and experiences while using my own knowledge and experiences of Stoic practice to gauge participants' levels of understanding of this practice. This chapter outlines how I designed and applied specific data collection methods and analyses to address the objectives and research question of this study.

Data Collection Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used in the inquiry of the research objectives for this study with an interpretive analysis bringing the findings together into a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic nature of the application of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. This mixed methods approach allowed for an overview of general applications and experiences to be obtained as well as more in-depth understanding of the experiences of individuals in their applications of the principles in their workplaces.

Purposive sampling was initially used as the survey was promoted through social media groups dedicated to Stoic philosophy, as mentioned previously, with the option for survey

respondents to participate in an interview provided at the end of the survey. Social media platforms were searched for sites that met the criteria of showing active participation in the sharing of knowledge of and insights into Stoic philosophy, by administrators and members alike. Despite variation in size of groups and engagement styles of the groups selected, the aim was to ensure potential participants of the study were familiar with the context of the study and could provide meaningful contributions and insights. Social media group administrators were contacted prior to issuing the survey to ensure there was support for my posts promoting this research on their social media sites and inviting members to participate in the survey.

Appendix A outlines the social media group list and copies of the wording and dates for each post issued during the data collection period. Of the nine social media group administrators contacted, seven confirmed their approval for me to use their sites to promote the study, providing a potential connection to approximately 135,000 members. However, the number of members of a group did not necessarily provide an accurate indication of the level of engagement by administrators or members with the sites or indeed the study. One of the sites seemed to have been disestablished before the first survey post and another during the study. Further, as the survey responses showed, many respondents were members of several social media groups dedicated to Stoic philosophy; thus, the total number of unique members was difficult to established because of duplication across groups.

Hence, acknowledging the limitation that only a percentage of *active* members would be interested and chose to participate in a study on Stoicism in the workplace, helped to explain the relatively low engagement with the survey of 55 respondents (49 of which claimed to use Stoicism in their workplaces) compared to total member numbers. This was supported by my

own observations of each of the sites which showed varying degrees of member engagement but which did not appear to reflect a high percentage of the total member numbers. Engagement by members ranged from 'likes' to comments on posts and posting of questions but often lacked, in my opinion, more structured and in-depth discussion of topics. Greater depth of discussion was achieved by some administrators through other means, such as podcasts, which I also participated in to help promote the study. Survey respondents' experiences with social media interactions through these sites is provided in the next chapter outlining the results of the survey.

Data collection commenced with the online survey going live on Sunday 29 March 2020. This survey stage of the data collection was closed on Saturday 16 May 2020, comprising seven weeks of data collection. Interviews were also conducted during this time, however, due to scheduling, the final interview was conducted in the week following the closing of the survey. Progressing to the interview stage was given as an option to survey respondents, not as a requirement of undertaking the survey; however, in order to partake in an interview, individuals were asked to respond to the survey in the first instance and then select their preference for continued participation in the study through an interview. Interviews and survey responses provided the basis for ethnographic inductive and deductive analysis techniques incorporated into the study in order to gather information on the cultural elements of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. Each of the data collection methods of the survey and interviews and the interpretive analysis are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Survey Design

The survey design followed a combined quantitative and qualitative structure; Appendix B provides a copy of the survey exported from the online software, Qualtrics, which was used for the survey, including information sheet, consent and survey questions. The flow of the survey is also indicated in Appendix B where the responses to some questions would lead the respondents to different relevant subsequent questions. The survey was conducted from a secure Qualtrics online location separate from the social media platform groups where the invitations to participate in the survey were posted. This strategy ensured that the research was presented as a separate activity to the social media group activities.

The information sheet, which provided background on the purpose and elements of the study as well as an estimation of the expected time the survey would take to complete and the confidential nature of all survey and interview responses, was presented as the first page prior to requesting consent to participate in the survey. Participants who chose to participate in the online survey were required to select the option that indicated they had read and understood the parameters of the study provided in the information sheet but they were not asked to provide their name or contact details; however, if respondents chose to proceed with an interview following the survey, they were required to provide contact details so that interviews could be arranged. After respondents selected the option indicating their consent to participate in the survey, the first question of the survey was presented to them. Those who chose not to participate in the study after reading the information provided were advised to either contact the Principle Investigator for further information or to exit the survey with no further action required on their part.

Quantitative Survey Elements

The aim of the quantitative elements of the survey was to collect data on the prevalence of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, particularly within the workplace, and the level of understanding and engagement of the survey respondents in the practice and with social media groups; contributing specifically to the inquiries outlined in Objective 1 (To capture circumstances under which participants choose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace) and Objective 3 (To identify the specific principles of Stoic philosophy participants have applied in their workplace). A definition of each of the principles was provided within the survey to ensure respondents understood the principles as these were being applied to the study. Information was collected on how long respondents had been practicing Stoic philosophy and how they viewed their own understanding of the principles in addition to where they sought information on and insights into the practices. As the primary channel of communication and engagement with the survey was through social media groups, information was also collected on the level of engagement with these groups and how helpful or otherwise participants found the group posts and discussions.

Qualitative Survey Elements

The qualitative elements of the survey were aimed at gauging the level of satisfaction respondents experienced with their application of the principles and interactions with the social media groups. These survey questions were specifically aimed at contributing to the inquiries of Objective 2 (To understand why participants apply Stoic philosophy in their workplace), Objective 4 (To explore the beneficial and challenging elements participants experienced when

applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace) and Objective 5 (To determine the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace), while adding to the contextual understanding of Objectives 1 and 3. Respondents were asked to comment, through open-ended questions, on both the challenges and benefits they had realised through their applications as well as the general cultures of the social media groups and whether these were helpful for their applications of the principles. The option at the end of the survey where respondents were invited to participate in an interview with the researcher provided an opportunity to share, in more detail, their experiences with applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. Thus, the use of the survey as the first stage of this study provided an initial means of engaging practitioners in the study as well as serving as a conduit to the interview stage.

Interviews

Survey respondents who chose to participate in an interview were asked for their first and last names, and to provide a contact email address to enable interviews to be arranged via online conferencing facilities. The Zoom platform was used for all the online interviews. No information on the social media profiles of interviewees was requested apart from the responses within the survey as to which social media groups the respondents engaged with. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured reflective practice inquiries, as described in the previous chapter, and contributed to the inquiry of all the study objectives but specifically provided greater depth of understanding to inform the ethnographic sentiment and interpretive nature of Objective 5.

The semi-structured approach for interviews provided some guidance for participants to engage with reflective practice techniques and draw upon their story of the circumstances under which they chose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy, and upon what they learned through their application that might suggest an inclination toward the continued *practice* of the principles in future scenarios. Appendix C outlines the general line of questioning for the interviews (Eppich et al., 2019) as adapted from Gibb's Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988). As the interviews were conducted at a point in time with no further inquiry of interviewees' experiences following the interviews, subsequent cycles of reflection that would be recommended by Argyris and Schön's (1978) double and triple loop learning were not utilised. However, indications of interviewees' continuous *practice* of the principles through their descriptions of their experiences provided some insight into a cycle of learning incorporating insights and adjustments to beliefs, behaviours and actions, consistent with reflective practice, which was captured through the interpretive analysis component of this study.

Transcription

Interviews were recorded using the online video conferencing facility, Zoom, feature for recording sessions which allowed for both audio and visual recordings of each interview to be saved and transcribed later for analysis. Auto-transcription software was purchased and used through NVivo. The software took approximately one hour to transcribe the first group of eleven interviews which comprised just under four hours of audio. The process of auto-transcribing in NVivo was simply a case of dragging and dropping the saved audio files from OneDrive into my NVivo account, selecting the language for transcription (i.e. English) and then selecting the 'Transcribe' option. Once the auto-transcription was complete, a word file

of the transcription was available to be exported and saved. The NVivo account site showed, at the top of the screen, how many hours of auto-transcription were still available based on the number of hours purchased and the time already used for auto-transcriptions. The cost of purchasing auto-transcription was approximately $40 AUD per hour of audio transcribed.

All auto-transcriptions were checked manually for accuracy by listening to the audio recordings while editing the auto-transcriptions exported from my NVivo account, before loading the final transcripts to NVivo for analysis. Original unedited auto-transcription documents and the corresponding audio files were also loaded to NVivo as part of my file saving protocol outlined in Appendix D. The time required for the manual editing of each auto-transcription file, inclusive of formatting and saving protocols, ranged from thirty minutes to two hours depending on the accuracy of the auto-transcription and length of recording. Interviewees who spoke at a moderate pace and in clearly spoken English were transcribed more accurately by the software than those who spoke either more quickly or slowly, lowered or dropped the volume of their speech (i.e. ‘muttered’) and those with an accent from a first language other than English. The software seemed to cope with accents reasonably well, however, some accents were quite strong in places and it proved difficult to make out what was said. The main challenges were with the speed of speech, including both quick pace and slow pace, which the software assumed were the start and end of sentences when they were in fact just pauses taken by the interviewee to consider their response. Speech ‘behaviours’, such as the use of ‘uhm’, ‘like’, ‘you know’, ‘and’, ‘I mean’, ‘I don’t know’, etc. and the repeating of words as the interviewee was collecting their thoughts also made for confusion for the software to pick up on sentence structure. These errors in the auto-transcriptions were corrected through my manual transcript editing process and saved as the final transcripts for analysis.

On average, an interview recording was 20 minutes but ranged from 13 to 32 minutes across all interviews. Approximately six and a half hours of audio was recorded from a total of nineteen interviews conducted; this time excludes one interview which required me to take manual notes during the interview due to technical difficulties with the audio on the interviewee's end. Similarly, one audio in particular was of a lesser quality due to internet connection issues with interviewee. However, overall the audio quality of recordings was of a high standard. The final interview was transcribed manually due to a lack of available funds left in the NVivo auto-transcription account.

I found my skills at listening to the audio while checking and editing the transcripts proceeded better and faster as I progressed through the recordings. For example, I found the first day quite mentally strenuous, particularly when editing the auto-transcript from the audio recording of an interviewee with a strong French accent and quick pace of speaking which took a couple of hours to work through thirty minutes of recording. With fewer corrections required, the majority of twenty-minute recordings took me around 40-60 minutes each by the second day of transcript checking and formatting.

The main transcript formatting required was to differentiate between sections that were spoken by the researcher and the interviewee, putting spaces between the sections, and renaming and saving as a new file to preserve the original auto-transcription for later reference if required. The primary corrections required included deleting spacing before full stops or commas, forming correct sentence structure, correcting wording, aligning the placement of statements to the correct speaker and combining sequential sections from the same speaker

which were auto-transcribed as a separate speaker. I used the search-and-replace function in word to correct the spacing errors such as the spaces the auto-transcription software placed before each punctuation mark and to reformat the titles of the speakers from 'Speaker1' and 'Speaker2', for example, to 'Researcher' and 'Interviewee', respectively. The corrections to and formatting of the auto-transcripts into final transcripts not only provided accurate documentation of the interviews but also made for easier coding analysis in NVivo as well as helping with my interpretations of the data collected as I listened back to the interview recordings.

As survey responses and interviews formed the qualitative data collection methods applied in this study, it was not possible for me to take detailed field observation notes at the same time as collecting data. However, during the period of time that I was conducting the interviews and later while analysing the results of the survey and interviews, I journaled my insights and thoughts which were later expanded upon for the interpretive components of this thesis, drawing on the participants' experiences and comments to form a view of the cultural and community elements of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. The survey also contributed to further cultural understanding through questions asking for respondents to provide insights into their interactions with the social media groups they were associated with as these related to the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace.

Thus, the primary data collection technique applied to the interpretive component of this study was journaling and reflection during and after the data collection period, particularly following interviews so that insights could be documented and expanded upon during my

analysis. Insights were not captured on a scheduled or regular basis but rather as these contemplations and reflections arose, providing for a more authentic and less forced method of documentation. I recorded my own thoughts, observations and insights throughout the interview stage, forming ideas and exploring different working hypotheses, theories and explanations throughout the study (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010) which were later considered in my analysis with regard to the findings of the survey.

Analysis

As mentioned in the previous sections, the software used in this study for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data were Qualtrics and NVivo. Qualtrics survey software allowed for the survey to function online with data automatically collected and reporting options available to extract the data in its raw form as well as represented in graphs. More in-depth techniques were required for the use of NVivo to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews specifically. A qualitative exploratory data analysis was conducted which allowed for the practical actions of the interviewees to be explicitly articulated (Jebb, Parrigon, & Woo, 2017; Oeij et al., 2017). Inductive analysis was undertaken through detailed assessment of the contents of each interview transcript to identify themes within the data (Jebb et al., 2017). Deductive analyses were then undertaken using the *a priori* Stoic framework introduced earlier to align the participant experiences within the Stoic principles. The first stage of the qualitative analysis was to code the themes that arose from the experiences that interviewees shared and were documented within the interview transcripts as well as my journaled reflections and insights.

NVivo

Once interview transcripts had been loaded to the NVivo project, the process of coding for specific themes found within the data was undertaken. Themes were set up as 'Nodes' where sections of the transcripts that represented each theme could be saved. The Nodes were themes arrived at inductively from the interviewees while deductive analysis based on an articulation of the three Stoic principles of *logic*, *ethics* and *physics* was undertaken later through a further process of 'thickly descriptive' interpretation (Holloway, 1997a; Liamputtong, 2009a).

Inductive Interpretive Coding

The themes identified through the initial inductive analysis of the transcripts based on my interpretations of what study participants shared and that were set up as Nodes within the NVivo project are outlined in the Codebook summary in Table 3.

Table 3: Codebook

Node Name [Theme]	Description
Change Management	Managing one's response to changes in the environment or driving change
Clarity	Clear intentions and articulation of intentions
Common Good	Focusing on what is right and good for those around, organisation, society etc
Conflict Management	Managing conflict or preventing conflict

Node Name [Theme]	Description
Control	What is within my control; feeling more in control of themselves emotionally
Emotional Regulation	Includes worry, anxiety, fear mitigation, depression, calm, focused, detached and any other form of emotional response that is regulated using the principles; distancing one's self from situations and understanding 'this too shall pass'
The Dichotomy of Control	What is within my control and what is outside of my control
Decision Making & Problem Solving	Thinking clearly through decisions; taking decisive action; calm; solving problems
Intentional	Setting the intention to apply the principles
Leadership	Role modelling; guidance/advice
Practical, Simple, Common Sense approach	Practical, simple, common sense approach
Practice	Seeing it as an ongoing practice
Providing Guidance	Helping others through difficult times through guidance and advice; teaching; sharing insights
Stress Management	Regulating stress responses

Subsequently, by using a text search query, NVivo would produce a list of all the references (i.e. transcripts) that contained the specific word indicated. The text search function of NVivo allowed for a focused search for particular features of each interview which may have been missed when reading through the transcripts looking for multiple features. The query could then be saved as a Node by selecting the 'Query Results' under the 'Search' menu, right clicking on the query and selecting 'Create as', 'Node'. I used the naming convention of the name of the original Node/text query (e.g. Control) with '- Auto' to signify the Node that was produced through the query (e.g. Control – Auto) which differentiated between the text search and the main Node used for analysis. Organising my process in this way allowed me to keep track of where I was in the coding process with regard to the transcripts I had coded and the

themes I had searched for as this process took multiple days to complete, making a progress tracking system an important strategy to apply.

Each of the references (transcripts) identified by the text query as containing the specific word searched, were opened and the relevant sections highlighted from the file before saving these to the desired Node by, right clicking, selecting 'Code Selection' and then selecting the specific Node to save that selection to. Each text selection was coded to as many Nodes as were relevant signifying that the data could be represented and interpreted in multiple ways and that there were overlaps in the applications of each of the Stoic principles within the interviewee experiences. The Auto search could then be deleted from the main Node section after all references to that Node had been extracted.

The actual coding required some level of judgement as to how much of the information from the transcripts or other data sources was appropriate to include within the Nodes (i.e. themes) (Bazeley, 2007; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Rydenfalt, Johansson, Odenrick, Akerman, & Larsson, 2015). For example, in some instances and depending on the theme being coded, it was reasonable to include a paragraph outlining the full context of the information. In other instances, a few words or short sentence was deemed sufficient. It was also important to read through each transcript in its entirety to be able to pick up on the subtleties of what interviewees were saying and ensure I had captured the main themes that emerged from the experiences shared.

Comparisons between the Nodes as to which had similar references coded and therefore were perhaps more closely linked was conducted through selecting 'Query' from the NVivo menu, 'Matrix Coding', selecting the nodes to be compared in 'Items in Selected Folders' and '+' on both rows and columns of the same nodes as selected in the previous step. The 'Run Query' was then selected to display the relationships between each node in the form of a matrix of where the coding overlaps between nodes existed. This contributed to greater understanding of the dynamic nature of the application of the principles through multiple themes and is further explored later through the presentation of the results and in my analysis.

Deductive Interpretive Analysis

The deductive phase of my analysis, allowed me to interpret how interviewees were applying the three Stoic principles of *logic*, *ethics* and *physics*, in ways they perhaps had not realised or mentioned at the time of the interview. Acknowledging here that this was an interpretive analysis, there would be several alternative interpretations of the data; my interpretations of the results are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. My analysis was conducted as a recursive, reflective and iterative exercise (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013) of continually drawing upon my own insights as I interviewed participants and reviewed the interview transcripts while developing greater depth of understanding of how the Stoic principles were being applied to workplace situations. Stoic practice within contemporary workplace environments was considered through my interpretations of the experiences interview participants shared with additional information from survey participants on their experiences including their experiences of the social media group dynamics. I considered the behaviour and actions of participants as these

were presented by interviewees and survey respondents and drew upon the contexts of their experiences to create an interpretation of the culture within which those practicing Stoic philosophy engaged with and created (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 29).

An approach of applying iterative recursivity and reflective practice, combining both inductive and deductive analysis to extract items, patterns and structures (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010) while maintaining flexibility for interpretations to emerge (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013), was appropriate for this study as the principles of Stoic philosophy were defined prior to collecting the data as the *a priori* framework forming the deductive structure within which themes identified through inductive analysis of the experiences shared by participants would ultimately be organised into. To organize my analysis into the three main principles of Stoic philosophy, the same criteria as were applied to the survey question asking respondents about their use of the principles in various workplace scenarios and my assessment of the information provided in the interviews was applied to develop the interpretive analysis of the application of the principles. However, while my approach to interpreting the data was guided by the three Stoic principles and how the participants experienced the application of these principles in their workplaces, an inductive emergence of themes from within the data ensured the study captured the actual experiences of participants rather than just retro-fitting their experiences into a model presented through this study. This allowed for multiple perspectives and insights to come out of this study that may inform future research and applications of Stoic philosophy.

Summary of Methods & Analysis

The methods and analyses applied in this study support the inquiries required to address the study objectives with the intent to explore the research question, contributing knowledge not previously available on the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. Specifically, the quantitative survey questions primarily addressed the inquiries in Objectives 1 and 3 while the qualitative elements of the survey primarily addressed Objectives 2, 4 and 5, notwithstanding significant overall contribution of each stage of the study across all objectives. Notably, the reflective practice informed design of the interviews and interpretive approach to analysis contributed to the inquiries of all objectives.

The design of this study, associated methods and subsequent analysis techniques reflect the complex nature of the study topic. To adequately contribute new and unique knowledge on how and to what effect the principles of Stoic philosophy are being applied and experienced by individuals in their workplaces, it was necessary to design the study in a way that allowed the intricacies of the phenomenological elements of Stoic philosophy to be explored and captured from multiple angles and perspectives. The quantitative and qualitative survey methods combined with individual interviews and interpretive analysis allowed for a unique contribution to knowledge to be presented through the results of this study. In the following chapters, I outline the results of the survey and themes that emerged from my inductive analysis of the interview transcripts before delving more deeply into the specific application of each Stoic principle in the workplace through my deductive interpretive analysis, synthesising the findings of this study with the *a priori* Stoic framework.

Chapter 5: Stoic Philosophy in the Workplace

The insights shared by participants of this study through their application of Stoicism as the underlying philosophy they chose to apply in their workplaces progresses our understanding of the practice of this ancient philosophy and how it relates to contemporary workplace dynamics. Within the unique perspectives and experiences shared by study participants there were pronounced elements of subjectification, self-actualisation and existentialism as participants were *themselves* the subject, means and resolve of their own experiences, respectively (Huber, 2019; Mygind, 2021). This must be acknowledged as practitioners continually progress their Stoic understanding, of themselves essentially, autonomously through continuous experiential reflection rather than through an external evaluation of performance, as might be more commonly expressed in organisational terms. The sharing of experiences by practitioners, initially from their own perspectives, constitutes Stoic reflectivity with an ensuing intent to engage in open discourse, as the Stoics would have encouraged, to progress their own understanding and liberate themselves from the limitations of "reflective entanglement" (Huber, 2019, p. 1831). Through my presentation of the findings of this study, I aim to draw experiential themes to the fore, providing a foundational basis for furthering our understanding of experiences of self within the larger whole and the telos of contribution to the Stoic concept of the common good more broadly within workplaces.

Understanding the culture of Stoic practice among practitioners was a key component to progressing knowledge of how the principles are applied in workplaces and the broader socio-cultural-political environments within which they are being enacted. I did not attempt to

draw detailed comparisons between social media and the ancient School of Stoa as this would have required more sophisticated and in-depth exploration of culture than my choice of methods afforded; however, a description of participant experiences with the social media groups used to promote this study casts some limited light on the culture of Stoic practice within these groups and further indication of the nature of participation in this study.

Survey respondents were engaged with a number of social media groups used to promote the study and encourage individuals to participate in the survey and an interview, resulting in a total of 119 social media group memberships identified among the 55 respondents. Approximately 55% of respondents engaged with the social media groups at least once per day with 34% of those engaging two or more times per day; 76% of respondents also indicated the social media groups influenced or informed their Stoic practice in some way. Survey respondents reflected a predominantly positive and supportive social media experience; however, a perception that some contributors were more interested in promoting their own knowledge or opinions than being genuinely helpful was raised. A respondent summarises this experience as,

> Mutually respectful, for the most part. Occasionally see people getting competitive with their ideas and understanding of the subject. Sometimes feel that some members are trying to prove something. But overall there is a sense of shared values, and shared interests.

Another respondent highlighted the aspects of what they experienced through their social media interactions as,

> … an honest intent to fruitful communication which I really appreciate, especially because it has become so rare otherwise in social media. It is inspiring and reminds me of sticking with the facts rather than emotions and not take myself to[o] seriously even in dire situations like a lockdown. I got good advice and quotes here when I asked for it, and great book recommendations.

While there was no specific data collected or analysis done as to how age, location or profession influenced the study participants' social media experiences or what they were looking for through these interactions, this could comprise some basis for future inquiry in so far as how best to engage people of varying demographics with the principles of Stoic philosophy. Respondents generally found the social media groups useful for engaging with others who share their interest, particularly where there was limited or no engagement with Stoic philosophy in their workplaces or "limited physical presence of Stoic philosophy in my local area", as one respondent put it. There was some concern as to the validity and credibility of the information shared on these platforms with differences between social media group sites indicated with regard to how they were moderated and the affect this had on the usefulness of the content and tone of the group. Interestingly, the official posts on the sites were noted as more useful than the general discussions by group members, as stated by this survey respondent:

> I have found the official posts on the social media sites to be very informative and thought-provoking. On the other hand, I don't find comments and discussions by people in the groups to be very helpful, as they appear to be a bit self-absorbed 'look at me and how I practice stoicism' discussions.

This sentiment was complemented by comments regarding the need for more specific content on the application of the principles and less ‘clutter’ of those looking for consolation rather than actually applying the principles. The smaller group discussions and ‘meet-ups’ were noted as being useful and insightful for the application of the principles, including the sharing of personal experiences and ideas generally viewed as useful with one respondent stating they had,

> … taken a more active role (meet ups), and [were] now finding the groups to be more supportive and challenging [them] to go deeper to live the philosophy every day.

These more focused discussions were seen as less useful when the contributions were self-congratulatory in nature rather than genuinely contributing to a discussion on the application of the principles. The fact that these groups dedicated to Stoic philosophy exist was viewed as an encouraging sign that there is a following for Stoic philosophy and, even if the respondents indicated they didn’t interact much with the groups, there was some comfort in knowing the groups existed. There was a strong psychological and sociological component to the comments regarding the social media groups in that they helped people to feel part of

something and to engage with discussions that assisted with their own practice, as one might imagine was also the experience ancient practitioners had of the Stoa.

Thus, while being part of a community that engaged with common interests seemed to provide sufficient enticement for participants to remain engaged with these groups, the sentiment that the more targeted discussions relating to the actual practical application of the principles emerged as an area for greater consideration in the design and moderation of these social media and broader interactions. This was particularly relevant in so far as the physical distances between those practicing Stoic philosophy in modern times. Of the 55 survey respondents, 39 latitude/longitude markers were identified by Qualtrics, as listed in Appendix E. While not all respondents' data included location markers, the latitude/longitude markers that were available were entered into Google Maps Search to identify the approximate location of the survey respondents with an additional location identified from the interview process that had not been picked up by Qualtrics. The 40 locations identified were spread across 17 countries, within 8 of which interviewees were located. Based on the location data available and acknowledging not all respondents' locations were available, the United States appeared to have the most survey respondents (13) followed by Canada (6), the United Kingdom (4), Australia (3) and New Zealand (2).

The majority of respondents (75%) indicated that they had been practicing Stoic philosophy for five years or less, with 18% having practiced for between six and ten years and just over 7% for over 10 years. Approximately 49% of respondents felt they had an average level of understanding of Stoic philosophy, 31% in the early stages of learning and over 16% felt they had an above average level of understanding; two respondents (3.64%) identified

themselves as having an ‘Expert’ level of understanding. Further inquiries might reveal whether the more experienced offered their insights to those in the earlier stages of their practice, as was the convention followed in the Stoic school.

All 55 survey respondents indicated that they engaged with reading resources to inform their understanding of Stoic philosophy, followed by 33 respondents also listening to podcasts and watching videos. Speaking with colleagues or friends, joining off-line Stoic groups and attending presentations were less commonly engaged with by respondents to inform their understanding; however, it must be noted that the survey was promoted through online social media groups which may have influenced these results and limited an understanding of the actual level of off-line engagement of those practicing Stoic philosophy outside of the groups engaged with these social media channels. Greater insight into the off-line engagement with the practice of Stoic philosophy was gained through the interview process. Thus, the modes of engagement with Stoicism have remained relatively consistent with ancient times, incorporating reading materials and open discourse predominantly; it is the platforms for engagement that have changed dramatically, opening the practice to a wider range and distribution of participants.

Hence, this study serves to bring together experiences as a contribution to the discourse on Stoicism in the workplace more generally. While participants engaged with this study to share their own experiences, the intent to engage with others who shared their interests in a practical way that helped to progress their own understanding and practice was evident. My exploration of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy began with the insights shared by survey respondents from a wide range of locations and professions. Of these survey

respondents, 19 chose to participate in an interview, allowing me to extract themes that emerged through my inductive analysis of the experiences shared. The foundations, therefore, are laid in this chapter, through exploration of the first four study objectives, predominantly, for deeper contemplation of these findings through my deductive interpretations of participants' experiences as these relate to each Stoic principle, presented in subsequent chapters.

The findings presented here provide an indication as to how each of the principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics* were experienced by study participants. Consideration is given as to whether respondents and interviewees felt that the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces helped them to gain a better understanding of the circumstances they were working within; the impact of their actions, behaviours and decisions on others; others' perspectives; and whether they were able to form more considered responses. The circumstances under which participants chose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy (Objective 1) was captured in their responses to survey questions 8 and 11, specifically. A better understanding of why participants chose to apply Stoic philosophy in their workplaces (Objective 2) was formed through survey responses to the open-ended questions and experiences shared by interviewees. The specific principles of Stoic philosophy participants applied in their workplaces (Objective 3) were captured through the experiences shared in the interviews as well as through survey question 11. Questions 13 and 14 of the survey asked respondents for their comments on the main challenges and benefits they realised through the application of Stoic philosophy in the workplace (Objective 4). This was further enhanced through the experiences shared by interviewees and expanded upon in subsequent chapters through a detailed analysis of the survey and interview results to present the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace (Objective 5). While

participants of the interviews did not always express their experiences in terms of the three main principles of Stoic philosophy, these were captured through my interpretations and assessments of what they shared and complemented by the survey results.

Applying Stoic Principles in the Workplace

Progressing our understanding of applications of Stoic philosophy in the workplace required a picture to be developed as to the nature of the applications and specific circumstances where the principles were being applied by practitioners. When asked under what circumstances survey respondents had applied the principles of Stoic philosophy the most common response was for 'Personal Growth and Development' (52 respondents) followed by in 'Workplace Situations' (49 respondents), as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Figure 4: Applications of the principles of Stoic philosophy. N = 55

In addition to the areas of potential application provided on the survey, respondents also indicated they had applied the principles of Stoic philosophy in other circumstances, such as ‘instead of spirituality’, ‘parenting kids’, ‘dietary lifestyle’, ‘managing chronic health conditions’, ‘spiritual growth’, ‘crises’, ‘mindset’ and ‘emotional balance’. Thus, as the survey was promoted as being part of a research project exploring the application of Stoic philosophy in the *workplace*, the number of respondents who indicated ‘Workplace Situations’ may not be representative of the wider application of the principles.

For the 49 survey respondents who indicated they applied the principles in the workplace, Table 4 outlines the workplace situations those respondents were asked to select from and indicate which of the three principles of Stoic philosophy, *logic*, *ethics* and *physics*, they applied in each of those workplace situations. The most common workplace situations selected by respondents were ‘Conflict Management’, ‘Improving your own performance and/or productivity’, ‘Overcoming work dissatisfaction’ and ‘Decision making’. While all three principles were applied by respondents across all workplace situations to some degree, *logic* and *ethics* were the most commonly applied principles when considering all workplace situations collectively. However, the prevalence of application of each principle differed between workplace situations. For example, the principles of *logic* and *ethics* were applied equally to ‘Conflict Management’ situations in the workplace, *ethics* was more prevalent with ‘Improving your own performance and/or productivity’, while *physics* was more prevalent with ‘Overcoming work dissatisfaction’ and *logic* in ‘Decision making’.

Table 4: The prevalence of the use of the three principles of Stoic philosophy across workplace situations. N = 49

Workplace Situation	***Logic***	**#**	***Ethics***	**#**	***Physics***	**#**	**Unsure**	**#**	**Total**
Conflict Management	38%	27	38%	27	24%	17	0%	0	**71**
Improving Team Dynamics	35%	23	37%	24	26%	17	2%	1	65
Overcoming disappointment	35%	23	27%	18	38%	25	0%	0	66
Addressing bullying or harassment	34%	19	32%	18	25%	14	9%	5	56
Improving your own performance and/or productivity	32%	23	37%	27	32%	23	0%	0	**73**
Discussing performance issues with an employee	33%	19	40%	23	23%	13	4%	2	57
Overcoming work dissatisfaction	34%	24	29%	20	37%	26	0%	0	**70**
Leaving a job, team or organisation	24%	12	29%	14	29%	14	18%	9	49
Starting a new job	24%	12	30%	15	22%	11	24%	12	50
Preparing for a difficult conversation	31%	20	39%	25	30%	19	0%	0	64
Decision making	41%	29	31%	22	28%	20	0%	0	**71**
Managing a career or job change	33%	18	27%	15	29%	16	11%	6	55
Total		**49**		**48**		15		5	**747**

A summary of the workplace situations where each of the principles was most commonly applied is provided in Table 5. *Logic* was the most commonly applied principle when respondents were dealing with 'Conflict Management', 'Addressing bullying or harassment', 'Decision making' and 'Managing a career or job change'. *Ethics* was the most commonly applied principle in 'Conflict Management', 'Improving Team Dynamics', 'Improving your own performance and/or productivity', 'Discussing performance issues with an employee', 'Leaving a job, team or organisation', 'Starting a new job' and 'Preparing for a difficult conversation'. *Physics* was the most commonly applied principle in 'Overcoming disappointment', 'Overcoming work dissatisfaction' and 'Leaving a job, team or organisation'. As also indicated by the summary provided, *ethics* was equally applied in 'Conflict Management' and 'Leaving a job, team or organisation' with *logic* and *physics*, respectively. The application of *ethics* by respondents was more dominant across a greater range of workplace situations than the other two principles.

However, as shown previously in Table 4, *logic* showed a slightly higher number of total responses than *ethics*, indicating that *logic* was more evenly applied across workplace situations among respondents while there was greater dominance of the application of *ethics* where it was applied. This variation in the results can be explained by respondents being able to select as many principles and workplace situations as were relevant to their own experiences. Thus, *logic* was selected across more workplace situations than the other principles but, in many cases, was not the most dominant principle selected due to other principles also being applied to those workplace situations, at times to a greater extent among participants. Definitions of each of the principles were provided in the survey and a necessary assumption

was that there was a reasonable degree of common understanding of these across the sample of respondents. Respondents' understanding and interpretations of the principles and their experiences with each of the workplace scenarios may have differed, of course, but the survey method does not permit investigation of this variation. More nuanced understandings are explored through my analysis and interpretation of interview data and through the comments shared by survey respondents on the challenges and benefits they realised through their Stoic practice.

Table 5: Summary of the workplace situations where each of the Stoic principles was most commonly applied.

Logic	
	Conflict Management*
	Addressing bullying or harassment
	Decision making
	Managing a career or job change
Ethics	
	Conflict Management*
	Improving Team Dynamics
	Improving your own performance and/or productivity
	Discussing performance issues with an employee
	Leaving a job, team or organisation*
	Starting a new job
	Preparing for a difficult conversation
Physics	
	Overcoming disappointment
	Overcoming work dissatisfaction
	Leaving a job, team or organisation*

*more than one principle equally applied

Challenges and Benefits of Applying Stoic Principles in the Workplace

The richness and diversity of insights gained into the reasons for applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace was further developed through the open-ended survey questions regarding the benefits and challenges respondents experienced through their applications of Stoic philosophy. Respondents identified with challenging workplace situations, bosses and colleagues as sources of stress which they turned to the practice of Stoicism to assist them to manage. Challenges respondents faced with managing anxiety and depression were also indicated as sources of motivation to apply the principles in their lives and workplaces. The benefits of working through these challenges through the application of the Stoic principles was evident among participants as they shared an overall improvement in their well-being and capability in navigating these challenges.

Interactions with others who did not enact Stoic philosophy emerged as a common theme in the challenges study participants faced when applying the principles in their workplaces as well as themselves being seen as unemotional or uncaring. Ironically perhaps, a corresponding challenge raised by participants was the ability to regulate their own emotional responses within 'frustrating' workplace situations and interactions. Thus, challenges with regard to being able to practice and articulate the principles effectively around and to other people, respectively, were prevalent, as summarised in the following comment from a survey respondent:

> To consciously reflect on the situation at a behavioural level. Often it is only after the event I can see how [S]toic philosophy might have been of benefit. How to balance the understanding that I only control myself with the potential that I don[']t appear to be bothered by things that others are[,] leading to a sense of potential d[e]tachment. The application of stoicism can seem to others as if you don[']t care, or [are] to[o] cold.

Based on the comments made by survey respondents regarding the challenges they face in applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces, the need to better understand how to apply the principles effectively, particularly in environments and with people where the practice of Stoic philosophy is not common or well understood, was evident. This was consistent with the results outlined previously regarding participants' social media group interactions in that the discussions and posts regarding the actual application of the principles were seen as most useful. The level of frustration expressed by some with attempts to practice the principles of Stoic philosophy indicated perhaps a lack of understanding of the principles as a *practice* rather than a competency and the need for greater acceptance of what is outside of one's control.

There was, however, evidence of an understanding within the survey responses of expressed attempts to practice the dichotomy of control and regulation of emotions in an effort to manage frustrations with more commonly applied practices. A survey respondent working with troubled youth shared their workplace experience of this as follows:

> As a counsellor and teacher I use [S]toic themes to encourage, mostly traumatized and always impulsive youth. One of the walls I come across is that emotion in and of itself

is seen as the deepest aspect of the human psyche, and most treatment revolves around simply understanding (describing) emotions.

There was also an acceptance expressed by respondents that others' behaviours and actions were outside of their control and that a degree of reflective practice was required to enable deeper comprehension of this and their own responses to situations. A key benefit that emerged from survey respondents' comments was an acceptance and compassion for other people's responses and actions that may not align with Stoic practice. Despite frustration being expressed regarding challenges with others not understanding the practice, there was a corresponding acceptance of this and, at times, an apparent desire to guide others toward a better understanding and consequently improved performance in the workplace. Improved relationships with others was a subsequent benefit conveyed within the survey comments as respondents found they were better able to interact with others and had, for example, "become less angry and argumentative with colleagues and more understanding of their values and viewpoints".

Survey respondents expressed the value of the principles in helping them to manage their own emotional responses, particularly with regard to the behaviours, actions and views expressed by others. This was articulated as a way for them build confidence and a sense of peace enabling a detachment from that which was outside of one's control. One respondent drew upon the Marcus Aurelius quote that we must "learn to become indifferent to that which makes no difference". In no way contradictory to this sentiment was a sense of being part of the collective, allowing for greater release of worries and anxieties. A respondent shared their sense of being "more able to take a step back, not respond, and reflect on what is said with less

emotional upset", with another respondent sharing they felt "calmer and logical", which was expressed as being beneficial to their relationships with peers.

Combining the sentiments expressed by respondents, this ability to "distance [themselves] from previous emotional reactions" resulted in respondents experiencing "less emotional discussions, more inner peace, even when in disagreement, more patience [and] more confidence". The benefits of practicing Stoic philosophy within the workplace realised by survey respondents was summarised eloquently by one practitioner as feeling,

> [a] greater sense of calm and happiness in my life. A better work-life balance. A more calm and nuanced approach to problem-solving. Deeper empathy for the situations of others. A better springboard for reflection that starts more from what is just and right than from what is the socially-accepted path.

The general improvement in overall wellbeing expressed by survey respondents was notable in so far as reducing stress, anxiety and worries about things that had happened or that might happen in the future. There was an acceptance and release of happenings in favour of defending one's wellbeing through deliberately slowing response times which improved clarity in problem solving and decision-making. Providing a basis for greater focus on what could and should be done rather than paying attention to distractions was a key benefit expressed. These benefits of the practice of Stoic philosophy were related by respondents to becoming more flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances as the stress or desire to control events was greatly reduced. As a respondent shared,

> Through understanding that there will be external factors out of my control, I have been able to distil things for what they are - just things that happened. This thought process allows me to think clearly and calmly, and to act with clarity and decisiveness.

The principles also allowed practitioners to, as stated by a respondent, "impart wisdom to others who [were] seeking advice in their lives, whether professionally or otherwise", while also reflecting on their own experiences. This was not easy, however, as respondents shared their challenging workplace circumstances. For example, in described a confronting instance of the complexities of trying to provide guidance to others, a respondent shared the following:

> I work in an environment where violence is a daily threat, where it is easy to be hated by the very people you want to help, the very ones you care about. A Stoic outlook helps me keep things into perspective.

This provokes the need to further gauge the effect of survey respondents' experiences with the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, in line with the second part of the research question for this study, 'to what effect' are the Stoic principles applied in the workplace. Five statements which aligned with the three Stoic principles were provided in the survey with respondents asked to select their response from a Likert scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree or Strongly Agree; the responses are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. For all statements, 74% or above of responses were either 'Agree' or

'Strongly Agree', meaning respondents felt that the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces helped them to gain a better understanding of the circumstances they were working within (*physics*); the impact of their actions, behaviours and decisions on others (*ethics*); others' perspectives (*ethics*); and were able to form more considered responses (*logic*). Further, when asked of the usefulness of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, over 92% of respondents thought Stoic philosophy was, or would be, a useful approach to apply in workplace situations.

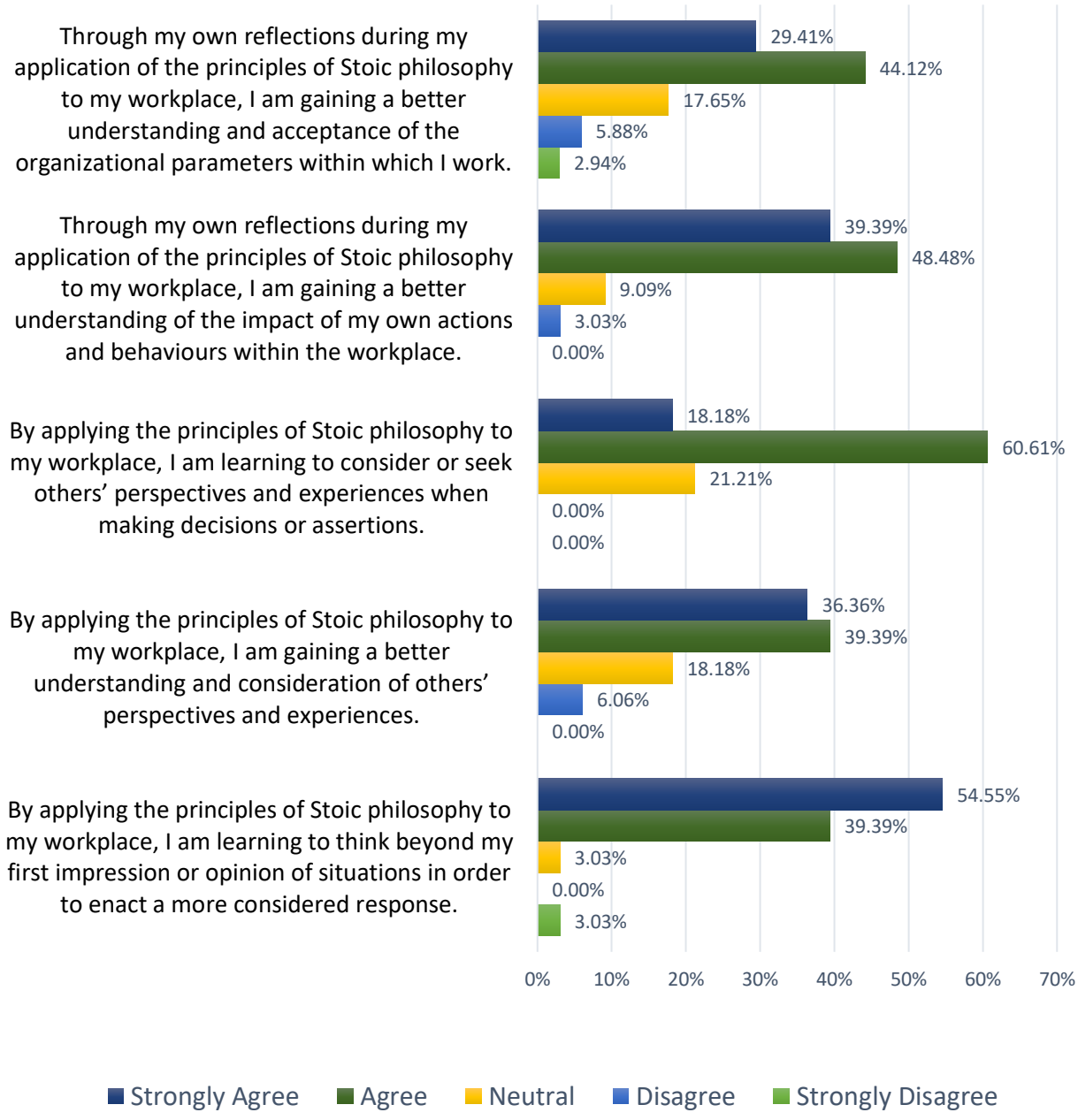


Figure 5: Likert scale of respondents' experiences with application of the principles of Stoic philosophy. N = 49

The quantitative and qualitative data collected through the survey provided initial insights into the nature of applications of and the effects experienced by people applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces, however, these initial findings invite further exploration through deductive analysis and future studies to gain a more thorough understanding of the effects of these practices within the workplace. Thus, as presented in the next section, I further progressed my exploration of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace initially through an inductive analysis of the main themes that emerged from interview data. I then aligned the interview data themes with the Stoic principles through an *a priori* deductive analysis, the results of which are presented in subsequent chapters.

Prevalent Themes in Workplace Applications of the Stoic Principles

Through the interview process, I found all of the workplace situations identified through the survey were also highlighted in the experiences of the interviewees, albeit with greater insight facilitated through the face-to-face discussions and expressions of experiences by interviewees and the ability for me to pose follow-up questions to gather more information. Thus, as one might expect, the expression of specific experiences was more thoroughly represented in the interviews than in survey responses. Through my inductive analysis of the interviews, themes emerged which were later used to guide my subsequent deductive interpretations of all the study results as these related to the applications of each of the Stoic principles.

The personal and professional insights interviewees shared were mere glimpses into their world and what brought them to the place where they were willing to share their experiences with me. These glimpses were of a highly personal nature with alcohol and drug addict recovery, homicide investigations and mental health among the stories shared. And yet, they all exuded a sense of pride in their ability to apply the principles, in their own ways, to the challenges they faced. Undoubtedly, beneath the surface of what they chose to share with me, troubled thoughts and experiences had led to their insights; however, they portrayed control and optimism in their practice, genuinely believing it helped them.

Of the 19 interviews conducted (15 male and 4 female participants) there was a range of ages, locations and professions/industries, as outlined in Table 6. Estimated age ranges of 30-40 and 40-50 years old comprised the majority of interviewees with six and seven interviewees falling into these age ranges, respectively; however, interviews were conducted with participants across estimated age groups from 20-30 up to 60-70 years old. The locations of interviewees included 9 in the United States, 3 in the United Kingdom, 2 in Canada, and one each in Denmark, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand and the Dominican Republic. Despite what is represented in the geographic and demographic diversity of study, the limited sample prevents close comparative analyses based on such stratification. What did emerge, however, was a commonality of occupational pattern in that all interviewees, regardless of geographic location, came from professional backgrounds. The reason for this is unclear but warrants investigation through future studies as to why individuals of professional backgrounds may have chosen to participate in a study on Stoicism in the workplace where others did not and whether this is reflective of Stoic practice more broadly.

Table 6: Summary of interviewees, estimated age, gender, location and profession.

Case	Age Est	Gender	Location	Profession or Industry
SHUK1542020	20-30	Female	UK - Wales	IT Project Manager
DLUS1742020	20-30	Male	US - Michigan	Global Security & Intelligence Analyst
SSUK1442020	30-40	Male	UK - Wales	Mental Health Nurse
TCUS1252020	30-40	Male	US - Colorado	High School Band Director - Music Teacher
SMUS3042020	30-40	Male	US - California	Vet & Practice Owner
AMCA2842020	30-40	Male	Canada - Ontario	Military - Environment Construction
AADK1252020	30-40	Male	Denmark - Copenhagen	Philosophical Therapist - Red Cross & Refugee Work
CBUS1642020	30-40	Male	US - Arizona	Military
AUGM2152020	40-50	Female	Germany - Berlin	Writer
KMUS1742020	40-50	Female	US - Iowa	Pastor
PDUS1452020	40-50	Male	US - Virginia	Navy - Commander Master Chief; Special Advisor to Commanding Officer
AWSD1742020	40-50	Male	Sweden	Software Engineer & Analyst
CFNZ1152020	40-50	Male	New Zealand - Auckland	Retail Management Buyer
IBUS1442020	40-50	Male	US - Colorado	Private Investigator
WGCA1642020	40-50	Male	Canada - Saskatchewan	Commercial Electrical Sales
EMUK1442020	50-60	Male	UK – Oxford	Geologist – Oil & Gas
BADR2142020	50-60	Male	Dominican Republic	Consultant – Government
JLUS152020	50-60	Male	US - Chicago	IT Consultant
KSUS1542020	60-70	Female	US - West Virginia	Artist

A number of themes were identified through my inductive analysis of the interview transcripts with regard to the interviewee experiences of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to the workplace. The references to the specific themes I have identified were not necessarily expressed by the interviewees using the same terminology but rather a result of grouping sentiments expressed into common themes through my own interpretations. The emphasis by an interviewee may, for instance, have been on how they approached a project but I might also have interpreted this as how they managed change or stressful circumstances.

'Stress Management' was a theme that emerged where interviewees might have been referring to regulating their emotions without using the specific term 'stress' but it was evident, through their expression of an event, that they had found it to be stressful; or, alternatively, I determined the example provided to be indicative of stressful circumstances. For example, when sharing his workplace circumstances, a private investigator described his experience as follows:

> … when I approach people and talk to them, it's usually about something horrible. It's usually about a crime. I've been working on homicide cases for the past 20 years. Most people don't want to talk about things like that. So I try to remain calm, even keel …

The process of synthesising the experiences shared by participants into themes, therefore, was both extrapolative and intuitive. Table 7 below provides a summary of the number of references within transcripts coded to each theme as well as the number of transcripts which were coded to each theme, indicating whether I had identified a particular theme within a transcript or not. This allowed for an analysis of how many interviewees

referred, in my view, to a particular theme as well as how many times the same sentiment was referred to across all interviews.

Table 7: Summary of themes identified within interview transcripts. N = 19

Themes	**Number of coding references within transcripts**	**Number of transcripts coded to theme**
Control*	173	18
Emotional Regulation	97	17
The Dichotomy of Control	66	14
Providing Guidance	116	19
Practice	100	18
Stress Management	67	14
Decision Making & Problem Solving	63	17
Common Good	52	15
Practical, Simple, Common Sense approach	32	11
Clarity	31	12
Change Management	25	10
Leadership	23	10
Conflict Management	17	6
Intentional	4	3

*aggregate of 'Emotional Regulation' and 'The Dichotomy of Control' themes within the parent 'Control' theme.

'Providing Guidance', seeing Stoic philosophy as a 'Practice' and 'Emotional Regulation' were the top three themes identified both with regard to the number of interviewees referring to these themes as well as how many times these themes arose within the transcripts. At times, the provision of guidance to others was an integral part of participant professions but

this theme also emerged as a component of Stoic practice others expressed their passion for. A Red Cross worker counselling refugee children, for example, shared how he "began to look back to [his Stoic] studies … to find a way or method to get into these young people's mind and see if [he] could help motivate and inspire them".

As 'Emotional Regulation' and 'The Dichotomy of Control' were sub-themes coded within a parent theme of 'Control', the aggregate results (*) of the 'Control' theme comprised the combined results of these two sub-themes as well as any items coded specifically to the 'Control' theme alone. Thus, as an aggregate theme, 'Control' presented as the most commonly coded theme within the transcripts and equal with 'Practice' with regard to the number of transcripts identified as containing this theme. In fact, when analysing and coding the interview transcripts I found a number of themes that regularly emerged together including:

- 'Common Good' and 'Providing Guidance'
- 'Clarity', 'Stress Management' and 'Emotional Regulation'
- 'Practical, Simple, Common Sense Approach' and 'Practice'

These were identified during the coding process where interviewee comments were deemed to fit into more than one theme as well as during analyses after coding had been completed where consistencies between themes were found. The matrix provided in Table 8 summarises the most frequently occurring relationships between themes. The intricacies of the relationships between themes are addressed in greater detail in the following chapters through my deductive analyses of how the themes align with each of the Stoic principles specifically.

Table 8: Summary of the two most frequently occurring coding relationships between themes.

Theme	**Emotional Regulation**	**Stress Management**	**Practice**	**Providing Guidance**	**Decision Making & Problem Solving**
Change Management					
Clarity					
Common Good					
Conflict Management					
Control*					
Emotional Regulation					
The Dichotomy of Control					
Decision Making & Problem Solving					
Intentional					
Leadership					
Practical, Simple, Common Sense approach					
Practice					
Providing Guidance					
Stress Management					

*Control = Aggregate of Emotional Regulation and Dichotomy of Control themes

As 'Emotional Regulation' was a theme that emerged frequently through the interviewee experiences, it is worthy of some attention here prior to a more thorough

exploration of this theme in subsequent chapters. Emotional regulation was the theme I found corresponded most frequently with the other themes throughout the interviews and that also emerged strongly within the survey responses, indicating it played a particularly important role for participants of this study in practicing and applying the principles of Stoic philosophy. This was articulated by interviewees as they took great pride in their ability to manage their own emotions, reducing their stress levels and enthusiastically sharing their insights with their colleagues, employees or others they were working/interacting with, albeit not necessarily expressing this in the specific terms of Stoic philosophy.

Each theme identified through my inductive analysis allowed me to interpret participant experiences from different perspectives. For example, interviewees referring to Stoic practice as a "de-escalation technique" for managing emotions and "to know some techniques to distance yourself from what is happening" were statements by interviewees displaying signals of the simplicity and practicality of the application of the principles as a theme along with the themes of emotional regulation and providing guidance to others through these techniques. This made for an intriguing exploration of the interview results and helped me to remain curious about what else might be extracted and interpreted from what the interviewees had shared with me of their experiences.

I acknowledge fully that the data I have chosen to focus on for the purposes of this study is but a part of the potential interpretation for other purposes which may well inform and contribute to further studies. As Geertz (1973) so pertinently implores, the act of expression has great depth of interpretative opportunity. In expanding my exploration of the behaviours of the interviewees and how they expressed themselves, I explore the most prevalent themes

in subsequent chapters through the deductive analysis phase of the study, aligning themes with specific principles of Stoic philosophy.

Aligning Workplace Experiences with Stoic Principles

What has been explored thus far are insights not previously available in the literature on the practice and application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, particularly as these relate to the workplace. Through the course of this study there has been growing knowledge and understanding of the *enactment* of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace, including why and how the principles were being applied, in addition to the challenges and benefits of doing so, and the nature and characteristics experienced through the application of the principles. To summarise the study findings to this point, participants in this study came from a broad range of locations, age groups and professions and engaged with the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace for purposes that ranged from providing guidance to others to managing their own emotional responses, stress and changes they encountered. Engaging with the principles of Stoic philosophy was done as a practice by participants with the intention to continue to learn and develop personally and professionally. Regular engagement in social media groups appeared to provide some influence or information on the practice of Stoicism; however, reading was shown to most commonly inform participants of the Stoic practices and how these might be applied in their own lives. The social media group engagement was seen by several respondents as most beneficial where posts were targeted specifically toward the practical application of the principles as well as the formation of smaller group discussions where experiences could be shared.

Personal and professional development and the application of the principles in the workplace were the most common applications of Stoic philosophy by survey respondents; however, there must again be recognition that the survey was specifically promoted as exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace and, therefore, it was to be expected that a large proportion of survey respondents also indicated that they applied the principles in the workplace. Participants engaged the principles of Stoic philosophy across a range of workplace situations, most notably for the purposes of 'Conflict Management', 'Improving performance and/or productivity', 'Overcoming work dissatisfaction' and in 'Decision making'. However, also indicated was that the three principles were often applied together; for example, the principle of *ethics* was applied equally as commonly in 'Conflict Management' and 'Leaving a job, team or organisation' with *logic* and *physics*, respectively.

While all of the three principles of Stoic philosophy were engaged within workplace situations, *ethics* was found to be more dominantly applied across more workplace situations than the other principles, despite *logic* being applied slightly more often than *ethics* across all workplace situations. *Ethics* was applied predominantly in situations that involved interactions with others, such as improving team dynamics or having difficult conversations, and *logic* where the situation was of more an individual nature such as decision-making or managing one's career. *Physics* was applied in situations such as changes in or dissatisfaction with job, team or organisation, where a certain level of detachment and acceptance of 'the bigger picture' was beneficial. However, all of the principles were applied across all workplace situations highlighting the fluidity of the practice of Stoicism.

With regard to their own development, participants indicated strongly that the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces helped them to gain a better understanding of the circumstances they were working within, the impact of their actions, behaviours and decisions on others, awareness and acceptance of others' perspectives and that it enabled them to form more considered responses. Furthermore, there was a sense among participants that the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace encouraged greater productivity due to a more deliberate focus on what needed to be done and that which was within their control as opposed to getting distracted by interactions or situations that did not contribute to 'getting the job done', so to speak. These intricacies of the dynamics in the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace are expanded upon more fully in the following chapters to understand and articulate the results of this study as these relate to the *effect* of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

The first part of the research question, 'In what ways are the principles of Stoic philosophy being applied in the workplace…?' has so far been the focus of my analyses, addressing study Objectives 1 through 4, predominantly, and allowing for a progressive understanding and conceptualisation of the study findings to be developed. This information is valuable in so far as expanding our knowledge of the application of the Stoic principles and associated experiences of those applying them. However, the description of results provided thus far is but a mild contemplation that merely brushes the surface of the second component of the research question, '…and to what *effect*?' and of Objective 5 with regard to considering the *nature* and *characteristics* of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace. In the three chapters to follow, the depth of potential exploration of each of the principles of Stoic philosophy, pertaining to the ontology and epistemology of Stoic philosophy and the theoretical framework for applying the principles within a workplace context, is assimilated

with the findings of this study in order to articulate the *experience* of Stoic philosophy as I have interpreted what was shared by interviewees and survey respondents.

To express a practice in terms of systematic processes and cause-and-effect relationships is valuable in the sense of understanding its mechanics but true appreciation is found within an articulation of how a practice is experienced, how it is *felt* (Geertz, 1973); thus, I now progress my analysis toward exploring the affectivity of practicing Stoicism. What is the effect, or indeed are the effect*s*, of Stoic philosophy? How does it feel to experience the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as it is being applied?

Taking the experiences shared by participants and interpreting these through my own understanding of the principles of Stoic philosophy – deriving both from intellectual enquiry and practice – is the basis of the deductive interpretations provided in subsequent chapters (Geertz, 1973). The experiences shared by participants provided the subject base of this study which allowed for a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Holloway, 1997a, pp. 61-64; Liamputtong, 2009a) of workplace Stoic *practices*. An insider perspective (emic) and an alternative perspective (etic) using the application of my own knowledge, experiences and understanding allowed me to make sense of the experiences shared by participants so as to better grasp the nature and characteristics of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace as it is experienced. As expressed by Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith,

> Knowledge involves not science, but philosophy; a consciousness of ourselves, of others, and of nature. (2004, p. 36)

As presented through my interpretations of the study participants' experiences, Stoic philosophy is a psychological and sociological experience of gaining awareness, acceptance and wisdom through refining our knowledge of ourselves and how we deliberately interrelate with what occurs naturally. Philosophy itself is, again, "the love of wisdom" (Hadot, 1995, p. 265), summoning feelings of affection toward thoughtful inquiry. Thus, to fully explore the application of Stoic philosophy in the workplace, we must study the experiences of those applying this practice, as interpreted through the three principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics*. Through my deductive interpretations, I delve into the themes that emerged as most dominant through the analysis of the survey and interview data outlined in this chapter and interpret these through the Stoic framework presented in Chapter 2, and again shown in Figure 6.

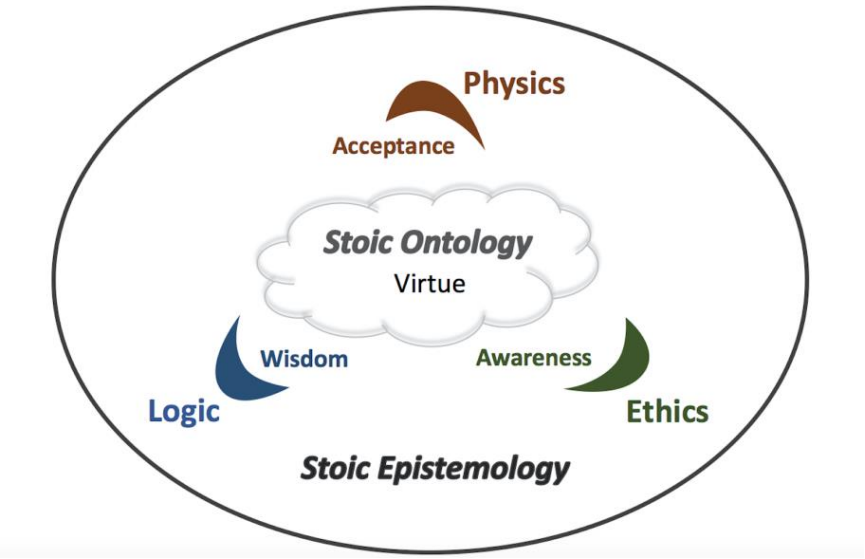


Figure 6: A framework for the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace

My depiction of Stoic practice in Figure 6 provided a visual representation of the "highly concentrated nucleus" of the deductive systematic Stoic processes of applying the three principles to achieve practical efficacy with the aim of stimulating affectivity of the soul (Hadot, 2002, p. 107); thus, actively shifting our way of being, ontologically, through lived Stoic epistemology, as were confirmed as the main reasons behind participants' engagement with Stoic philosophy through the results of this study. The study design allowed for themes that emerged from the data, collected from the survey and interviews, to be interpreted through inductive reasoning, as was presented in this chapter. The Stoic doctrine provided an *a priori* framework, that was used to then assimilate the findings of the inductive analysis into the Stoic framework through deductive analysis. Henceforth, my interpretation of how acceptance, wisdom and awareness developed through the practice of the principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics*, respectively, contribute to a virtuous way of being in the world is outlined in the following chapters.

My interpretation of the results in the following three chapters initially focuses on what is outside of one's control, through an acceptance of the dichotomy of control, and that which is within our control, namely, the practice of Stoic philosophy as these themes related to the principle of *physics*. I then explore the wisdom gained through emotional regulation used to manage stress and improve decision-making capabilities as these themes related to the application of the principle of *logic*. Finally, I consider, through insights gained from the data and the dominant themes that emerged, the development of a greater awareness of others' experiences, enabling the provision of guidance and the desire to contribute to the common good as themes that I interpreted as applications of the Stoic principle of *ethics*.

Whilst the practice of Stoic philosophy was designed from the perspective that we should all aim to live virtuously and act in accordance with this, the reality of learning a new perspective and practice was shown through this study to be more aligned with an epistemological progression of revising our perspectives, responses and interactions with others to then be able to come to a place where we could ontologically assume a virtuous way of being. My approach to the next three chapters was driven by the intent to create what Redmond (2004) referred to as 'walking around' the situation through reflection to create a picture of the workplace environments of the interviewees and their approach to applying the principles in their workplaces. These were dynamic experiences and by no means intended to be completely comprehensive but rather a particular set of views that may inform a greater understanding of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

As mentioned, emotional regulation emerged through the data as a theme that transgressed across other themes and, as such, I gave particular attention to how participants had actively applied the principles in this regard. However, it would have been a gross oversimplification of the study results and Stoic philosophy more broadly if I were to have omitted an exploration of the deeper comprehensions that participants had to work through in order to be able to regulate their emotional responses; and, so, each of the Stoic principles was given equal relevance throughout the whole of my interpretations of the study results. In line with the Stoic framework introduced in this thesis and what appeared to be the natural progression of learning by participants of this study, I first explore the themes that aligned with the experiential effect of the application of the principle of *physics,* in the next chapter, followed by themes associated with the principles of *logic* and *ethics* sequentially in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6: Applying the Principle of *Physics* in the Workplace

Acceptance

'Living in agreement with nature' is a central tenet of the Stoic doctrine, which entails taking responsibility for one's own responses to all that arises, 'naturally', without digressing into trying to control that which arises (Robertson, 2018). The concept of living with the flow of nature guides those practicing Stoic philosophy to accept their place in the larger whole and focus solely on their own contributions to this greater whole in order to live virtuously. In applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplaces, survey respondents indicated a dominant tendency to engage with the principle of *physics* when faced with 'overcoming work dissatisfaction' and 'overcoming disappointment', in particular, through an acceptance of what was within and outside of their control. This appreciation of the dichotomy of control, being a key element of the principle of *physics,* emerged as a dominant theme that interviewees also shared as they learned new perspectives that assisted them to better manage their circumstances.

Engaging with their environments through the dichotomy of control from the perspective of 'what is within my control' and 'what is outside of my control' gave study participants the focus they needed to address the challenges and disappointments they faced with their workplace environments with greater clarity and confidence. Essentially, participants were learning how to "maintain agency under changing circumstances" (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 144), engaging with precisely the practices encouraged by Epictetus in *The Enchiridion* and

Discourses to maintain equanimity of mind through the continuously changing circumstances of life (Epictetus, 2000a, 2000b, 2011, 2018).

Many participants expressed a change within themselves with respect to allowing others to take responsibility for their own actions rather than becoming distracted by expectations that they should engage with behaviours that did not serve their own wellbeing or productivity. This introduced a twofold interpretation of the application of the principle of *physics* with respect to the themes of 'the dichotomy of control' and Stoicism as a 'practice'. In the following section on 'the dichotomy of control', I explore the effect of detachment from that which is outside of one's control. I then progress the discussion to the effects that participants' practice of Stoicism had in developing greater capability to redirect attention to that which *was* within their control.

The Dichotomy of Control

Aristotle engendered the philosophical perspective that we must be appreciative and inquisitive of all that nature has created so as to better apprehend our own sense of universality (Aristotle, 1998; Hadot, 2002). Seneca (2014) progressed understanding of natural occurrences through his work, *Natural Questions*, where he delved into how and why things were as they were in nature. The Stoic ideal of living 'in accordance with nature' forms the creed of the principle of *physics* as it relates to our interactions with our environments. Through the application of the dichotomy of control, as a core concept of the principle of *physics*, a greater sense of what was within their control allowed participants to focus on their own contributions

and responses (Pigliucci, 2017) so as to improve their experiences of their working environments.

To comprehend the dichotomy of control is to understand that the Stoics were not encouraging us to retreat from things that were outside of our control but to instead engage with these things from the perspective of focusing on what we do control and accepting the outcome; thus, it is not a passive existence by any means, it is very much an active participation in our lives with a greater appreciation for where our energy is best spent (Pigliucci, 2017). This comprehension of the dichotomy of control was a common theme that emerged from the interviewees' experiences as they sought ways to deal with challenges within their workplaces.

Working in an open-plan office environment proved very stressful for one interviewee to the point where, after taking sick leave due to the stress he felt and lack of quiet space to conduct his work, he eventually quit his job. External factors, such as constant interruptions, noise and not enough space to work in, were among the reasons given by this interviewee for why he decided to leave his job. The COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be a blessing for this software engineer in that he was able to work from home in an environment he felt was much more conducive to productive work. The work itself was enjoyable for him, he explained, it was the environment that was the challenge. After leaving his previous employment due to the open-plan working environment, this professional decided to look for ways he could better manage his response to environments that he found stressful; books on Stoicism, particularly applying the principle of *physics* regarding the dichotomy of control, were found to be useful by this interviewee.

Through an evaluation of his workplace environment, he was able to reduce his stress by accepting the things he determined as outside of his control and focusing more on his work. As a result of his study and practice of the dichotomy of control, he did not feel as though he had to leave his next workplace due to the things that he found stressful despite the environment of his new workplace also being open-plan; instead, he could regulate his response through greater appreciation and acceptance of what factors were outside of his control and therefore did not warrant his attention.

Continuous development of her understanding of the application of the dichotomy of control was also important for a government-based IT project manager who explained in the following quote how, in her role, she needed to manage the interactions with all of the stakeholders of the projects she was responsible for.

> [I] remember what I controlled and what I didn't. Things like the resources I was allocated I have no control over, the lack of authority over the technical team. I had no control over the structure of the organization as such that the project manager wasn't even in the line management chain. You know, how rational either the technical team, or the stakeholders were behaving was completely outside my control. Their opinions of me was outside my control. The number of hours in a day and the number of emails in my inbox was totally outside my control. But what I could control was how I communicated with both parties and how I responded to, you know, the ever-increasing number of emails in my inbox. How I responded to things like being asked to do a job, then not being given the resources to do it. And how I responded to how others came

to me as well. So those sorts of things, you know, I couldn't control. So, I focused my energy on what I could control.

Each stakeholder group had different levels of technical comprehension of the projects, she explained, and this required her to use the dichotomy of control to determine which elements of the project she had control over and which she did not so that she could communicate effectively with each stakeholder. The resources allocated to the projects were not within her control, for example, but the way she chose to interact with the stakeholders was. She was also able to recognise that the structure of the department and how her role fit within the structure was outside of her control which allowed her to focus on how she approached her work rather than becoming frustrated with reporting lines or other structural issues she encountered. She maintained a big picture view of all the projects in so far as what the purpose of each project was and what it was trying to achieve in addition to taking the time to understand what the motivations of each stakeholder were so that she was better able to respond to their needs. In a situation where the pressure of undertaking the management of technical projects within a government agency might have overwhelmed her, she was able, in my interpretation of her experiences, to apply the principle of *physics* to manage what she chose to respond to within the challenges she faced.

This ability to apply the dichotomy of control through the Stoic principle of *physics* as we face challenging circumstances that affect us personally is a benefit of Stoic practice other interviewees also expressed. In the first year in his new role, a high school band director, whom I interviewed, led his students into a competition that the school had done well in for many years. When the band did not perform as well as in previous years, this long-time music

teacher's confidence took a hit and he began to "spiral", as he put it, into his thoughts and emotions as the opinions of the judges challenged his belief in his own abilities. When his wife introduced him to a video series on Stoicism in an attempt to help him out of his 'slump', he took up journaling as a way of processing his thoughts and, in particular, gaining a better perspective on what was within his control and what was outside of his control.

This music teacher found through his journaling exercises that he was challenged predominantly by what he saw as a problem with a system whereby the only thing that seemed to matter, in his view, was what the three judges had to say about the students' performance on the day of the competition; a mindset he had himself fallen victim to. He felt there was a need for a broader focus on the experiences the students have and how their daily practice is as important as the performance itself, if not more so, but he was struggling to reconcile this within himself as he expressed through the following excerpt from his interview.

> My first year [at that school] our big performance activity was a competition, we did not do well and it kinda surprised everybody that knew the program because, when we got our results, even people that had heard me were going 'that's not what should have happened' … but it caused a huge spiral for me. I couldn't get out of it because I was sitting there going 'well everyone else was saying it went well but these three people [the judges] said it's not going well'.

Stoic reflective practice through journaling gave this music teacher an approach that worked for him to reconcile his thoughts so that he was better able to re-energise his approach to teaching and how he interacted with the students through a system that, in his view, needed

refining. Coming to a place where he was able to recognise where his energy was best placed and where he needed to allow others to deal with their own thoughts and actions became a useful insight for this interviewee when dealing with colleagues and the parents who held alternative perspectives to his own. His reflective practice led him to question,

> … well do I agree with … the direction that music education with the focus on the activity side is going? And it kinda led me to, 'well no I don't' and stepping back and going 'well what can I control?' … I can control whether we go to this festival or not … I can't control people's perceptions of that. … and so, the entire Spring was building up to this same festival again and for me I was, 'I'm going to do my best to perform here again and then I don't know if I'll ever come back because I don't agree with what is coming out of my programs'. … even if we had an amazing experience, the kids were still only focused on 'what did these three people say about us?'. I used a lot of that reflective practice and a lot of bouncing ideas off other people and just taking time for myself just processing through what I wanted versus what did I think everybody else wanted.

This ability to detach from how others chose to approach situations served as a useful application of the dichotomy of control for other interviewees as well. Disrupting the trend of becoming emotionally invested in situations by taking the time to think about what was happening and to consider an appropriate response was also expressed as a Stoic practice used by a highly trained US military personnel in his daily life and workplace. Similar to other interviewees' experiences, developing the right mental perspective to decide what task to do

next so that you are not dwelling on what has already happened and are able to move forward more easily was how this interviewee expressed his experiences.

An acceptance of what is outside of our control as things around and within us are perpetually in a state of change was a key part of many interviewees' experiences. This military personnel interviewee, who had done a number of active tours of Afghanistan and, at the time of the interview, worked in an office within the corporate military setting, was clear that the dichotomy of control and negative visualisation were the two elements of Stoic philosophy he had found most useful and applied the most in his work and personal life, as expressed through the following statement he made during his interview:

> In military training, when you're out in the field and you can't eat and you can't sleep and you have people yelling at you or you're getting blown out of fire bases … or even when you're on deployments … I've been to Afghanistan five times … there's a lot of things that happen that you just can't control. It really helps to maintain the mindset that I didn't have any way of controlling that we are in this situation but now I can judge how I'm going to perceive this and how I'm going to act according to my judgement.

This military professional not only used the principles in the more dramatic situations described above but also within the role he was in at the time of the interview as operations personnel in charge of the professional military leadership education for the non-commissioned officers (NCOs). In dealing with the politics and, in his view, ineffective correspondence of an organisational environment, this highly trained military professional found the office interactions among the most frustrating he had dealt with. The constant interference he

experienced within this role due to what he saw as haphazard requests from 'higher-ups' for information served as a regular source of frustration that this professional applied the dichotomy of control to in order to maintain his "sanity". Similarly, he applied negative visualisation to imagine that it could always be worse; a particularly poignant perspective given his experience in active duty in a war zone.

Despite his efforts, this interviewee acknowledged that he "fails all the time" in his practice, as had other interviewees also expressed during their interviews, but he continued to maintain the perspective that the more you do it, the better you get. I delve into the continual *practice* of Stoicism in greater detail in the next section, acknowledging through this interviewee's expressions of his experiences, and those of other interviewees, that practice played a major role in his ability to direct his efforts through an ever more confident acceptance of what was within his control and what was not. What is expressly within our control, therefore, is the effort that we might put into practicing the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy within the workplace.

Practice

While some may still erroneously perceive philosophy as impractical, "True philosophy is a matter of a little theory and a lot of practice" (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 190). For Epictetus, "the point of philosophy is to put the theory into practice, to change one's life" (Brennan, 2010, p. 11) and as Morris (2004) expressed it, "Philosophy is a vibrant quest to know, to understand, and finally, to act – with wisdom" (p. 3) and, thus, "an eminently practical enterprise" (p. 13). This sagacity of Stoic philosophy was offered as sufficient proof of the value of this practice

by the interviewees of this study who were applying its principles. The practicality of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy provided passageways for those seeking escape out of long felt anguish within their personal and professional lives through an acceptance and experience of what they had within their control; namely, their own thoughts, beliefs and actions. Hence, exposing the alignment of the theme of 'practice' with the principle of *physics* in so far as developing greater understanding of our individual place within and contribution to a much greater whole, as opposed to relying upon or becoming provoked by external happenings to determine our experiences.

The practice of Stoic philosophy has been shown through the experiences shared by participants of this study to be both intellectual and experiential. For those who were naturally inclined to living a virtuous life, the application of the principles and resulting effects served as confirmation of the value of the practice of Stoic philosophy in their lives. For those who were yet to engender virtuousness, the experience of application better served their attempts at resolving forebodings within their lives than merely engaging with discourses on the subject (Hadot, 2002). Stoic philosophy was, by design, a practice that "was not meant to be worn on your sleeve" but rather practiced quietly through "phrases [that] were employed by practitioners as personal reminders" guiding their actions and experiences (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 63). The practice of reflective journaling, for example, shared by the music band director to allow himself the space to process his thoughts and develop greater acceptance of his own contributions was the same approach used by Marcus Aurelius, which was later turned into the book *Meditations,* as a method employed by Stoic practitioners to quietly practice the intellectual contemplation intrinsic to philosophy before progressing into the experiential realm.

Philosophy is a way of *being,* a way of life, and the practice of philosophy is existential to one's choice to live a certain way as an expression of their soul (Hadot, 1995, 2002). Despite participants in this study expressing their desire to share with others what they have learned through applying Stoic philosophy in their lives, there was also a sentiment expressed among those applying the principles to have their practice remain somewhat anonymous in so far as not wanting to express their insights as that of Stoic philosophy. There was a tendency for practitioners to tread carefully around the terminology they used in sharing their knowledge of Stoic philosophy with others as a way of avoiding negative responses to the idea of philosophy in general. In our 'modern' world, philosophy is not revered, nor interpreted, in the same way it once was and is often viewed as impractical (Case & Gosling, 2007; Hadot, 2002).

To be able to show that Stoic philosophy, in particular, is indeed practical without articulating it in terms of sharing a *philosophy* as such, was a craft most practitioners sought to master quite quickly, both in antiquity and modern times; while within different historical contexts, both for the reason of avoiding possible exile from the societies they belong. The common thread that continues with the application of Stoic philosophy today, as it was in antiquity, is that of allowing others to come to this way of life of their own accord by way of exemplifying virtuous character and through the provision of sound guidance (Morris, 2004). As the interviewee working with refugee children and providing philosophical therapy services mused, "I think it was Epictetus who said that you can't teach him the Proverbs, act like you wanted him to act". Thus, it is the practical actions of Stoic practitioners that serve as possible inspiration for others to explore Stoicism for themselves.

By way of example, applying the principle of *physics* as a private investigator allowed one interviewee to interview witnesses and suspects in homicide investigations using a 'humane' approach, treating everyone with dignity and respect, as he explained.

> [W]hen I approach people and talk to them, it's usually about something horrible. It's usually about a crime. I've been working on homicide cases for the past 20 years. Most people don't want to talk about things like that. So, I try to remain calm, even keel, respecting those people for what they do or don't want to share. I don't try to manipulate people into saying things. I'm really straightforward with people. You know, I always tell people, 'it's up to you whether you want to talk to me or not'.

Not having control over what the witness or suspect would tell him during an interview required him to completely remove his own attachment to any specific outcome. An ability to actively 'improvise' through unpredictable scenarios (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015) provided a method for him to manage his own mental health and remain detached from any desired outcome that he may have formed otherwise. He was able to maintain clarity of his role as the investigator, not the judge of what had or had not happened nor the prosecutor or defence attorney who were pursuing specific lines of interrogation.

Interacting on cases with the attorneys who did have a vested interest in the outcomes proved challenging for this private investigator as he managed his own sovereignty and did not get caught up in the debates between sides. This interviewee expressed his gratitude in finding a philosophy that suited his own approach to life and that he was able to apply it in his workplace. Despite appreciating the benefits of Stoic philosophy, this interviewee

acknowledged there were still struggles in interacting with those who did not behave in the ways he had grown to appreciate in his own practice of the philosophy. Not getting drawn into what others, such as defence and prosecution attorneys arguing opposite sides of homicide cases, expected of him and reflecting upon his potential reactions to these expectations so as to maintain focus was where he felt his practice of Stoic philosophy really benefited his state of mind and continually challenged him.

Furthermore, being able to compartmentalise the conversations he had to have with witnesses and suspects each day regarding the details of homicide investigations required him to maintain a state of mind that allowed him to let what he heard go so that it did not result in long-term damage to his own wellbeing as "ghosts lingering in the subconscious", as he so strikingly put it. The principles of Stoic philosophy provided a framework for accepting the nature of the environment within which he worked and to manage any thoughts or actions that might have created dysfunction within his role, allowing him to practice maintaining his character virtue throughout otherwise stressful interactions.

In so far as dealing with stressful work environments, the interviewee who had been in active duty for the US military found their training in the military aligned with what they had learned about the practice of Stoic philosophy. This interviewee, however, expressed discrepancies between the physical and mental demands of training for active duty and the demands of working for the military as an organisation. He could see how the principles were easily practiced through the military training exercises but as he began to apply the principles in an organisational setting, he encountered great frustration with the comparative lack of order and common sense, as he saw it, in office dealings and processes. He expressed in his interview

with me how practicing Stoicism helped him to find greater focus on the things that were motivating for him and to experience greater joy through his work and other endeavours as he related his struggle to comprehend the office environment he was working in with his experience with active duty through his statement:

> … it really helps to stay in the mind state that, hey, I can't, I didn't have any way to control the fact that we're in this situation but now I can judge how I'm going to perceive this and how I want to act according to my judgment.

He shared how he could see that the application of Stoic philosophy would have been useful in the very tough training environments he faced early in his military career prior to discovering Stoic philosophy through an educational program. However, he also reflected on how he probably was applying the principles without realising it at the time. The sentiment that permeates Stoic practice resonated throughout this interviewee's work experiences in so far as a holistic way to approach any situation, which he was working on putting into practice in a corporate setting.

A similar sentiment was expressed by another interviewee who transitioned from the "piecemeal" approaches of "leadership training" and "manager training" to Stoic philosophy, allowing for him to control himself more, as opposed to focusing on trying to control others. This interviewee, who was also in the military but in a different country than the interviewee above, led large military construction projects and expressed how he was able to use the management principles he had learned but found there was no logical sequence to them, whereas Stoicism gave him the sense of being able to control his own thinking and was able to

apply his learnings more effectively because of the simple and straight-forward practice it provided. He expressed his change of approach using the dichotomy of control to communicate with his team in the following statement:

> I try to get them [military subordinates/peers] to understand what's within their influence or within their control, what's not within their control and in so doing, then we can decide what pieces of the problem we can actually address.

The practice of Stoic philosophy also influenced other interviewees' approaches to workplace interaction. To be able to distance yourself and compartmentalise what you do and to help others to do this as well was an important skill to develop in the workplace, according to a buying manager working for a large DIY retail chain. Applying the principles of Stoic philosophy was like coming back to the breath in meditation, he explained, in so far as you needed to keep bringing yourself back to the principles and keep practicing. He also expressed that he had "not yet come across an instance genuinely where [he hadn't] been able to apply" the principles, stating that "it's very much a case of you have a framework that you can apply on a consistent basis"; however, he acknowledged that at times it could be too logical in that it made so much sense it could be a bit disconcerting with regard to "where are the emotions that make us human?". Thus, finding a way to engage people with this practice without being dismissive of emotional context was a challenge he acknowledged despite seeing it as a practice that could be applied across any business from "top to bottom".

How the emotional context of situations can be dealt with through the practice of Stoic philosophy is expanded upon further in the next chapter as I expand my exploration into the

principle of *logic* and the theme of 'emotional regulation'. However, it is worth mentioning here that this is an integral component of the work a mental health nurse mentioned in so far as how his own practice of the principles of Stoic philosophy had helped him to provide better guidance to his patients as they dealt with anxiety, depression and other challenges, due to himself having the lived experience of practicing Stoicism, allowing for personal experience with the practices he was recommending. Like many of the other interviewees, he did not necessarily refer to Stoicism explicitly when talking to others but used the practice throughout the guidance he offered to patients and the example he set through his own behaviours and actions. He carefully navigated the principle of *physics*, as I interpreted what he shared with me, through ensuring he expressed our part in a much bigger picture in a way that did not make his patients feel insignificant; instead, he tried to help them to be liberated from their suffering by encouraging a change in their perspectives. The egoistic tension between individual significance and the place we hold within our broader environments remained a challenge to navigate for many.

Quotes such as, 'an easy life is not your friend' printed on a software engineer's mug at his new place of employment served as a reminder that it is good to have something to endure, something that provides opportunity to practice dealing with difficult situations. *Amor fati* or an acceptance and love of one's fate had been a useful concept for this interviewee as he shared with me that his levels of stress had been greatly reduced by his practice of the Stoic principles. Interestingly, despite the working environment that this software engineer ended up in, after leaving his previous job, being another open-plan office space, he found by practicing the principles of Stoic philosophy, he was better able to cope with what was previously a very stressful environment for him by continually bringing himself back to what he did control; his own practice.

Many of the examples provided of how interviewees practiced the principles of Stoic philosophy were within corporate and office environments, however, less structured workplaces where interviewees found solace within the practice of Stoic philosophy were also revealed through this study. In the creative environment that an artist interviewee described, for example, where there were competing interests and artistic techniques used by fellow artists, she expressed how she found she was able to come to a place of peace more quickly with what she was contributing rather than focusing on what other artists were doing by applying and practicing the dichotomy of control. As an artist, her own creations must come from within herself not from a checklist of what others want her to create, she explained. She shared that Stoic philosophy, particularly the contributions of Epictetus, helped her to maintain a mindset conducive to creating pieces that were from her own artistic impressions, not from the expectations of others.

This artist's practice also extended beyond her artwork and into her work as an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) sponsor, representing further diversification of this practice. She applied the principles to ensure she was not engaging with how others thought she should support them through their recovery or respond to their emotional states. This gave her more stability in her own emotional state which was something she had to continually manage through her Stoic practice. Being responsible for her own actions and not taking responsibility for others' actions was a weight off this artist's shoulders who had previously struggled to cope with the emotional outbursts of others which would have detrimental effects on her own mental wellbeing. As she expressed,

> Accepting what I can and can't control and I boiled it down to I can control my thoughts, my actions and my choices … I can control, but not the outcome of them. OK, and accepting that everything else I can't control means that I only have to take responsibility for those three things. And it was like all the stuff that everybody else was telling me I was responsible for, their feelings, and 'you made me do that', and 'look what you made me do', right? And 'you hurt my feelings' and … manipulation. I was free of all that. … and that freedom and … I was responsible, too. I couldn't say that somebody else made me angry. I couldn't blame others for my behaviour. And it made life a lot clearer. … not paying attention to the opinions of others gave me a freedom and it helped me.

Through her Stoic practice and an acceptance of what was and was not within her control, this interviewee was able to make decisions that were good for her by being responsible for herself, not the actions of others. This realisation and application of the practice of Stoicism across a diverse range of workplace circumstances may be more easily appropriated when not entrenched within a systemic organisational culture. The expectations on a US Navy senior official, for example, to have *control* of his command played a big part in how he approached his work prior to becoming aware of the Stoic practices. He stated,

> [T]he military likes to believe that they can control everything from A to Z [*sic*]. And it's just a matter of desire and effort. And, you know, coming up with the right plan. And if you plan properly, then you can execute every single evolution flawlessly. … especially when it comes to leading people, you know, there's this expectation that you can get people to do anything. You just have to figure out how to do it.

And as he came to the Stoic realisation of the dichotomy of control:

> … just recognizing that, you know, I control my own input, but I don't control the result and learning to accept the result.

Through the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, he found a way to get better outcomes for himself and his workplace by accepting the reality he faced and working with that rather than trying to change the circumstances to suit his own way of working. He saw his work as a service to his country, not a job, which meant accepting a level of sacrifice that he saw others, even those working in the Navy alongside him, may not have appreciated, in his view. Over twenty years of training had taught him there was always a way to control outcomes through the right approach. He shared that he continued to have to work on his Stoic practice, as I interpreted his comments, specifically with regard to the principles of *physics* and *ethics* to allow an alternative approach to form. Learning to accept the result even when things did not go as he would have liked was a part of developing his conscious application of Stoic philosophy.

As other interviewees also articulated, this Navy official expressed a desire to have learned of the principles of Stoic philosophy earlier in his life, stating that he "predominately [thinks] it's a very good practice for life". This statement seems significant, especially coming from someone with the seniority of a Commander Master Chief and Special Advisor to Commanding Officer in the US Navy. As with the others who expressed similar sentiments, he

accepted that his 'late' discovery of Stoicism was not something he could control or change so continued to develop from the place he was through his practice of the principles. Interviewees expressed in different ways how they felt themselves developing wisdom through their practice of the principles of Stoic philosophy and their reflections on how earlier introduction to this practice might have changed their previous experiences and their practical capabilities now. The artist interviewee further stated that "if you try to limit it to one place, then you're not really practicing it". This reflection resonates with an observation made by Hadot (2002):

> This kind of life requires, moreover, a considerable effort, which must be renewed every day. It is with regard to this kind of life that those who "really do philosophy" are distinguished from those who "don't really do philosophy", who have only a veneer of superficial opinions. (p 66)

This sentiment of a holistic practice was also acknowledged by the IT consultant interviewee, stating:

> I feel like I'm still learning, learning how to apply [the principles], still learning what they are. I have more books to read, more meet ups to attend those types of things. I will continue practicing and bringing into the workplace. I want to. It should be, you know, throughout all my life, right, the personal side, the business side. Again, they're really just principles of life and [a] philosophy of life.

Thus, Stoicism as a continual *practice* was a responsibility accepted by study participants as they engaged with various workplace and, indeed, life experiences.

Summary of Applying the Principle of *Physics*

I have outlined the application of the principle of *physics* in this chapter through the sentiments expressed by interviewees with regard to the themes of 'the dichotomy of control' and Stoicism as a continual and holistic 'practice'. Hadot's (2002) assessment of who 'does' and 'does not' *do* philosophy provides for some space to be created allowing practitioners to evolve in their practice while taking initial steps to introduce others to this practice. I have not interpreted Hadot's comments as being derogatory, despite these possibly being intended in such a way, but rather that we all start with a superficial understanding of the application of philosophy in our lives and progress ourselves into deeper comprehension through our experiences in applying the principles. I chose to present the principle of *physics* first in my interpretation of my study results because this appeared to be the first intuitively appealing understanding many participants grasped before progressing their understanding through their practice.

While this Stoic way of approaching life may be a choice in many sectors and professions, for others it can prove to be an invaluable way of coping with the dichotomies they experienced in their working lives between real danger and operational chaos, such as the interviewees who have themselves faced both life-threatening situations and corporate environments or processes using the same Stoic principles. The military interviewee who had faced multiple tours of Afghanistan before working in the corporate offices of the military in

the US and a geologist who went from having bodyguards with him throughout his workdays in Algeria to supervising pre-school children in Canada are examples of how the practice of Stoic philosophy transcends situational context; the geologist making the following statements regarding his transition between contextual working environments:

> … Stoicism was really a way to say, OK, focus on the present. See what I can control or not. I was used to that also because we worked in a dangerous area in Algeria … when you went into a place like that you had to give control away and the dichotomy of things was really helpful.

Some interviewees found that people were interested in what they were practicing but did not want to put in the work required to realise the benefits. The sharing of this practice may need to be predominantly by way of example as practitioners realise the benefits for themselves and share their experiences with others. For example, regardless of how others reacted to her practice of the Stoic principles, the pastor I interviewed said that she was able to maintain a calmness in persisting with her refined approach to dealing with things and others. She felt she was able to be compassionate toward people as they adjusted to her new ways, expressing this through her ability,

> … to be able to use that language, to help them identify … What is in your control and what isn't in your control? What are some things that we can do? What are some things that you need to let go of?

When speaking to her congregation, 'the common good' was a key element of Stoic philosophy that she could see as aligning with her Christian faith. In supporting AA meetings through her church, she could see how the Serenity Prayer resonated with Stoic philosophy, despite the exact origin of the prayer remaining somewhat apocryphal (AAHistory; Case & Gosling, 2007, p. 108, Footnote 9), as did the artist interviewee who contributed her own experience with recovery as a sponsor for others in alcohol and drug rehabilitation. "Stoicism is the Serenity Prayer on steroids", chuckled the artist as she reflected on her growing understanding of Stoicism as it related to her experience as an AA sponsor. As she put it,

> the dichotomy of control has made me a better sponsor because I believe that their recovery is between them and their higher power. … I have only to tell what my experience, strength and hope is. I'm not the one who's getting them clean and sober. OK. Because that's not in my power.

In fact, both these interviewees and others had found Stoic philosophy gave them greater patience through the ability to detach from others' behaviours and actions as being outside of their control in order to continue with their practice. As the Serenity Prayer states:

> Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

Through the application of the principle of *physics*, acceptance of what is outside of our control allows for greater focus on our own contributions and the practice of Stoicism through

real life experiences, giving expression to the development of wisdom. As the IT consultant interviewee stated, “I can't control it, but I can control [how] I react to it” and the private investigator identified:

> That's why they call it practicing Stoicism or practicing Buddhism or practicing, you know, it's the practice … the effort … it's reshaping the mind so you're not automatically responding to stimulus … there's actual process involved.

Progressing from the initial stages of practitioners’ recognition of the dichotomy of control and the need for practice through their application of the principle of *physics*, in the next chapter, I explore the process of the development of wisdom through the application of the principle of *logic*, particularly as it relates to the dominant themes that emerged from the data; those being ‘emotional regulation’ and ‘decision making’.

Chapter 7: Applying the Principle of *Logic* in the Workplace

Wisdom

Developing the wisdom to be able to discern between true and false impressions as well as alternate impressions of the same circumstance was seen by the Stoics as an important component of assenting to impressions and, indeed making the choice to suspend assent should the impression be deemed of no consequence or if there remained uncertainty as to the soundness of the impression (Brennan, 2010). Wisdom conveyed through this impartiality and neutrality in addressing challenges by being able to assent 'well', shall we say, invoked a sense of confidence and trust among the staff and colleagues of the Stoic practitioners in this study, according to their own perceptions and claims. Many of the experiences shared by interviewees and survey respondents involved an improved ability to regulate their emotional responses through their practice of Stoicism which I have interpreted as predominantly the application of the Stoic principle of *logic*. Emotional regulation emerged as a dominant application of the principle of *logic*, particularly with regard to improving decision-making capabilities but also as a theme that transgressed other applications and benefits realised by study participants.

Thus, there were two main elements that emerged in this study regarding the application of the principle of *logic* in so far as being able to regulate emotions which then allowed for engagement with wise-reasoning in decision-making. The theme of 'emotional regulation' emerged through the experiences participants shared which contributed to an improvement in 'decision-making' capabilities as another dominant theme that emerged in my analysis of the data. These themes seemed also to be affected by the maturation of the participants' Stoic

practice. An interviewee who had been studying philosophy for fifty years and Stoic philosophy for twenty of those years, for example, expressed that he may have started out thinking he could "change the world" but over time had developed the wisdom of a more tempered approach and focused on more targeted efforts to help others. By comparison, interviewees who were relatively new to the learnings of Stoic philosophy tended to express more enthusiasm for its possibilities beyond their own experiences as they continued to develop greater wisdom and confidence through their practice. Ideally, finding a place where the enthusiasm and wisdom of experience occur in equal measure would most likely best serve wider distribution of what the principle of *logic* has to offer more broadly.

If we consider Aristotle's view that knowledge should be sought for the sake of the intellectual satisfaction of forming an independent mind rather than to serve egoistic purposes (Hadot, 2002), then we are better able to consider how the Stoic principle of *logic* can be applied in practical terms within workplaces. Thus, differences must be acknowledged between the intent of Aristotle compared to that of the Stoics in so far as developing wisdom primarily for the intellectual experience versus a way of contemplating and enacting virtue, respectively. In my interpretation of the results of this study, applying the Stoic principle of *logic* to intellectually consider how they were responding to their own and others' emotional states allowed participants to maintain a clarity of thought that remained relatively unperturbed amidst emotive colleagues and workplace environments. Negative visualisation, as shared by several interviewees, by way of example, allowed for planning for potential issues that might have arisen, enabling practitioners to be better able to manage these, should they occur, while maintaining independence of mind; thus, avoiding engagement with potentially disruptive emotional reactions or fears. This appeared to help lessen some of the 'passion' or 'emotion'

expressed by those around them that may otherwise interfere with progress of specific tasks or projects within their workplaces.

Using the terminology of 'emotional regulation' might seem redundant from a Stoic perspective given emotions were not strictly recognised by the Stoics in the same way as we view them in modern terms. However, the understanding expressed by participants of this study indicated they had a preference for the use of the word 'emotion' and, in my view, the use of this term is aligned with how we might express the practice of Stoic philosophy in contemporary environments, at least until such time as more sophisticated dialogue has been adopted.

To 'regulate' emotion suggests that our emotions are a reaction to our environment rather than, as the Stoics would encourage, an understanding of the beliefs that we hold which produce an 'opinion' of how we *should* respond. This twist of perspective was a practice the participants of this study showed signs of engaging with as they contemplated their own reactions to their circumstances; however, there remained a modern interpretation of an emotional response which required regulating, with some indication of an emerging understanding of the beliefs or opinions driving those emotions. So, while I have used the terminology of 'emotional regulation' as a key theme that has emerged from the experiences shared by participants of this study, I must acknowledge that this terminology captures merely the initial stages, if you will, of participants regulating what might be learned responses to situations and perhaps a developing recognition of where their emotions are actually coming from. Understanding this mental accent to the impressions one experiences was expressed by Graver (2007) in the following statement:

> The Stoic approach to action thus classifies the responses of the animate being according to the intentional characteristics of psychic events rather than by the expression of those events in observable behavior. The behavior per se is not synonymous with the action: it is what happens when one acts, but to say what action is being performed, one has to make reference to what happens in the mind. (p. 27)

Essentially, as understood by Brennan (2010), the Stoic interpretation of emotion is that there are only four recognised emotions, two of which are dealt with as opinions of the future, namely fear and desire, and two which are considered opinions of the present, being pain and pleasure. The interpretation that emotions are in fact 'opinions' is significant in creating a recognition that our emotions are linked to what we believe which in turn promotes action toward or away from something we perceive as 'good' or 'bad', respectively. The challenge that emerges from the Stoic doctrine with regard to this explanation of emotion is that the only good or bad are virtue or vice, respectively, and only a sage would be able to determine this, the rest of us are merely continuously progressing our experiences and comprehension. This very brief summary of the depth of explanation Brennan provides is sufficient for this study, while acknowledging that a dedicated practitioner of Stoicism would certainly be inclined to study these interpretations in more detail and that an entire study could be conducted on the topic of emotion alone. Here, I continue to focus on the broader sense and application of each of the Stoic principles by study participants' experiences of their workplaces, of which emotional regulation through the application of the principle of *logic* was a component contributing to the development of wisdom.

Building upon Case and Gosling's (2007) work, the development of wisdom as a practical application in workplace settings may well serve organisational needs, allowing for better decision-making capabilities to transpire, from a Stoic perspective, through the regulation of emotive reactions. According to Brennan (2010), Stoic "belief is an assent to an impression" (p. 65), meaning Stoic epistemology observes every circumstance as an opportunity to form beliefs regarding each circumstance as it is happening. It follows that we can all reform our beliefs at any moment if we are willing to consider impressions more carefully; thus deeming beliefs as less psychologically 'fixed' than some perspectives may suggest. Indeed, "assent is caused by oneself more than anything else" (Graver, 2007, p. 64), suggesting we are able to develop the wisdom to reconsider and adapt our assents to impressions regardless of the causes of said impressions; therefore, actively evolving our beliefs through our experiences and how we choose to respond to the circumstances we face. Further, the Stoic doctrine expresses that "the sense of helplessness or being the "passive victim of one's passions is … a lingering vestige of childhood" and that we, as adults, are responsible for our own emotions (Graver, 2007, p. 81).

In this chapter, I progress my analysis of the survey and interview data into the experiences of practitioners with applying the principle of *logic*; first considering participants' experiences with regulating their emotions to form beneficial responses to the circumstances they face, thus, considering the *impression* and *assent* stages of Stoic *logic*. I then explore practitioners' progression through the final stages of *logic*, those being *scrutiny* and *knowledge*, through their decision-making capabilities; emotional regulation therefore abetting decision-making in practical terms.

Emotional Regulation

Epistemologically, Stoicism forms the grounding for modern psychology in the sense that we have the intellectual capacity to consider and reconsider our emotional reactions based on our beliefs rather than the common misrepresentation of Stoic suppression of emotions. Indeed, we cannot develop wisdom in so far as how we choose to respond to situations without experiencing an emotion related to the situation which compels assent to an impression. In deliberating over the debate and Stoic position on whether we experience natural 'pre-emotions' or 'feelings' (*propatheia*) of the body outside of our mental control and beliefs, or of those of a wise person, Graver (2007) states:

> Impressions of the emotive type are integral to what it is to be human; that is, to be a rational creature. What is really required is not that we should cease to have them but that we should withhold assent from them. … For [the Stoics], one has not had an emotion until one accepts that the way emotion presents its object is really true; that is, that that object really is charged with value or disvalue and really does merit a vigorous response. (pp. 108-109)

Here, I take this consideration of emotions by participants as a 'regulation of emotion', which represents the process of assent to impression, so as to form a greater understanding of their beliefs and the opinions which drive their actions; a process many expressed as their greatest challenge and that proved to transcended experiences. This regulation of emotion was expressed by one interviewee who was a self-proclaimed "accidental Stoic" working as an IT project manager at the time of being interviewed. Finding her way in her life as she faced

multiple traumas and losses including the deaths of loved ones and chronic health issues, she saw herself as living by her values which happened to align with Stoic philosophy, as she discovered the practice later in her life. Having discovered what Stoic philosophy was, she made more concerted efforts to practice the principles more intentionally.

Managing her frustrations in the workplace was something this interviewee expressed as being an area she needed to continue to work on; however, "compared with colleagues in similar situations, [she] tended to be less stressed", in her view due to her Stoic practice enabling better regulation of her responses. In addition to the frustrations she encountered at work, this interviewee had managed chronic health conditions, including bi-polar, chronic pain and fibromyalgia, every day which required her to regulate her working time according to what was required to maintain her health as best as she could. She saw that Stoicism assisted her in managing her life but also shared that the trauma of losing eleven people in separate circumstances early in her life brought her to practicing the principles without realising what they were at the time. "It was either adapt or turn to drugs and alcohol", she stated as being her attitude as she felt the principles of Stoicism were forced upon her as a way to adapt, despite many others adopting the latter to cope with the trauma they faced in their own lives. Others did not always understand her responses, she explained through the quote below, as they saw situations which she chose not to react to as warranting an emotional response.

> [S]ometimes people don't understand my response. … They think I should be angry. They think I should be something this, that or the other and they don't quite get the why. … Why are you not particularly bothered about this. Or sometimes my problem solving and this one affects me in my real life, [because] my husband hates this … if I see a

> situation, my thing is ‘well what [do] we control?’, ‘how do we problem solve this?’. And he's like, ‘look, I don't want … to solve the problem right now … I just want to get angry and be annoyed’. So I suppose that sometimes causes some difficulty, but I have to keep in mind that that’s more of an interpersonal thing … I have to keep in mind, well, not everybody thinks like [me].

Why some naturally adopt the Stoic principles in times of distress while others need to find it as a way of pulling themselves out of the stressful circumstances they find themselves in after turning to less productive ways of coping is an interesting psychological conundrum; and one that is, in part, explained through Stoic doctrine. The understanding that our beliefs drive the emotions we associated with particular happenings in our lives is a crucial conception of Stoic philosophy. As Graver (2007) explains, the Stoics understood that our beliefs are formed prior to a happening that we experience which creates an emotional response to what has happened based on what our previously formed beliefs dictate would be a suitable response, which further informs our response to the next happening. An appreciation of what is driving our emotions then leads to the knowledge that if we consider the beliefs behind our emotional responses to happenings, we can regulate these with greater conviction; “one needs to recognize something in one’s current situation as falling under some general type to which an evaluation has previously been assigned” and which we believe our response to is appropriate based on a judgement that the situation warrants a response (Graver, 2007, p. 40). Thus, as iterated earlier, the practice of Stoicism is not a suppression of emotion but a quest to develop greater wisdom in how we understand and experience our emotions based on what we believe.

A mental health nurse interviewee shared how he found the connections between his work in applying Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Stoic philosophy useful as a way for him to process the confronting stories he was faced with through his work. Having started reading about philosophy generally during a difficult time in his personal life, this interviewee found Stoic philosophy in particular to be a refreshing approach in so far as being a practical philosophy that was applicable to our daily lives. This appreciation and understanding of the Stoic principles translated into his work life and how he was able to assist his patients; being able to put in perspective that a difficult moment did not have to mean a difficult day, week or month or that his job or their situation as a whole was terrible or beyond redemption. Applying the principle of *logic*, as I have interpreted what he shared with me, in his thinking and in the guidance he was able to provide for his patients came from asking himself what a Stoic sage would do in each circumstance. This, as he expressed through the excerpt from his interview below, gave him comfort that he was able to make decisions that were in his own and his patients' best interests and not driven by an emotional reaction.

> [B]eing able to take a step back from my emotions … and kind of being more of an observer of my thoughts rather than just getting caught up in them and kind of trying to think of what's going to be better in the long term and better for me and better for the other person rather than what would be a quick, easy solution … it's about what's better for us, even if it is difficult … it's for the best in the long term.

This mental health nurse, like other interviewees, found Stoic philosophy resonated with his own world view and the wisdom he felt he was developing as he matured. While he expressed that it was difficult to measure or quantify the benefits that such a practice has in

one's life, in his mind it definitely had benefited him in his personal and work life. He saw the need for consistency in his practice to ensure he was reminding himself regularly of the practices and continuing to guide his patients and colleagues without coming across as "preachy", as he put it.

To be able to consistently come back to a simple, easy to apply, logical framework that could be applied in any situation was what also drew the buying manager for a large DIY retail chain to Stoic philosophy as he sought ways to manage his own and others anxieties. From his early years thinking he was on the life path of becoming a priest and recognising an intense desire within himself to be living in nature, this professional changed his path as he began to travel and experience different options available to him. A self-reportedly fear driven workaholic and prone to, in his words, "catastrophizing tendencies" that produced high levels of anxiety, he recognised how being in nature brought him back to a sense of calm and stability. After a business fall-out and having become disillusioned with some of the more dogmatic aspects of Buddhism, as he articulated it, he attended some CBT sessions to help him through what he referred to as his "darkest times". These sessions allowed him to deconstruct how he was thinking about things and gave him a framework that really worked for him, leading him to explore more of the history and Stoic philosophy groundings of the CBT method. As other interviewees have also expressed, the fact he did not find Stoic philosophy earlier was regrettable to him as he thought it should be a mandatory part of the curriculum within our education system and certainly would have made his own experiences more tolerable, less emotionally overwhelming.

Emotions ran high through a tendency, perceived by this interviewee, for colleagues to catastrophise things, which was also experienced by an interviewee who was a sales associate in the commercial lighting industry as unproductive and detrimental to his own and others wellbeing. A highly emotive sales environment drew this interviewee to Stoicism in the twelve months or so prior to his interview with me as a way of dealing with large engineering and construction firm contracts. Stepping back from the emotive dynamic of his workplace to gain a better sense of what was actually within his control and what will matter in the long term (*physics*), while mystical to his associates, allowed this salesperson to better handle the stress within his workplace environment through greater focus on the regulation of his own emotional reactions. While he admitted the time between his own emotional reaction and where the "Stoicism takes over" could be shorter, this was something he saw as an ongoing practice of the process to improve his consistency in its application which, as highlighted in his statement below, helped to reduce his level of stress in the workplace.

> Personally, it reduces my stress level immensely. You still get stress, don't get me wrong. I mean, when things are going off the rails, … things still get stressful, but it helps you initiate the process to solve the issues in a logical, more calm way. I mean, it's not always a hundred percent. Of course, you try your hardest.

As other interviewees also mentioned, this interviewee referred to "the pause" and "emotional de-acceleration" before action was taken as a useful way of managing his responses through what I interpreted as the process of applying the principle of *logic*. Thus, the interactions between the principles of *physics* and *logic* become apparent here as attention is shifted from their environment to taking responsibility for their own responses.

Practicing emotional regulation, exhibited through anger and depression, was also the geologist interviewee's focus as he worked in several countries around the world and was drawn to explore Stoicism. He shared his thoughts, in part, through the following declarations:

> Often I would go into a fight or a conflict with someone and I will take things extremely personal and when I read more [on Stoic philosophy], I was aware of cognitive therapy a bit because that was the way I went through depression 20 years ago and I went off of medication thanks to cognitive therapy. Stoicism was a way to deal with, to use a psychological principle of cognitive therapy, but put them in a larger context and connect with all the culture, and [creations] of culture from the past. So, I used cognitive therapy really much to manage a lot of my conflict with people and especially understandings that a lot of the conflicts were coming from my own perception of things. So, it was kind of more, I will say, that I apply Stoicism as a propagation of cognitive therapy or actually as a kind of … non-psych non-therapeutic approach to take a systematic approach to things.

The Stoic principles allowed him to put the CBT he was also undertaking, like other interviewees expressed, into a broader context and be able to see how the conflict he was creating in his life was based on his perceptions of the things that were happening. Differentiating between CBT and Stoicism, he stated that Stoicism gave him more of a sense of connection to history, which he valued, and spirituality without retreating into yourself as Buddhism or similar practices encourage, as he interpreted these practices. Welcoming the disturbances of life, *amor fati*, to allow for the principles to be applied rather than finding a

calm internal place while waiting for them to pass was a more beneficial approach for this interviewee as he experienced the ups and downs throughout his career.

The polarity of the perceived emotional contribution to artistic endeavours compared with the lack of emotion perspective of Stoicism might make creativity and Stoicism seem to be contrary concepts to those less familiar with the practices. However, as one interviewee expressed in her role as a writer and creative writing teacher, being able to express emotion effectively through creative works is invaluable. When people immerse themselves in their emotions in order to create, through whatever form their creative endeavours take, they must also be able to "de-escalate" their emotions to preserve their own wellbeing and to be able to extract the useful insights of those emotions, she explained. There is the need to develop techniques, in this writer's view, that allow you to distance yourself from what is happening in the story or artwork you are creating. You have to learn how to work *with* your emotions to be able create a piece of writing that is not "boring", as this interviewee puts it in her statement below, and this requires a deep awareness and knowledge of emotions and how they feel.

> If you don't write with emotion it's boring. So, you have to work with [emotions] and you have to, at the same time, you have to keep your distance to analyse them or to use them in a way that will be, yeah, that will be working. And so, I apply let's say I apply mindfulness like when emotions come up, I try to look at them first like a gift basically like how can I use them, are they useful to me? And what do they mean? Sometimes they are persistent or they are kind of not working with me but against me and I then I think they have a message for me and I try to decipher the message but I have to stay

> cool … like someone who's observing … like an observer. Not identifying [with the emotions].

In her writing practice, this interviewee tried to see emotions as a gift to her craft that held a message for her; exploring them to find out whether they were useful to her in what she was trying to create was part of her exploration of the Stoic process of *logic*, as I have interpreted her experiences. She used the 'five second rule' to give herself a chance to determine whether the emotion was taking over or if it was going to be useful, from which I draw a connection to the stage of *logic* whereby one is giving consideration to their assent to an impression. She expressed how the principles helped her to manage her emotional responses and stop ruminating over things that had passed or judging herself or other people, displaying in my view a progression into the scrutiny and knowledge stages of *logic*. "[Stoicism] is a bullshit exterminator" she offered as her summary of how it helped to manage emotions. The insights this writer and the artist interviewee expressed through their own experiences go some way to supporting the idea of developing an artistic sensibility within our workplaces so as to better regulate our responses through experiential development of wisdom beyond intellectual comprehension (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015) and reflection (Schedlitzki et al., 2015).

For some, however, Stoic practice offered a more acute detachment from emotion as a method of preserving their own wellbeing. Being able to limit his emotional reaction to what the private investigator interviewee working on homicide cases had to hear from witnesses and suspects was a key element, he stated, to being able to remain impartial when doing his job, despite the highly distressing stories he was exposed to. He explained that,

> when somebody says something to you confrontational or something disrespectful or something threatening, … that gut feeling you get at that moment, recognizing that for what it is, that it's just an emotional reaction and moving past that as quickly as you can so you can process the information logically and in a rational and reasonable way.

Progressing through the process of impression, assent, scrutiny and knowledge within the principle of *logic* was a process this interviewee engaged with regularly, in my assessment of the experiences he shared with me, to ensure he was not mentally impacted or professionally influenced by what he heard from those he was interviewing. He admitted maintaining attentiveness in this regard was his greatest challenge as he processed emotional impressions and moved himself forward through to a logical interpretation of his impressions. As he shared,

> You don't have any control over the outcome of what interviewee or what a witness is going to tell you. … You have to focus on asking the questions and getting the answers. You have to take your desire for an outcome completely out of your consideration when interacting.

Other circumstances where the principle of *logic* was applied by interviewees in the workplace were less dramatic but carry no less potential for destabilising one's wellbeing if not handled wisely in Stoic terms. Taking the time to pause so the music teacher I interviewed was not reacting to the sentiments around him and via email correspondence, by way of an example given by this interviewee, was something he continued to learn to apply and advise colleagues on as they inevitably got caught up in their workplace dynamics. He reflected on his own challenges prior to finding Stoic philosophy where he could see when he contributed

to dysfunction in these interactions through projecting his own concerns onto others instead of taking a more considered approach. Regulating how he was interacting with his workplace environment helped this interviewee to step back from unhelpful behaviours of his own making as well as those of others. Contributing to solutions using considered responses rather than perpetuating problems through emotive reactions proved to be valuable learning experiences for this and other interviewees.

Allowing oneself to be drawn into the emotion and drama of situations served as a deterrent in the path to resolving challenges in a holistic way, as several interviewees experienced. The artist interviewee, for example, who was recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, shared with me that she was looking for something she could apply beyond the meetings of AA; something that was more encompassing, as she put it. She found comfort in the less punitive way of approaching her recovery and new life through the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy. As a self-proclaimed sensitive person, she struggled to cope with workplaces where there was aggression, as outlined previously, even when it was not directed at her. Through her application of Stoic philosophy in her recovery and life more generally, she went from having to leave workplaces that she found too stressful to being able to detach completely from others' aggression, even when it *was* directed at her.

This revolution in her life of not replacing one emotion with another and instead allowing herself the space to detach emotionally played a big part in her own recovery and how she was able to progress to helping others to recover from their own addictions. However, moving forward, she could see how she would need to "sharpen her compassion" so that she did not come across as "too cold". With a core value of hers being accountability, the virtuous

nature of Stoicism resonated deeply with her but she also recognised the need for compassion to be fostered, displaying signs of a deeper understanding emerging of the Stoic interpretation of emotion in so far as regulating the fear, pain, desire and pleasure responses in favour of compassionate engagement for oneself and others.

The regulation of emotion formed a key element to the practice of Stoicism in participants' workplaces and lives as they developed wisdom through their experiences along their path to virtue. The software engineer interviewee stated that emotional regulation was his greatest challenge. "Waking up to the reality of things", was something this interviewee described as what Stoic philosophy offered people. The pastor interviewee also expressed in the following quote how developing the ability to regulate her emotional responses was helping her to balance moments of "inner turmoil".

> I think that inner calm, when … I do feel an inner turmoil about something … I'm very idealistic … and so when something bumps up against how I think things should be, I sense inner turmoil. And so, what I would like to improve on is … having more inner calm and inner balance in those times.

Thus, there is a natural progression from the regulation of emotion using the process of Stoic *logic* to being able to understand and use our emotions in making decisions through the application of wise-reasoning. In the next section, I progress the discussion to the theme of 'decision-making' that emerged from the experiences shared by study participants.

Decision-Making

Decision-making might be idealistically envisioned as a 'logical' process but if we consider a Stoic *logic* perspective, our decisions are highly vulnerable to how we assent to our impressions which are influenced through our beliefs, thus driven by emotion. Applying the Stoic principle of *logic* to decision-making allowed for some regulation of emotions by study participants, as discussed in the previous section, which might otherwise have driven decision-making from highly emotive states. This observation was depicted through the experiences shared by participants of this study as they described how they were able to achieve greater clarity of thought when faced with problems or challenges; a practice which, from their perspectives, improved their confidence in their decision-making capabilities.

This clarity of thought and confidence was expressed by the pastor I interviewed, who was reluctant to see the principles as 'applications' and more aligned herself with the practice as a way of *being,* showing an ontological understanding of Stoic philosophy emerging through her practice. She expressed that the philosophy allowed her to be more clear-minded and calmer when making decisions. She also felt that she had been able to gain a better perspective on the challenges she faced, specifically stating that she was able to "keep an even keel on things that could be upsetting that don't have to be" allowing her to "make calmer, clearer decisions". Some of the people she had interacted with saw her new approach as refreshing and could see how things could be done differently, whereby others found it disconcerting and were taking longer to adjust to it as their own emotions continued to drive their perspectives and decisions, as she explained.

Being able to solve problems in a logical and calm manner also allowed another interviewee to move on from issues more quickly with a sense of satisfaction that problems were solved well and hadn't caused further destruction to the workplace dynamic or his own stress levels. Solving problems in a sales environment through the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy was how this sales associate working in the commercial lighting industry transformed his experience of his workplace while providing real solutions to problems without the drama he saw perpetuated by his colleagues. He no longer suffered any residual emotional attachment to the problems because he had confidence that they had been addressed sensibly and without becoming overly emotional himself or by perpetuating emotive reactions from others when making decisions. He explained,

> You put forth an honest, logical effort into it and you try to draw in all your skills and talents and use every aspect that you can in a nice, logical, calm manner. And when the problem is solved, … you sit back and look at it go, 'oh, OK we solved that, let's move on to the next thing'. And the residual of that is that it doesn't stay in my brain … it just disappears because it's been solved and handled in a nice, concise package and it's done. There's no emotional crap that comes along with you … for the next problem. You know, it's just solved.

Negative visualisation was a part of the IT project manager's decision-making process of managing the risks of projects and preparing herself for being "comfortable with the uncomfortable", not to mention if a project were to go "completely wrong" in which case she took the position of accepting the fate of this as outside of her control, thus, applying the principle of *physics* to bring herself to a mental space where she was able to progress through

the process of Stoic *logic*. Grounding herself in her own values provided the sense of responsibility for how she chose to approach her role and those she worked with as well as her duty within her role. The ability to gain perspective was a key element of her ability to handle the stresses of managing IT projects in so far as being able to visualise the worst case scenarios and the place of the project in the scheme of her life and the continuous development of new technologies that would soon render her projects redundant, as she expressed through the following statement.

> [T]hinking of what could go wrong … allowed me to anticipate problems as well. … So, I know if I do this to solve this problem, is it going to cause three more problems down the line or that sort of thing. I think it did make me a better problem solver. … Just being able to better problem solve things when you've got a chronic condition makes life easier. … Keeping in mind the bigger picture … helps for dealing with a chronic condition.

As someone who managed her own mental health and other chronic illnesses, the principles of Stoic philosophy gave her the framework to be a productive project manager despite challenging personal circumstances. This ability to approach problem-solving and decision-making with equanimity allowed her to maintain the mental nous to see the entire situation rather than focusing solely on a solution to a particular problem (Pigliucci, 2017).

The sales associate in the commercial lighting industry interviewed for this study found Stoic practice was useful in his workplace where he also saw his colleagues getting caught up in stressful dynamics which negatively impacted on their decision-making capabilities. Adding

to the stress of a sales industry, he saw the technical communication of emails and text messaging as stress aggravating factors in a workplace. He explained his perspective of his colleagues in terms of, “they just focus on all the things that are going wrong and catastrophise things and ramp things up and bring that to the table”. Actual direct verbal communication was, in this interviewee’s mind, much more effective for reducing stress levels and allowing people to discuss the challenges that needed to be resolved in a calm way rather than sending emotive messages back and forth which only served to further heightening the drama. He sensed that people were appreciative of his alternative approach to calmly and actively considering the real-time possible solutions to issues instead of contributing to the stress; however, he also saw some were sceptical of his calm demeanour in the midst of a “passionate” working environment. He shared with me how his boss at one point questioned whether he cared about his job because he was not showing the same emotional reactions as his colleagues were when problems arose.

In workplace dynamics that typically involve heightened emotions, a Stoic approach may well serve an important purpose in reducing stress levels and engaging people in their work in more productive ways. The interviewee mentioned in the previous paragraph saw Stoic practice as lending itself naturally to good common sense in the business world; “being successful in a quiet way” was how he articulated his thoughts on what was needed within the workplace dynamic through a more humble Stoic way. He also saw this as a way of keeping personal conflicts within the workplace to a minimum as the ego was removed from the interactions, focusing instead on the work at hand. This alternative approach may go some way to shifting the egoistic need to solve problems through aggressive and decisive actions as is so often encouraged through contemporary tactics.

A sense of inner peace and ability “to live with problems that are not immediately solved” was expressed as being among the benefits experienced by the writer interviewee. Being able to “keep your cool” and be a “grown-up” by allowing things to “cool down” before responding helped this writer to manage her emotions to her benefit in her profession, particularly when negotiating contracts. However, she found challenges in dealing with others who were not managing their emotions where she then had to practice maintaining her own inner peace and “work hard to get it back” once it had been disrupted by others. This was a challenge as she felt, at times, she was the only one taking responsibility for keeping things “cool”. These experiences expressed by this interviewee highlighted the importance of widening the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in our societies and workplaces so as to develop a sense of personal responsibility among people for their own contributions to situations.

Another interviewee, a government consultant, used the principles of Stoic philosophy to create an environment where everything from processes to interactions was as simple and clear as possible. Perhaps stated more forcefully than others, this interviewee expressed in their tone of voice and statements, as indicated in the quote below, a level of rigidity in their way of mitigating and dealing with challenges.

> I've come across many of those clients and the result is always very simple. It's goodbye. I will go so far. I will try to do the best I can for the client. But if the client simply is not prepared to play by the rules already agreed, then the relationship will be

terminated. And if I say that, it will happen and it will be total and forever. That's the nearest I could say that I come to Stoic philosophy in that situation.

This rigidity, in my view, is excessive and not strictly in line with how I interpret the practice of Stoicism; however, the sentiment of becoming more cognisant of regulating our responses, with the intent to make decisions on how we choose to engage with circumstances and individuals, depicts an intent to practice Stoic *logic*. The impression that Stoicism is detached and uncaring was evident in how others often perceive this aspect of the practice whereby it became easier for people to be clear on what did and did not work for them and what they were prepared to involve themselves in emotionally. While this may be a challenge in considering Stoic philosophy for wider application in workplaces, in a society where it has come to be expected that we engage with the emotional reactions when faced with problems or decisions, a Stoic philosophy approach appeared to provide an alternative for interviewees to what was expected of them socially and within the workplaces in order for them to be more productive.

Summary of Applying the Principle of *Logic*

It is certainly a challenge to ensure the practice of Stoic philosophy does not create too great an impression of detachment; a disposition that carries the danger of alienating people and seeming to disregard or downplay what they experience as significant problems. However, it is also all too easy for people to "take the emotional way out" as the professional writer put it, which can become a burden for those around them and those trying to practice the Stoic principles. Being able to balance emotions and move past issues more quickly without the

blaming or guilt that might have been used previously, allowed this writer to see how the principles could greatly benefit workplaces in general as teams and colleagues work through their projects and tasks.

Many interviewees expressed a level of frustration with the lack of common sense they perceived within workplaces and the amount of time that was wasted on emotive interactions that did not serve the interests of the work needing to be done. “The biggest thing is that it helps you maintain perspective”, the military personnel interviewee stated, acknowledging that the challenge with his role in a military office environment was of greater frustration to him than active duty in a war zone due to, in his mind, not being stressful for good reason. Poor communication, lack of clarity and random requests for information were among the scenarios he shared as sources of frustration, but he also acknowledged that much of the stress he experienced was self-induced and a matter of continuing his practice of the principles of Stoic philosophy to better manage his engagement with this environment. He mused that perhaps what he needed to do was to commit to regular practice on a weekly basis where he consciously applied a principle on a particular day so that he was engaging with the practice regularly until it became habitual. He saw a benefit of practicing Stoic philosophy as helping him to better prioritise tasks among several “knee-jerk” reactions happening around him which led to a greater focus on his own responses to situations. He felt he was better able to see the situations for what they were instead of focusing on the drama or urgency that had been created around these interchanges.

A challenge again raised by this and other interviewees was the misconception of Stoicism as displaying no, or indeed not feeling, emotion and a general lack of understanding

within our modern societies of what Stoic philosophy is and how it can be used. Engaging the principles where others were accustomed to having an immediate emotional response and helping them to step back from what they were perceiving the impact to be, was how the buying manager of a large retail chain explained his approach to assisting others to experience the benefits of this practice. “Getting them to focus on the present moment and what they can do in this moment”, was what this professional saw as the key strategy needed to reduce the anxiety associated with conjured perceptions of a situation. The Marcus Aurelius quote of “being indifferent to what makes no difference” was stated by this interviewee, as it was by another, as a way of getting people to stop, think and refocus on what was important so they could let go of their emotional attachment to circumstances and make better decisions. He saw emotional regulation as a key component of workplace performance.

This interviewee also stated that using the principles of Stoic philosophy as a way of engaging high energy, high performing executives with large egos in decision-making was a potential solution to ineffective dynamics within boardrooms. He saw the principles as providing a framework whereby decision-makers could be trained to focus on the decision at hand and not the many other influences vying for their attention.

As further evidence of the effect of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy, the IT project manager interviewee who worked on government projects saw herself as being less stressed than many of her colleagues due to her ability to manage the stressors more effectively. Creating an environment where she was able to focus her efforts and her team’s efforts on solving problems that they could control and not getting distracted with problems they had no control over provided a more effective and less stressful working environment, in

her view. She felt she was able to gain the respect of and maintain good working relationships with all the stakeholders because she took her sense of duty for her work seriously and stayed true to her values. The ability to create a culture of trying things and not getting too worried about the outcomes allowed her to progress her knowledge and her team's competencies. Being intrinsically, rather than externally, motivated was what she felt was a key element to being able to manage the emotions involved in managing IT projects.

"Leading by example" was how the mental health nurse interviewee explained his approach to introducing his colleagues to Stoic philosophy without overtly talking to them in terms of the Stoic practice he implements in his own life. Being able to remind himself to not be too emotionally driven allowed him to avoid making "rash" decisions, in his view; "to think before you act is good advice for anyone, really", he stated. To remain grounded and be able to consider whether our emotions were driving decisions for short term benefits instead of longer-term rewards was something this interviewee found useful in his practice of regulating his emotions and making decisions that were in the best interests of others as well as himself. The practice provided the grounding for his desire to continue to "be a better person" overall and get more out of his life, not being held back by anxieties and fears or becoming overly critical of himself or others. In his work with patients, he saw the principles of Stoic philosophy as providing him with a sense of being a calm and dependable person that his patients and colleagues could rely on for sound guidance, particularly in a crisis. He saw that over the years he had been practicing Stoicism he had become more of a role model for junior staff. This sentiment is explored more broadly in the following section on the application of the principle of *ethics* through the themes of 'the common good' and 'providing guidance'.

Chapter 8: Applying the Principle of *Ethics* in the Workplace

Awareness

> There is one thing, and only one, which does depend on us and which nothing can tear away from us: the will to do good and to act in conformity with reason. (Hadot, 2002, p. 127)

The sentiment Hadot expressed in the above quote of this interpretation of the Stoic doctrine exemplifies the interconnectivity of the principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics*. Through an acceptance of our place in 'nature' and ability to engage wise-reasoning, according to this philosophy, we come to a place of greater awareness of how to conduct ourselves so as to engender *polis*, a sense of community (Pigliucci, 2017). The Stoics considered *ethics* in terms of how we should live our lives as opposed to the common interpretation today of facing a dilemma and judging whether associated actions are or would be right or wrong based on how they impact on others (Brennan, 2010); thus, again it is important to draw attention back to Stoic philosophy as a *way* of life, not an accessory *to* life when it is needed.

I have, so far, covered the topics of an acceptance of that which is outside or within our control (*physics*) and of the development of wisdom through emotional regulation (*logic*) in the previous chapters. In this chapter, I progress the discussion toward the transcendence of the individual to an awareness of and intention to 'doing good' through my interpretations of the study participant applications of the principle of *ethics*. In Greek language, ethics or *êthikê* refers to the "development of one's character" or *êthos* (Robertson, 2018, p. 25). Developing

greater awareness of how one is choosing to live their life and how their way of life interacts with others, in so far as contributing to the *polis*, is how I have interpreted the fundamental conception of the Stoic principle of *ethics*.

The Stoics inspired experiential learning slightly differently than the earlier philosophers through the provision of systematic practices that guided disciples toward living virtuously. There was, and remains, no definitive definition of what constitutes ethical behaviour due to every action having some consequence that may or may not be perceived as ethical. Pigliucci (2017) used the example of dietary preferences to highlight the Stoic approach to *ethics* through his comparison of vegetarian versus omnivorous diets, each which could be argued as being more ethically sound than the other from animal rights to environmental impact perspectives. The Stoics took a Socratic perspective of what is 'good' in so far as "happiness consists not in pleasure or in individual interest [as was considered through Epicurean teachings] but in the demands of the good, which are dictated by reason and transcend the individual" (Hadot, 2002, p. 127). Thus, I have interpreted Stoic *ethics* as an awareness of how our actions impact on others while remaining cognisant of the idea that considering only two options, as far as what is *good* and what is *not good*, creates a "fallacy of false dichotomy" as there are 'always' more than two options when it comes to applying reason (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 71). Essentially, the Stoic principle of *ethics* emanates from an interpretation of "the intentions, motives and characters of agents" (Brennan, 2010, p. 31; Seneca, 2011).

The theme of 'the common good' as the central concept of living in accordance with the Stoic philosophy doctrine of doing what is good and right is first explored in the next section, followed by the theme of 'providing guidance' to others as a natural progression in my

analysis, emerging from the data as an indication of transcending the individual in favour of contributing to the *polis.* This served as some indication that the Stoic practitioners in this study thought not only of their own application of the principles but also of how they could assist others to apply the principles in their own lives. Greater depth of exploration focusing on the theme of 'the common good', in the first instance, allowed me to interpret how participants viewed the "values of outcomes, things, and states of affairs, making judgments about what sorts of things bring value, worth, meaning, and goodness to an individual's life, or to a community or the world at large" (Brennan, 2010, p. 31). I have interpreted the nature of the Stoic principle of *ethics* as that of a cumulation of the other principles as these are applied to assisting others while developing greater awareness of one's own contribution to the whole which is depicted through the examples given by study participants.

The Common Good

Acting for the common good is a central tenet of Stoic practice. From a Stoic perspective, "Humans are inherently both rational and social beings, whose natural goal is therefore to perfect their capacity for wisdom and justice" (Robertson, 2018, p. 31). The Greek term *oikeiôsis* refers to how we determine what actions we will take based upon our concern for the welfare of others and ourselves, in so far as what and who we deem as important to us and our place in our larger community (Brennan, 2010). Brennan made particular note of the Stoics' intention that we are not acting for *others* but rather for *ourselves*. The virtue of others is of course 'good' but is indifferent to us as it is outside of our own control (Robertson, 2018). By doing what is good (i.e. virtuous) through moderation of that which should be indifferent to us (i.e. food, property, wealth, etc), we are able to contribute peacefully to the welfare of our own wellbeing and that of others without succumbing to our vices, Brennan explains.

Thus, contributing to the common good is not a selfless act but rather a *selfish* one which is deemed beneficial to us, due to our ultimate intention to live virtuously, which then in turn contributes to the common good of human kind (Hadot, 2001). Epictetus (1995) implored us to concentrate on creating our "own merit" based upon our duty to contribute, regardless of "who is watching" (p. 12) acknowledging that "we each have our own special calling" (p. 65) and that we must intentionally decide what demeanour we want to adopt and to maintain this regardless of who we might be around (p. 50). Further, "Rational beings … have the opportunity to attain a good of their own in the perfection of their reason even as they continue to participate in the goodness of the cosmos" so as not to disturb the natural flow of things through a lack of practical wisdom (Graver, 2007, p. 51). A contribution to the common good, therefore, from a Stoic perspective is through self- respect, awareness, mastery, preservation, transcendence, transformation, control, discipline, and examination (Epictetus, 1995; Graver, 2007; Hadot, 1995, 2001, 2002; Jedan, 2009; Morris, 2004; Pigliucci, 2017; Robertson, 2018; Seneca, 2011); ultimately through 'care of self'. The results of the survey indicating that respondents were primarily motivated to practice Stoicism for the purpose of personal growth and development, previously shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, is therein supported by the Stoic doctrine.

Robertson (2018) further clarified this point of self-interest in the common good by stating that, "According to the Stoics, 'natural affection' towards others … forms an integral part of our own supreme Happiness and fulfilment [*eudaimonia*] in life, and our self-interest is synonymous with altruism or a *qualified* interest in the welfare of others" (p. 34; original emphasis). Essentially, Stoic philosophy encourages us to consider everything in the universe

as being interdependent (Morris, 2004); relational interdependence is what characterizes the 'cosmos'. This principle naturally finds expression in human relationships. Being able to not only assist one's self through challenging times but to be able to offer sage guidance and practical means for others to navigate their own challenges was brought to the fore on more than one occasion by those who shared their experiences with me. Critical to this interpretation is an understanding that one must first come to a place themselves from which they are able to assist others.

Seneca (2017) wrote, the "best evidence of a bad character is variability and constant shifting between pretense of virtues and love of vices" (p. 483). A desire to be actively involved in their own lives and to make a contribution to the people in their lives emerged time and again as a key component of the devotion felt to Stoic practice by participants of this study. As one interviewee and former refugee stated, "it's about being a good person and having the qualities of a good person"; this sentiment was expressed in different ways by many interviewees in so far as their desire to enact the values and character of a 'good person'. This state of being was often engaged with in terms of consistent practice of the principles, acknowledging our place as part of a much greater whole (*physics*), and the regulation of our responses (*logic*). The demeanour of interviewees as they expressed their desire to *be* Stoic in this regard was that of humility in their expression of how they chose to embody Stoic philosophy. There was a distinct lack of self-importance among the stories shared by those practicing the principles. The focus for them was on what Stoicism meant within their lives but with the sense of how they fit within the greater whole through universality, as is taught through the principle of *physics*.

With a strong inclination toward the values of Christianity, applying Stoicism might have seemed an odd approach to adopt as a pastor but that was exactly what one interviewee had done. As she helped people to deal with the big life events, such as births and deaths, she found the Stoic principles resonated with her faith and her natural tendency toward contributing to the common good through changing her approach so as to help herself and others through their journeys, as evident in her following comment.

> I think one of the things that I used very consistently is the common good, and I think that is a thread of Stoic philosophy … that would be something that I do preach on [to my congregation] in various ways … Being more selfless, what's good for all … that's, I think, a pretty solid message.

She saw Stoic philosophy as a way of *being* rather than merely an application of techniques; a disposition which resonated with what we know of the ontological grounding of Stoicism. Despite only finding Stoic philosophy six months prior to the interview with me, this pastor had found the core of it almost immediately without even realising that was what she had done. Perhaps this direct association for her to a way of being was due to the practice of her faith leading up to finding Stoicism, an ironic reversal of history.

Being able to contemplate what contributions to make allowed for the creation of a culture that was considered rather than reactive and exemplifying Stoicism was viewed as a way of perhaps changing people's perspectives on things that might alleviate their own suffering and gain greater focus on the work that needed to be done. As the artist interviewee expressed as she shared an experience of processing a moment of fear,

> I had this panic came over me and I talked myself down recognizing that I wasn't really there to make money. It was about virtue. … what I was there for was to promote beauty in the world and to let people know about my enthusiasm, about making my art. And when I realized that was my purpose, instead of making the money, I was at peace.

Creating a culture of doing a job well and reconciling the work we do as our duty to the common good is an important potential contribution the Stoic values may represent within workplaces which have largely become engulfed in processes and systems designed to 'tell' people how to do their jobs and how to 'climb the corporate ladder'. Seneca (2011) would encourage us instead to see the value in our contribution through exchanges of 'gifts' that serve to strengthen our community rather than focusing on outcomes that merely serve ourselves.

The geologist interviewee stated that the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy was the only way he was able to cope with the work dynamics he was facing at the time of the interview. This interviewee had worked in France, Canada, Asia, Africa and the UK where he had taken great pride in undertaking projects in Algeria, North Africa, for example, which required him to work in a confined area for twenty-eight days at a time with the same people, seven days a week, twelve hours a day. The systematic practice of Stoic philosophy allowed this geologist to work more effectively, in his view, with different cultures by being able to view happenings with greater indifference and detachment than imposing his own views on these people; thus, engaging with the principles of *physics* and *ethics*. At the time of the interview, this interviewee was facing being let go from his role due to organisational changes for the third time from the same company. He reflected on his

experience after the last time he left that company and ended up being a French teacher in Canada, due to his French upbringing. Applying the principles of Stoic philosophy allowed him to focus on the present moment and the experiences he could have and contributions he could make to any situation rather than on the egotistical conflicts that might have emerged should he have chosen to engage with these.

Experiencing a shift from being a geologist for a large oil and gas firm operating in Algeria to a preschool French teacher in Canada was experienced favourably due to this interviewee's ability to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy through a digression from the ego driven response many might have to such changes in circumstances and instead focusing on his duty to the common good. Upon returning to the oil and gas company, once again this interviewee was faced with his ego as he adapted to a change in culture and behavioural expectations from his previous experiences with the organisation. In dealing with a boss who was much younger and less qualified than he saw himself to be, he practiced separation from his ego so as to recognise the contributions to the common good each of them made, himself included.

Facing change in their lives and workplaces, particularly under the health and economic circumstances at the time of writing this thesis as our global society dealt with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, was seen by the geologist interviewee, and others interviewed for this study, as where the principles of Stoic philosophy should become an advantage to those practicing, allowing practitioners to better cope with the changes they were facing and would face in the future. Stoic philosophy was seen as a way to 'anchor' our character and cultivate equanimity through challenging and changing circumstances. Interviewees spoke of creating a

culture of awareness of the place of our own and others contributions rather than a continuous exercise in egocentric competitiveness.

Creating a culture of awareness of and responsibility for your own actions was something the IT consultant interviewee saw as a way to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy within our workplaces. Having worked in large corporations and then in a smaller private consultancy he shared how he viewed the multi-level structures of large organisations as creating culture that lacked personal responsibility. He stated,

> [T]he flatter [hierarchical structure] is better and trusting people to be accountable and responsible for their role and work together as teams. And when there [are] issues, not [being] afraid to bring them up and where there [are] assumptions, call them out. You know, let's not judge people. Let's understand and let them speak. Right. And don't make too many judgments before you understand what … they're trying to get across, their intentions. You know, a lot of us don't sit and pause about 'why were they trying to do that?'. I didn't like that. But. You know, … I can't control it, but I can control [how] I react to it. But what … were their intentions? They were probably good. Let me talk to that person, you know, and just have a dialogue around this and ask what they were looking to do or what their intentions really were. But in the corporate world, with all the layers, I found it [to be] too complex. Unreliable communication … it's just changed so much. … There [are] better ways to run a corporation or to run a small business with these principles.

Moving from a large organisation to working in a smaller firm allowed this interviewee to reflect on the different dynamics he was experiencing where personal responsibility allowed for greater flexibility within the company to respond to client needs as well as a sense of being able to bring your own 'self' to work through improved openness and sharing of insights.

A culture of accountability and dialogue, in this interviewee's view, allowed for challenges and changes to be dealt with and responded to more easily, as he expressed how well each member of the team worked together using an approach of focusing on the contribution each individual made to the common good of each project, and to the firm as a whole. Being able to appreciate the contributions and approaches each member of the team brought to the projects gave this interviewee the framework to be able to sit more patiently with the challenges that arose and to allow the situations to evolve rather than feeling the need to control the outcomes or create tensions through initiating difficult conversations that would make the process more "rough", as he put it. He instead worked to adopt a more curious openness of dialogue on what the intentions of others were, rather than jumping to judgement and action. "It's having more dialogue … and then sometimes it's just staying with the challenge", he stated as he recollected his experiences.

A sense of duty to the common good was also evident in my interview with the private investigator. As with the other interviewees in this study, this interviewee not only focused on how the principles could assist him in his work and life generally but offered the practice as a way to assist those he was interviewing for investigations, including people who may have committed or witnessed heinous crimes. He used the Stoic understanding that everything is transient and perpetually in a process of changing (*physics*) to help the suspects and witnesses

he interviewed to see that the interaction and discomfort they were having in that moment would pass and that it was just a moment. The idea of an intense interview created through harsh interrogation was quickly dissolved listening to this private investigator explaining his approach. Instead, I was left with a sense of his ability to create a calm environment where people felt comfortable sharing what they knew or had seen as a proclamation of their duty and of his duty to unearth information that would serve the common good.

Creating this non-judgemental culture of acceptance and patience was a dominant feature that emerged throughout the interviewee experiences which extended to their interactions with others and themselves. Becoming more patient with themselves as they continued to practice the principles emerged as being just as important as being patient with others. A few interviewees mentioned that they felt more mature in themselves when they were able to manage their inner turmoil better and respond appropriately to situations through greater awareness of the contributions they were making. The pastor expressed her desire to continue to develop a calmer demeanour so that she was better able to help others, a sentiment expressed by the other interviewees as they shared their experiences from their relative stages of development in their Stoic practices. Interviewees appreciated having a tangible and clear approach to communicate with others as they attempted to provide some assistance to the people they were interacting with.

As the artist interviewee expressed, in her time as a recovering drug and alcohol user and now as a sponsor for others, she was better able to see her contribution to the common good through allowing herself and others to take responsibility for their own recovery. Trying to control others created a culture of taking responsibility for their actions which she learned

was not serving herself or them. In terms of a workplace environment culture, this is extremely powerful concept to consider in the sense that if everyone were to take responsibility for what they contribute to the culture, there may be less blame and creation of destructive cultures within workplaces. As stated previously, this artist used the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy to go from being highly sensitive to the outbursts of others in the workplace and in AA meetings to being able to accept their outbursts as their own responsibility and not something she needed to take personally or try to fix. “I’m not the one who’s getting them clean and sober”, she stated, “because that’s not in my power”.

Creating a culture whereby there was an awareness and acceptance of how different people approached their work made a profound impact on the US navy senior official’s experience of his workplace as well. He was no longer trying to control everyone and getting frustrated with the outcomes; instead, he was focused on how to get the jobs and projects done through working with how others approached their work. As he stated, “living in accordance with nature and accepting the natures of other people instead of trying to drag people along” became this interviewee’s approach to his workplace as he adopted the Stoic principles. As a “very good practice for life”, in this interviewee’s mind, the integration of work and other areas of our lives was important as he went as far as saying that he thought it would be best for people to start implementing it first in their life generally before trying to apply it within the workplace so that it didn’t come across as “gimmicky or just another leadership approach”.

This ‘life’ approach was seen as important by other interviewees as well as they melded their personal and professional experiences. The mental health nurse interviewee regularly reminded himself of the Stoic virtues and to do what was right for people and being able to

stand up for people's rights in his job, even when it was a difficult thing to do. It is easy to fall into "doing what is right for the system", as he put it, rather than what is right for the person; "what is fair" was important to this mental health nurse practicing within a national health system.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to have severe impact in this interviewee's country around the time of the interview, he saw the practice of Stoicism as critical to how people could navigate themselves through this crisis and how he would be able to manage his own fears and anxieties of being deployed into potentially quite scary situations, he expressed. Heartedly, from his perspective he saw how the, for lack of a better term on my part, inclusiveness of this pandemic had actually improved some people's mental health as they felt they were a part of something together with others. Individual problems had become less important to some of his patients as they saw how everyone had to come together to deal with what was happening and that, in the bigger picture, their small problems didn't matter and wouldn't matter in the long-term.

The high school music teacher interviewee used negative visualisation, as did other interviewees, to assess what could go wrong and prepared himself, his colleagues and students mentally so that they were better able to deal with scenarios, should they arise, acknowledging that 'something' will inevitably change. This allowed him to process his feelings of panic, when the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic hit and they were all faced with both personal and workplace disruptions, and was able to take the appropriate actions that prepared him for what they might have to face in the weeks and months following the initial outbreak. The economic impact on schools from government funding reductions added to the challenges

faced by this professional and his colleagues as he pointed out that the arts were often seen as where funding cuts could be made. Being able to consider various scenarios that he may face and working through solutions gave him the awareness to accept what might come, having developed the mental capacity to adjust quickly to which ever scenario might eventuate. Stepping back and being able to consider "what is best for the students and not what do I wish was happening for me right now" is how this music teacher explained what I have interpreted as his application of the principles of *logic, ethics and physics,* to gain a better sense of the common good.

This interviewee, through his practice of Stoic philosophy, showed a great sense of how he could contribute his knowledge and musical skills in a variety of ways, whether that be within the school system or in a different context; showing his understanding of his contribution to the whole rather than forming an attachment to any particular scenario or outcome. In workplaces, this is a very powerful concept as we tend to form attachments to our positions and are often attached to our positions in the eyes of those we work with rather than taking a broader perspective of how each individual might contribute their skills, knowledge and experiences to the greater whole of the organisation or society, as it were.

This sense of duty to the common good provided the global security and intelligence analyst interviewee, who was also managing ADHD without medication, with the guidance and framework he needed to focus and make a valuable contribution to his family, those around him and to the job he enjoyed. He said that applying the principles to improve his performance and operating capacity through greater consistency of practicing Stoicism provided him with the tools he needed to function effectively in the workplace and socially. The practice of

Stoicism aligned with this interviewee's nature which he shared as encompassing kindness, doing the right thing, family values and social justice; so, it was easily adopted as his main philosophical approach in life. With a Pakistani upbringing, this interviewee expressed a natural tendency toward community mindedness and family values and responsibilities. Living in the United States at the time of the interview, the individualist culture that prevailed in that country was at odds with the Pakistani culture he had grown up with, proving a challenge for this interviewee as he navigated his feelings and desires between the two cultures; ultimately choosing the path of 'doing what is right' for the common good in line with his own values.

The interviewees in this study portrayed a sense of duty as a contribution to the common good which naturally flowed into a desire for many to share their experiences and knowledge with others. The next section highlights the contributions some chose to make in so far as assisting others on their own journey, through the provision of guidance using the principles of Stoic philosophy as their guide. Providing guidance emerged throughout the previous analyses of the interviewees' experiences and, as such, this section is more of a summation of this theme rather than a reiteration of what has already been stated.

Providing Guidance

> [I]t is a virtue to give benefits that are not guaranteed to be repaid in the future, benefits whose returns are felt immediately by a donor of real excellence … the benefit is the intention of the giver. (Seneca, 2011, p. 19 & 23)

In the context of the principle of *ethics*, there is the natural inclination within the practice of Stoic philosophy to be of assistance to others through displaying virtuous character ourselves and offering guidance to others (Morris, 2004). Building on the results that emerged from the survey whereby the principle of *ethics* was the most dominant principle applied in scenarios that required the greatest interactions with others, the interviewees in this study also shared their experiences with improving team dynamics and their own performance/productivity through greater awareness of how to approach communication and interaction with others. Interviewees were not solely focusing on how they were performing within their roles but also on ensuring they were helping others to do the best possible job they could do as well. Here, I have interpreted these tendencies as intentional contributions to the common good, whereby I am considering the application of the principle of *ethics*, and the other two principles, as a *choice* which practitioners engage with willingly to provide guidance to others.

This sense of duty in those practicing Stoic philosophy to help others resonated among many of the interviewees who shared their insights for this study. An enthusiasm emerged in interviewees' voices and expressions when they shared their experiences with helping others using the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy to guide their discussions. From the perspective of the global security and intelligence analyst interviewee, he stated,

> I love to share with other people because I see people struggling. … you know, we live in a culture where this psychiatric agenda has created … this culture of 'syndrome-izing' everything; everything is a syndrome. Making an environmental problem into a biological problem. … maybe you just change … the environment. Maybe the person

> needs friendship, love, you know, socializing. So loneliness is a big problem. So I spread Stoicism … because maybe … the person's problem is only a change of perspective on things. … So I shared this philosophy with other people and then … a couple of friends I know that adopted it, and yes, they came back to me and said 'thank you for sharing this with us'. It might not solve all the problems they have, but at least it gives them some edge. You know, maybe you take a combination of medication plus this or maybe just that [change of perspective is enough for some].

Stoic philosophy applied to the mental wellbeing of refugee children arriving in Denmark, to friends going through divorce, colleagues struggling to find the confidence to present their knowledge to their superiors, recovering drug and alcohol addicts and homicide witnesses were among those helped by the interviewees who had shared their understandings of the application of the principles with others. Helping colleagues and staff in military construction and commercial lighting sales environments alike to solve problems through the dichotomy of control so as to focus on the problems they could address were examples of how the principle of *physics* was applied in this way.

To assist refugee children through his work with the Red Cross, one interviewee stated that he, "began to look back to [his Stoic] studies … to find a way or a method to get into these young people's mind and see if [he] could help motivate and inspire them". He went on to say,

> [If] I meet someone with anxiety, I would … somehow use Epictetus and talking about the dichotomy of control and to make them realize, what is reality and what is self-conception.

Stoic philosophy was also found to be a way that the high school music teacher interviewee was able to manage conflicting demands on his students' attention especially as the COVID-19 pandemic created further opportunity for this music teacher to apply the principle of *physics* with his students by advising them that none of them had any control over whether they returned to school the term following the school shut-down which occurred in March 2020 or if they were not to return until the following school year. What they did control, he explained to his students, was their memories of having had a great festival experience earlier in the year and how they choose to spend their time during the lock down. Interestingly, this interviewee saw his Stoic practice as being even more useful in his interactions with his teaching colleagues. His experience with getting "caught in that downward spiral" of feeling out of control and being able to pull himself out of it through the practice of Stoic philosophy gave him the tools to assist his colleagues as they found themselves struggling with the pandemic, in particular, but also within the daily correspondence and activities of a school workplace environment.

This teacher felt his own leadership capabilities emerge as he practiced the principles of Stoic philosophy to guide himself and his colleagues and students through the radically different workplace situations they found themselves in through the initial stages of the pandemic, despite not expressing to me that his position within the school system was a 'leadership position' as such. Helping people work through their feelings of wanting to control others and the situations they were facing so that they could gain a sense of their own contribution was shared by this interviewee as something he felt he was able to do through his own experiences with practicing Stoicism. He shared openly that his profession often felt like

one that “tends to crush spirits easily” and that coming to know Stoic practice had helped him to develop a more useful perspective that was beneficial to his own wellbeing. Like other interviewees, this music teacher saw his role in assisting others through the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy as something he took seriously and wanted to continue so as to help others experience the benefits he had experienced. Much like the pastor I interviewed, this teacher may also have had a personal tendency toward this sense of duty and community mindedness which Stoic philosophy provided some authentication for. A similar sense of duty to others emerged in my interview with the military interviewee with experience in active duty and corporate workplace environments who used negative visualisation in discussions with others who were facing challenges in their own lives to help them gain some perspective on their situations.

As the interviewee working on large military environmental construction projects articulated, “I'm grabbing onto these principles as a means to … help me dissect … whatever issues or items my staff have” so as to advise them on how to best approach their own work and contribute to the projects as a whole. This sentiment was also expressed by the corporate DIY buying manager in a manner that displayed a keen sense of wanting to further people’s understanding of the practical applications of the Stoic principles in the workplace beyond self-interest. He said,

> [It’s] trying to get people to actually spend the time to really find out about themselves and [ensuring I do] not just become that person who runs around kind of sprouting quotes. … The value of this and to pitch [it] in the right way … so it opens people's

> minds … and in a time when we're just being fed the next dopamine hit, man that would be powerful.

Where for many interviewees, the choice to provide guidance to others was a choice in itself on their part, for others, such as the mental health nurse, their professions entailed the provision of guidance which, as he stated through the following quote, he chose to do so from a Stoic perspective.

> The people I work with [are] on the more mild to moderate mental health problems, so they're not … serious mental health problems and they're generally kind of working and getting on with their lives. It's just [that] they're struggling maybe with anxiety or depression, emotional kind of disregulation as well, and helping people manage that, you know. And it's always useful, I think, to give people advice for things that have worked to my own life, … you know, it's always better to say [rather than] 'here's the thing I read in a book, why do you try it?' … more like, well, 'this has worked for me, why don't you try it yourself?'.

Thus, the provision of guidance resonated with and was expressed in different ways by interviewees but all were aligned with an intention to contributed to the common good.

Summary of Applying the Principle of *Ethics*

In this chapter, I explored the application of the Stoic principle of *ethics* with regard to the dominant themes that emerged from the data I collected in this study, those being 'the common good' and 'providing guidance'. The sense of duty that emerged through the insights shared by study participants was evident as they progressed their understanding of how they contributed to the world beyond themselves. A deep calmness and confident intention among the interviewees were displayed when they shared their experiences in reflective and insightful ways. Through an acceptance of their place in the world (*physics*), they were better able to regulate their responses to their environments through the development of wisdom (*logic*) which led to a greater awareness of the contributions they could make to the common good (*ethics*).

The ability and desire for the provision of guidance to others through participants' own experiences and knowledge has permeated through the Stoic practice from the time it was first founded by Zeno over two thousand years ago as a philosophy that had virtuous intent at its very core. Stoic philosophy diverged from many of the other dominant philosophies of the time in this regard as the others focused on one's own satisfaction, pleasure and intellect while the Stoics focused on *polis* and *eudaimonia* (Brennan, 2010; Hadot, 2002; Pigliucci, 2017). Through my interpretations of the themes of 'the common good' and 'providing guidance' to others, it was evident that the practitioners of Stoicism I interviewed were deeply drawn to its virtuous ontology. In the next chapter, I consolidate the epistemological interpretations of the study participant experiences with their applications of the Stoic principles described through these previous three chapters in order to articulate the ontological way of being Stoic that emerges from this practice.

Chapter 9: Enacting Stoic Virtue in the Workplace

The doctrine of Stoic philosophy is that of virtuous intent, which has received minor attention in my interpretations to this point as I have focussed on the practical application of the epistemology of Stoic philosophy in the previous three chapters. The experiences and insights shared by interviewees and survey respondents allowed me to represent the findings of this study from the perspective of all five of my study objectives and to address my research question as to how the principles are being applied and to what effect. In order to deepen the analysis of Stoic philosophy practices, however, I will now investigate further the underlying *intent* of this philosophy 'to live a life of virtue in accordance with nature'. In this chapter, I focus squarely on the ontological grounding and reasoning of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy within our workplaces through consideration of the intent of practitioners.

In the previous three chapters, I undertook a deductive interpretive process of exploring the themes that emerged from my inductive analysis of the interview and survey data for the purposes of positioning these themes into my *a priori* framework of the principles of Stoic philosophy (see Figure 7). As I highlighted through the interpretations presented in previous chapters, this is not a straightforward comparative analysis of themes that fit neatly into each of the principle concepts. Each principle, and in turn each theme, is interconnected fluidly throughout the practice of Stoic philosophy, in the manner of which it was always intended to be practiced. My interpretations of participants' experiences as these related to Stoic epistemology provided the basis for further interpretation of the study results as these relate to the Stoic ontology of living a life of virtue in accordance with nature; thus, how the epistemological enactment of the principles of Stoic philosophy expresses, if you will, the intent to live a life of virtue.

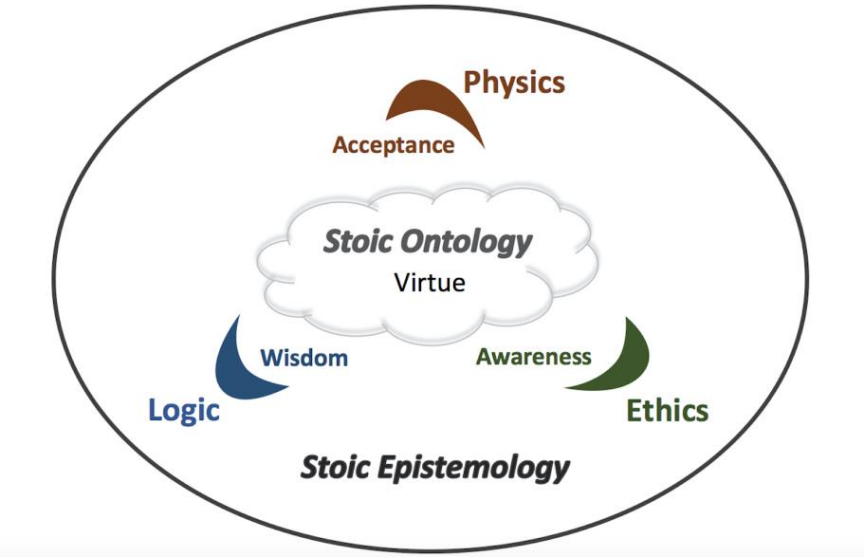


Figure 7: A framework for the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace

To summarise my interpretative analysis, I began with how the main themes of the 'dichotomy of control' and Stoicism as a 'practice' set within the principle of *physics* were displayed by study participants through an acceptance of their place in a much larger whole. I then progressed my analysis into an exploration of the principle of *logic* with regard to the themes of 'emotional regulation' and how this contributed to 'decision-making' capabilities through the development of wisdom. Finally, I explored the principle of *ethics* as I delved into a greater awareness by participants of their role in contributing to 'the common good' and 'providing guidance' to others. As previously expressed, in outlining the results of the survey responses and interviews, emotional regulation transcended the other themes and was therefore depicted as a key element of how study participants enacted their practice of Stoicism. We might view emotional regulation as the action or product of the principles and themes contemplated prior to practitioners taking action.

Throughout this thesis, I have made reference to the sentiment expressed by others, such as Hadot, that philosophy should be viewed as a 'way of life'. According to Stoic practice, that way of life should be directed toward living virtuously. Thus, it is the act of living in a virtuous way which invokes the practical application of the Stoic principles, else the philosophy would be merely a theoretical construct for consideration. As expressed by the Red Cross worker interviewee who counselled refugee children, "this is not for fun, this is a true living philosophy".

The reference by the Stoics to 'Nature' in so far as acting in accordance to what occurs by nature forms an important element to living virtuously. The practice of the principles provides a framework for enacting Stoic virtue through intent, not desired outcomes. We are not in control of the outcomes so instead must focus our attention on our intentions and adapt to the changes which come about by the natural flow of things (Aurelius, 2003; Hadot, 2001). This fostering of adaptability while maintaining virtuous intent through changing circumstances is an imperative within contemporary workplaces which are undergoing continual change.

How the interviewees in this study came to understand Stoic philosophy varied with regard to their individual life experiences but, without exception, they had all recognised the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy as having profound impact on their lives and workplace experiences. Being able to apply the Stoic principles in the workplace allowed practitioners to portray a level of professionalism that, from their perspective, emboldened trust among clients and colleagues alike through enacting their roles with a calm demeanour and clarity of thought. Some saw themselves being able to create 'strong teams' through the

confidence these principles allowed them to impress upon their staff while encouraging the development of confidence and character of each member of the team.

There emerged a strong sense of duty among participants recognising the importance of their contribution to the whole rather than an entitlement to receive. Indeed, I did not note one instance of where an interviewee or survey respondent portrayed a sense of entitlement; only a keen sense of how they could improve their way of being in the world. This was a powerful result of Stoic practice as many study participants applied the principles to progress from feelings of disappointment or victimisation to a place of acceptance, wisdom and awareness. As the interviewee working as a corporate global security and intelligence analyst stated,

> … you know, focus, give a hundred percent because, … again, it ties to philosophy that Aristotle, he said, what is a virtuous life? He said something like that, when you come home and lie in bed, your body's aching, but you are satisfied because you knew that you gave a hundred percent. That is living a virtuous life. So, I want to make sure that… I want my conscience; my conscience is very strong. If I'm slacking off, then I know … it bothers me. And the satisfaction is there when I do my work properly that I know I've done my job. So, I want to do that every day.

What is intriguing about their stories is that each professional in this study had found Stoic philosophy of their own accord as they looked for something more useful than mainstream approaches. Many stated that they wished they had known about it earlier as this "philosophy of life", as many also referred to it, resonated with them so readily and that they

were often confronted with misinterpretations of what Stoicism was. The white, Anglo-Saxon male image of this philosophy was raised by some interviewees as an unfortunate limitation attached to the applicability of the practicing of these principles by a much broader demographic. The sense of being a small part of history while also feeling a part of something that has stood the test of time for over two thousand years, gave many of the interviewees a sense of collectiveness and community.

Being connected to the history of Stoic philosophy and understanding how it has been applied, contemplated and expressed through various historical periods was something some interviewees found comforting as they continued to practice the principles within their own lives, perhaps seeing their contribution as part of the historical context of this philosophy. Despite consensus among interviewees that the Stoic principles were valuable within workplaces, many interviewees expressed the need to not limit the application of Stoic philosophy to the workplace or any other specific environment as it is intended to be applied throughout our lives holistically. There was also comfort expressed in knowing of others experiences and interest in the philosophy. Feelings of being a part of something that validated their own interests and helped them to progress their own practice were valued among participants of this study.

This way of *being* a part of Stoicism is explored more thoroughly through the following sections whereby I consider how the application of the Stoic principles contributed to enacting virtue in the workplace before progressing into a deeper exploration of how the study participants' applications of the Stoic principles aligned specifically with the Stoic virtues of temperance, courage, practical wisdom and justice.

Virtue in the Workplace

Stoic philosophy transcends status, wealth and position in our societies as the practice places value upon our character and virtue (Pigliucci, 2017), making it an ideal practice for consideration as an alternative to current workplace sentiments and dynamics. If we were to take a Socratic approach to exploring our current state of workplaces, we might find that through a relatively superficial interrogation of the systems, processes and models applied, we have been sorely misguided in our understanding of the human elements of organisations. While philosophy has been largely shunned in our contemporary workplaces as impractical, the quest for practicality has resulted in approaches which are overly systematic and do not appear to be resulting in improvements of how our organisations are performing or able to adapt to changing circumstances. Prefabricated checklists of traits, skills and competencies, for example, have merely proven that individualism serves the individual; providing little comfort that we are making any real headway in creating organisations that truly function as an *organisation* should, in so far as all parts being required to work in a synchronised fashion for the whole to work.

Taking inspiration from Hadot (2002), we might usefully turn our attention to who we *are* rather than what we have or position we hold to develop greater awareness of the contributions we all make instead of focusing on 'leadership' strategies for influencing or, indeed manipulating, circumstances to suit one's own purposes which are often veiled with dialogue suggesting actions are in the best interests of the organisation. Leadership as a concept is so often associated with position, authority or status that even when authors express it in

terms of a phenomenon or other alternative expression of the term, readers will inevitably find their association with the term remaining as the preconceived notion flouted in our society. Leadership and philosophy alike are difficult concepts to express in terms of dialogue, written or verbal, as they are phenomenological *experiences* more so than concepts that can be clearly articulated.

As such, through the findings of this study I have aimed to create a sense of the workplace as that of participants' contribution to the whole and their interactions with those around them through the practice of the principles of Stoic philosophy, rather than an explicit link to 'leadership' in its normative form. Ultimately, however, I accept that my attempt to explore a Stoic approach in workplaces will only transcend current thinking as far as readers are prepared to experience Stoic philosophy for themselves. As stated by Hadot (2002) in expressing Aristotle and Plato's approaches to 'forming' rather than 'informing' their disciples,

> [to] understand discourse, the auditor must first have had some experience with what the discourse is about, and some degree of familiarity with its object…We must have lengthy experience with things in order to know them, and to familiarize ourselves with the general laws of nature, as well as with the processes and rational necessities of the intellect. Without this personal effort, the auditor cannot assimilate discourse; it will remain useless to him [*sic*] … This is even more the case in the area of practice, where it is a matter not of knowing things but of practicing and exercising virtue. Philosophical discourse is not enough to make a person virtuous. (pp. 88-89)

In this thesis, I hope to have re-engaged our explorative nature as we progress our understanding of the potential application of Stoic philosophy in our workplaces through true exploration, continually seeking to gain wisdom through our experiences, aligning ourselves with a *life* of virtue. While the focus of Stoic philosophy is developing greater wisdom through our experiences (*logic*), this is from the perspective of an awareness of our contribution (*ethics*) and acceptance of our place in the larger whole (*physics*). Thus, I contribute, through my thesis, to recent efforts aimed at breaking down the individualistic, heroic position-based approach to leadership in favour of exploring unique contributions within the workplace more broadly enacted through virtuous intent.

If according to Alcibiades, the contribution of Socrates was unclassifiable, *atopos,* and Socrates demanded self-discovery from those he conversed with (Hadot, 2002), I see it as reasonable to suggest in the context of this thesis that instead of placing importance on classifying each other, we should embrace each other's contributions as we grow and evolve. As Hadot (2002, p. 32) stated in his assessment of Socrates' approach, "caring for ourselves and questioning ourselves occur only when our individuality is transcended and we rise to the level of universality". Thus, if we apply this reasoning to the application of the Stoic principles within our workplaces, the principle of *physics* conjures a greater sense of our place in the greater whole, *logic* provides us with a process for assessing how our contributions might be improved through wisdom applied to consciousness of our actions and *ethics* enables an awareness of how our contributions interact with those of others.

As the interviewee who managed his ADHD daily while undertaking his role as a corporate security and intelligence analyst conveyed, there is power within the practice of

Stoicism in so far as not showing off your own knowledge but rather taking the stance of ignorance so as to better understand another's perspectives. His practice of Stoicism helped him to stay focused on the tasks he needed to do and to remain humble in his knowledge. These approaches to Stoic practice highlighted the potential benefits of wider engagement with the principles within workplaces, particularly with regard to our interactions with others.

There is no need in applying this approach to spend time contemplating what 'type' of person we are, as attention is directed instead toward the virtue of our actions through practical contributions; herein exposing the irony of Stoic philosophy being wrongly interpreted as impractical. This in no way diverts us from the importance of *how* we are, as opposed to what we are; how we are relates to how we choose to *be*, ontologically, rather than with what superficial characteristics we choose to define ourselves. As quoted by Hadot (2002), Plutarch commented on Socrates as being "the first to show that at all times and in every place, in everything that happens to us, daily life gives us the opportunity to do philosophy" (p 38). Through this perspective, I am able to unite the parts of the Stoic framework introduced through my thesis into a core *virtuous* way of being, and by extension, a new ontology within the workplace.

In the time of Socrates, "Above all, philosophy was viewed as an exercise of wisdom, and therefore as the practice of a way of life" (Hadot, 2002, p. 49); "we must deal with things as they are, and act appropriately" (Hadot, 2002, p. 67). Being humble in pursuit of wisdom was something that came through strongly with the interviewees as they adopted Stoic philosophy as a *practice*, as it was intended to be, wherein the philosopher knows that they do not know (Hadot, 2002). A description given by one of Plato's contemporaries, Isocrates, stated

that philosophy "has become a means of training for life which transforms human relationships and arms us against adversity" (Hadot, 2002, p. 50). This, in Isocrates' view, was the difference between knowledge (*epistemē*), or know-how, and practical wisdom (*sophia*) as can be applied to any situation one might be presented with.

The Intention to Live a Life of Virtue

Pigliucci (2017) stated that "there are three sources of virtue: some comes from our natural endowment, some is obtained by habit, especially early in life, and some can be acquired intellectually and therefore can be taught" (p 130). Critical to our understanding of the Stoics interpretation of virtue is the comprehension that a non-sage is never considered virtuous regardless of how aligned they are with the Stoic doctrine; we are all merely considered to be in a continual process of developing virtue and attempting to live a life of virtue (Brennan, 2010). Therefore, it is the *intention* to 'live a life of virtue' that is of importance. This intention is then enacted through our "beliefs, actions, and affective responses … all capable of being evaluated not only in relation to universal reason but also in relation to [our] own harmonious or inharmonious system of belief" (Graver, 2007, p. 50).

In chapter 2, I introduced a table which is again presented here in Table 9 below as a summary of the ethical virtues that can be used to assess one's virtuous intentions. I have expanded the previous table to depict the relationships I have developed in this thesis between the Stoic principles and the specific virtuous actions as suggested by the Stoics. Pigliucci (2017) formed a similar view to that which I have used in this thesis of how the principles of Stoic philosophy relate to the Stoic virtues of temperance, courage, justice and practical

wisdom; *physics* relating to temperance and courage (acceptance), *ethics* to justice (awareness) and *logic* to practical wisdom (wisdom). While the alignments of principles to virtues by necessity are fluid in so far as being able to articulate the virtues in terms of more than one principle, it was useful to construct some alignments so as to better enable a determination of how the application of each principle might be construed as virtuous intent. Strictly speaking, the virtues presented in the table were aligned with the principle of *ethics* as these are what remain available from the Stoic teachings after much was destroyed or lost; however, to attribute these virtues to the other principles as well is consistent with the interconnectedness of the application of the principles. Thus, I have intentionally avoided an oversimplification of the enactment of virtue through the application of any one Stoic principle alone.

Table 9: Secondary virtues relating to the primary ethical Stoic virtues. (Jedan, 2009, p. 82 adapted)

Stoic Principle	**Primary Virtue**	**Secondary Virtues**	**Descriptions**
Logic	Practical Wisdom *Appropriate actions & what should be done*	Good judgement	What we can do and how we can act advantageously
		Good practical overview	Balances and sums up what is happening and what is performed
		Quick moral sense	Finds the appropriate action at the moment
		Discretion	What is worse and better
		Shrewdness	Able to achieve the aim in every case
		Inventiveness in difficulties	Able to find a way out of difficulties
Physics	Temperance *The quality of our impulses*	Good ordering	When something should be done, and what after what, and in general about the order of actions

		Propriety	Seemly and unseemly behaviour
		Sense of Honour	Careful to avoid just blame
		Self-control	Not transgressing the bounds of what appears to be correct according to right judgement
Physics	Courage *Endurance*	Perseverance	Sticking to what has been judged correctly
		Confidence	According to which we know that we do not fall prey to anything terrible
		Magnanimity	Makes one be above those things whose nature it is to happen to good and bad persons alike
		Mental Stoutness	The soul that represents it to itself as unconquerable
		Industry	Able to accomplish what is due to be dealt with, undeterred by trouble or pain
Ethics	Justice *Distributions*	Piety	Of service to the gods
		Kindness	Doing good
		Sociability	Equality in social intercourse
		Blameless companionship	Socialising blamelessly with one's neighbours

Aristotle and Plato saw the way to develop virtue was to create environments which allowed others the opportunity to engage with virtuous actions (Aristotle, 2006; Hadot, 2002). Thus, it was not seen as useful to prescribe virtue through discursive dialogue but rather to inspire discourse, and indeed debate, that emerged from experience. In the following sections, I explore how participants of this study expressed their intention to develop, as I interpreted their experiences, the virtues of temperance, courage, wisdom and justice through the application of the Stoic principles of *physics*, *logic* and *ethics*, respectively.

Temperance and Courage - Physics

As shown in Table 9 above, I have related the virtues of temperance and courage to the Stoic principle of *physics*. This was done by means of assessing the nature of the principle of *physics* as that of acceptance of where we fit within the larger whole and learning to temper how we choose to engage with our environment and, by extension, showing the courage to act according to this judgement. While I have chosen to present the virtue of courage as being aligned with the principle of *physics*, it is easy to see how this virtue, in particular, could also be aligned with any of the Stoic principles. I state this to reiterate my intention to avoid oversimplifying my analysis of what is a complex, real-life practice with infinite variability. In this section I focus on how participants intentionally engaged with the virtues of temperance and courage in their workplaces, specifically through an acceptance of their place within the larger whole.

The judgement involved with temperance and then courage can be related back to the 'dichotomy of control' and 'practice' themes that emerged from the data as I determined these as applications of the principle of *physics*. Determining what is within and outside of our control requires an initial judgement followed by tempered action, or indeed inaction, and the courage to 'practice' what we have deemed appropriate action.

The buying manager for a large DIY retail chain referred to the precepts of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance as the four elements of Stoic practice he used within what he referred to as "radical openness" whereby there were no pretences with regard to who you were or where you stood when engaging with others to discuss matters. This, in his view, required people to be very comfortable within themselves and to acknowledge what factors were within

their control and what was outside of their control. He described the buying environment as a stressful environment, as had many other interviewees in describing their workplaces. Particularly from a more traditional leadership perspective, managing eighty staff, Stoic philosophy offered him an effective framework that could be applied on a consistent basis to encourage courageous open dialogue and discussion, he explained. This approach, as I see it, clearly aligned with the sentiment of the ancient philosophers to encourage discourse through the courage of our expressions.

Intentionally applying the virtues of temperance and courage was also an important element to the IT consultant interviewee as he moved into a different workplace environment with a smaller company than he was used to in so far as approaching things with greater patience and not jumping in with the solutions to prove his worth. I see courage as often being construed as taking action and moving into that which we fear but it can also be, counterintuitively perhaps, a matter of courageously tempering our response and allowing things to evolve rather than trying to prove ourselves in a new environment, bringing forward a keen sense of vulnerability. Displaying courage in a tempered way was an ongoing challenge for this interviewee as the Stoic virtue of justice, for example, resonate more easily for him. The values of Stoic philosophy resonated deeply with many interviewees, often before they experienced the benefits of applying the principles which showed, in my view, that the intention to live a life of virtue was within practitioners prior to engaging with Stoic practice and it was through the epistemological enactment of the principles that their virtuous intensions were realised.

As became a commonly expressed path to finding Stoic philosophy by several interviewees, this IT consultant interviewee found the principles resonated for him as he faced a major career change; in his case, making the move out of a large corporation into a smaller consultancy firm working on enterprise architecture management and integration. Stoic practice allowed him to align his own values to the company and clients he had come to work with by embracing 'what was' and letting go of situations or opportunities that didn't align with his own values. The character of who you are was something that was expressed by this interviewee as important to him, as was also expressed by other interviewees. Stoic philosophy seemed to give freedom to interviewees to reconnect with their own character and follow paths that aligned with their values, providing an opportunity to pause and reflect, developing courage through a temperance of their attachment to outcomes.

The US navy senior official who was relatively new to Stoic philosophy, having only discovered it in the twelve months prior to his interview with me, also found the tenets resonated with how he had always tried to live his life. To have his approach to life articulated clearly within the principles of Stoic philosophy gave him some comfort and authenticated his beliefs. This gave him the confidence to continue to work on himself and, specifically, how he could apply the dichotomy of control in a work environment where control was a dominant feature through much of his training. This prior training created stress and frustration for him as he approached his work wanting and expected to control how others approached their work. Stoic philosophy gave him an alternative perspective whereby he was able to step back and work better with other people by understanding that they came to work and contributed to projects differently to how he did and that by trying to control this he was creating tension in his relationships and health problems for himself. This interviewee's story came through in

what other interviewees shared, albeit in different ways, as they courageously struggled to align their own tendencies with workplace expectations and cultures.

Developing the courage displayed by participants to see things in a different way and detach from expectations and learned behaviours was in and of itself revolutionary for participants of this study. To then put their renewed perspectives and intentions to tempering their responses into practice required not only continued courage but the ability to apply wisdom in determining appropriate alternative responses to the circumstances and cultures they encountered. In the next section, I progress the discussion to the virtuous intent to develop wisdom so as to apply the principle of *logic*.

Practical Wisdom - Logic

Judgement and a broad understanding of circumstances are key elements to one's progression from the application of the principle of *physics* to that of *logic*. As we temper our responses to suit circumstances and engage the courage to act according to our judgement, we must then determine what action to take through our ability to engage wise-reasoning. Thus, there must be an impulse to act that follows the intention to do what is good (Graver, 2007). While this might seem like a straightforward process, participants' experiences showed a dynamic and evolving process rather than linear comprehension to application. The virtuous intention to engage with practical wisdom, drawing upon the descriptions of the Stoic virtues adapted from Jedan (2009) and presented in Table 9 on pages 226-227, is not just a matter of being able to address the simple matters that arise in our lives but to be able to navigate the difficult circumstances that lack a clear path.

There is a need here to explain the use of the term ‘practical’ when referring to the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom in and of itself is not necessarily an action, but should the intention be to act then it becomes a practical application of wisdom. Thus, we can contemplate and reflect upon circumstances using wise-reasoning without making a decision to act and we can also intentionally engage with wise-reasoning for the purposes of taking appropriate action. Both of these scenarios played an important role in participants’ development.

The experiences participants in this study shared were complex workplace and personal dilemmas for which they sought practical ways to traverse, predominantly, as my inductive analysis showed, through improvement of their ‘emotional regulation’ and by extension ‘decision-making’ capabilities. The intention to apply the principle of *logic* through the process of assent to impressions, scrutiny and knowledge in order to act through the virtue of practical wisdom was exemplified in the following statements made by an interviewee who managed environmental construction projects for the Canadian military. He stated,

> I still have some challenges, you know, managing emotions … obviously we have some clients who are very emotional and, you know ... they're very passionate about what they're doing. They're very passionate about their projects and what they want done. I still have to work at not reacting with the first emotion that comes to me … applying that principle of not reacting with your initial emotion … can still be challenging for me. With Stoicism, I can control my own emotions and my own way of thinking, and then I can apply the principles better because of that … the idea that emotional reaction

versus rationalizing an issue and logically looking at that. You know, that's still challenging, particularly like I said, if it's an issue that I have more passion about.

The reflective practice displayed by this interviewee on how his intentions were directed toward virtuous action but that he continued to have to work at it perfectly exemplifies what Stoic *practice* is all about; it is the *intention* to live and act virtuously, not a perfectly orchestrated virtuous existence without flaw or failure. The intention to enact the virtue of practical wisdom through the application of the secondary virtues of good judgement, good practical overview, quick moral sense, discretion, shrewdness and inventiveness in difficulties were all displayed by this and other interviewees as they progress their Stoic practice. It was the inquiry, contemplation and reflection as practitioners developed wisdom so as to then apply it practically which formed an indication for my assessment of the intention to act through practical wisdom.

This intention to act with the virtue of practical wisdom proved difficult for some interviewees as they encountered people who did not, in their view, engage with this Stoic virtue. They expressed how their efforts were, at times, thwarted or discouraged by the circumstances they were facing. While I could sense through their expressions of their experiences that this was challenging for them, I also interpreted this as an indication of just how strong their intentions to act virtuously were. The writer interviewee expressed through the following statements her experience with intending to enact the virtue of practical wisdom within situations that did not lend themselves to this way of being.

> If I try to be really cool and solution oriented, this is kind of an open door for people who just like trouble … who you know, if they're not solution oriented, I'm the only one working on that and they just, I don't know, just wreak havoc on everything I'm actually doing and I have to find a way to, well, to kind of include them into what I'm doing in a positive, in a way which works out. Because if that happens to me two or three times in a row, then I'm getting angry and I really can't, I don't know, I'm going down the old road you know, I'm like accusing them of doing this and that and I don't want to do this because I know I can't change them. And, but it's so hard sometimes because I can take it once or twice but if it goes on it's like, I don't know, like a stone in your shoe when you have to run or something, it's really so annoying and this is one of the big challenges I'm, yeah, I'm really wrestling with. Because it sometimes seriously breaks my inner peace and I have a hard time to get it back. It's like when I once lose it, it's really really hard work to get it back. And I'm then the more angry at that person and it's … I have to, I think I have to forgive these persons.

It was not just the external environments which disrupted interviewees' intentions to act with practical wisdom, however, as many continued to regale in an internal reconciliation of learned behaviours and reactions with the desire to progress their Stoic practice. As the software engineer and analyst stated,

> Keeping emotions under control. Apparently, I seem to be a very, quite emotional person, so I tend to react a lot earlier than I think. So, trying to keep… tone that down ... especially when I'm getting angry at things. But yes, it's keeping emotions under control, I think is the most difficult bit.

The participants of this study expressed a keen sense of what their intentions were with regard to the practical application of wisdom through regulating their emotions so they were better able to engage with 'common sense' decision-making capabilities. While the levels of understanding of the application of the Stoic principles may have varied among participants, they tended to express their intentions clearly while acknowledging the need for continued practice and reflection so as to improve their awareness of how they were choosing to interact with others. This leads me to the next, and final, Stoic virtue discussed in this study of 'justice', as I have related it to the application of the principle of *ethics* through the dominant themes of 'the common good' and 'providing guidance' that emerged through my interpretations of the study results.

Justice - Ethics

From a mental health nurse to music and writing teachers, a pastor, military personnel, a veterinarian and a private investigator, among others, the intention to do 'what is right' was strong among the people I interviewed for this study. Whether it was already in their nature to foster an awareness of contributing to the common good, at times through the provision of guidance to others, and/or if their Stoic practice enhanced this for them, their intentions were clear. In simplistic terms, as they worked toward an acceptance of where their contributions were best directed (*physics*) through temperance and courage and then progressed to developing the wisdom to determine what practical actions to take (*logic*), they came face-to-face with the need for greater awareness of what constituted justice through their interactions with themselves and others (*ethics*).

A more complex and dynamic process obviously existed of the interconnected engagement with each of the Stoic principles as practitioners realised and acted upon their intentions to live virtuously. Participants shared stories of how their interactions with others and the struggles they faced within themselves led them to begin the process described above, which, to reiterate, was never a linear process. With an acceptance of what is outside of one's control (*physics*), one must also recognise that the actions they choose to take are based upon their reasoning (*logic*), which may differ from another's, as to what their duty to the common good might be (*ethics*) without knowing for certain what the outcomes of their actions will be; thus, it is again the intention to do what is right based on one's own capability rather than any certainty of just results from their actions (Hadot, 2001). As the private investigator interviewee expressed his experience of interacting with his own and others' responses to perpetually changing circumstances,

> … recognizing how insignificant and small you are in the big scheme of things … because if you look at the fall of big civilizations like the Bronze Age, the dark ages that came right after the Bronze Age and then the Roman Empire and then the Dark Ages that came after the fall of the Roman Empire … I mean, these things happen and it's important to keep in mind kind of your place and, you know, this process that you don't have any personal subjective control over, but that you are stuck in kind of the winds of it, that you're kind of blown away, you're like, you know, Odysseus on his boat, just getting kind of blown around. You're part of that and you have very little control over it but recognizing, at least for yourself, how you can contribute to not making things worse.

This interviewee showed, by his own account, a strong sense of justice in his profession as a private investigator as he sought truth without attachment to outcomes; choosing to treat people with respect and compassion to put them at ease when sharing what they knew of the cases he was working on. The music teacher and high school band director interviewee also depicted this sense of justice as he contemplated his role as a teacher in the US public school system and responsibility for his students within the potential of the wider contribution he might make to society. Similarly, the interviewee who shared his experience of transitioning from being a geologist working on major oil and gas projects to having to take on a role as a preschool French teacher after being let go from the oil and gas company saw this as an opportunity to fulfil a duty to caring for the wellbeing of others rather than an egotistical indulgence in his own pride.

Thus, a sense of and intention to justice was portrayed by the participants of this study in various ways as they engaged with their duty to do what is right and for the common good. In the words of Seneca (2004), “An ordinary journey will be incomplete if you come to a stop in the middle of it, or anywhere short of your destination, but life is never incomplete if it is an honourable one” (p 125). As Marcus Aurelius would implore, “the law of human and social reason demands that we place ourselves entirely in the service of the human community” (Hadot, 2001, p. 184) and, further, that we must develop an understanding that “our character … remains regardless of the role we happen to play in society” (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 105).

Again, I refer back to a previously introduced concept that the Stoics were not suggesting that we enact virtue by way of justice through any attempt to control or influence

others or even to contribute to others' experiences necessarily, but rather through concerted and intentional attention to our own thoughts, speech and actions, particularly as we interact with others. We are thus encouraged to possess,

> Indifference to external events.
>
> And a commitment to justice in your own acts.
>
> Which means: thought and action resulting in the common good.
>
> What you were born to do. (Aurelius, 2003, p. 125; Book Nine, 31)

Hadot (2001) summarised Aurelius and Epictetus' position on justice for the common good as follows,

> the goal of our actions must be the good of the human community, and the discipline of action will therefore have as its domain our relations with other people. In turn, these relations will be ruled by laws and the duties imposed by human rational nature and reason, which are fundamentally identical to universal Nature and Reason. (p. 185)

Stoicism therefore "is a major mind game centered on keeping one's moral high ground and self-respect" (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 126) as we interact with, but remain detached from, externals, including other people. This may sound counterintuitive to those less familiar with Stoic practice but it is indeed exactly what the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy teaches us and what the participants of this study shared in so far as accepting our place in the

whole (*physics*), developing wisdom in our responses (*logic*) to which we can apply through greater awareness of how *we contribute* to the common good (*ethics*) – not in how we might desire to control, albeit superfluously, outcomes as might be more commonly associated with leadership dynamics within the workplace.

The intention to enact virtue through acts of justice, therefore, are not based upon what should happen according to societal or indeed organisational expectations but rather how *we* should act, naturally entailing a continual process of reflection upon our experiences. This reflection was evident across the study participants' experiences they chose to share and in how they chose to articulate their experiences. Whether it was a recovering alcoholic reflecting upon her sponsorship of others also working toward their own recovery and coming to the realisation that the best way for her to help them was to get them to see their own contributions and take the responsibility or if it was a high ranking US Navy official realising that his best contribution was to accept how others took responsibility for their own contributions and to step back to allow this to happen, which was at great odds to the training he had received, participants of this study showed how the very nature of virtue as expressed through justice had more to do with themselves than others or the specific circumstances.

Participants began to realise, through their practice of Stoic philosophy and experiential reflections, their own contributions to the 'drama' and stress that they experienced within their workplaces. By seeing justice in the light of how they contributed to circumstances, they could step back and better assess their situations before taking actions that undoubtedly improved their experiences and by association the experiences of those around them. A sales consultant in the commercial lighting industry in Canada experienced this transformational realisation as

did a software engineer and analyst in Sweden and an IT project manager in the UK, among many others. Thus, it is of no consequence what the circumstances might be, work related or otherwise, but how we intend to contribute to said circumstances that matters.

Summary of Enacting Stoic Virtue in the Workplace

In this chapter I have consolidated my prior analyses of the experiences shared by study participants of their applications of the principles of Stoic philosophy so as to probe deeper into the ontological intentions behind practicing Stoicism within their workplaces. To intentionally undertake serious self-reflection and embrace ownership of and responsibility for one's own actions is no easy task and doing so represents a significant progression of participants' understanding of Stoic philosophy and how it can be applied to their workplace situations, and life more generally. The Stoic virtues of temperance, courage, practical wisdom and justice challenge many of the notions expected and encouraged within contemporary workplace environments. These virtues are not bound by position, authority or status but rather are incumbent upon each of us to act through acceptance, wisdom and awareness.

Enacting Stoic virtue as a way of being in the workplace is to focus on the actions we all take to contribute to the organisational societies within which we perform our professional duties. A focus on outcomes as a measure of one's performance and worthiness fails to consider that "what gives an action its completeness is precisely the moral intention by which it is inspired, not the subject matter on which it is exercised" (Hadot, 2001, p. 189). Thus, to create workplace environments which are considerate of the common good of the organisation and

those who contribute to it, we must consider alternative narratives which recognise the intentional actions taken.

The Stoic virtue of temperance was shown to be among the earlier associations that study participants had with practicing Stoic philosophy within their workplaces. While the Stoic principles are non-foundational to each other, fostering an acceptance of what was outside of their control, in the first instance, seemed to give participants some direction as to where they should be focusing their attention. Developing the ability to form judgements as to what was indeed within their own control in order to temper their responses proved to be a useful process for participants who were intent on improving their experiences of the workplace challenges they faced. Thus, through the practice of the principle of *physics*, practitioners befit the virtue of temperance, thereby improving the quality of their impulses through better judgement.

This judgement was then enacted through the virtue of courage which study participants revealed through the examples they shared of their continued practice of Stoicism in their workplaces. This enduring perseverance through significant workplace challenges showed growing confidence and mental stoutness of the Stoic practitioners in this study. Their judgements of the circumstances they faced then progressed to the application of the principle of *logic,* which provided an indication as to the appropriate actions that should be taken, determined through a commitment to enact the virtue of practical wisdom. Their intention to act through the virtue of practical wisdom allowed practitioners to bolster good judgement, practical overview, quick moral sense, discretion, shrewdness and inventiveness in difficulties through their practice of the principle of *logic*.

The continuous ‘check point’, if you will, for all Stoic practitioners when enacting the virtues of temperance, courage and practical wisdom is whether these virtues concur to the enactment of the virtue of justice. Without the application of the principle of *ethics* with the intent to embody justice through our actions, the entire premise of the application of Stoic philosophy within the workplace dissolves back to the institution of individualism. In simplistic terms, practitioners’ ability to progress beyond individualism toward universality appeared to give them the confidence to accept responsibility for their own thoughts and actions alone, releasing them from the desire to *impose* justice in favour of *enacting* justice through how they chose to interact with others.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Future Explorations

It is worth acknowledging, as one interviewee did, that in an interview setting, it is easier to share insights and experiences reflectively than *practicing* Stoicism in the workplace in the moment and on a consistent basis. The geologist interviewee reflected upon how it was relatively easy to discuss the principles of Stoic philosophy, and the perceived effect in his life, in an interview but quite difficult to practice the principles on a daily basis within his workplace and home environments. This begs the question of why we would want to create a culture of Stoic practice within workplaces; what would be the benefits of doing so, particularly given it is an ongoing practice and not a 'quick fix' approach? The desire by participants of this study to make a meaningful contribution to the common good was a dominant theme that emerged through my interpretations of their experiences which may provide some insights into the benefits of introducing this practice into our workplace environments more broadly. Perhaps the following statement provides some reasoning for engaging in practices that encourage virtuous intentions to be fostered within workplaces.

> … it shouldn't really take a lot of courage to stand up to your boss when your co-worker is being treated badly, no? I mean, the worst that can happen is that you'll be fired, not put into solitary confinement and tortured. How difficult is it, really, to behave honestly in the course of everyday life, since we are not risking military defeat and the prospect of suicide to save our honor? And yet, imagine how much better the world would be if we all did display just a bit more courage, a slightly more acute sense of justice, more temperance, and more wisdom each day. … that is, to become slightly better human beings than we already are. (Pigliucci, 2017, p. 137)

Admittedly, the above statement lacked the perspectives expressed by some of the interviewees of this study who did indeed face potentially life-threatening workplace circumstances; however, the sentiment stands that there is reason, or no reason not, to consider approaches to developing professional capabilities within our workplaces that promote virtuous intentions and actions regardless of hierarchical position, authority or status. This study set out to address specific research objectives, the results of which contribute new and unique perspectives to our knowledge of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

In the first instance, Objective 1 aimed to capture the circumstances under which participants choose to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in their workplace. To this end, I found participants chose to apply the Stoic principles across a range of workplace circumstances including conflict management, decision-making, overcoming disappointment, work dissatisfaction and navigating challenging and changing work environments and team dynamics. Expanding upon these findings, Objective 2 sought a better understanding of the reasons why participants chose to apply Stoic philosophy in their workplaces. In broad terms, participants expressed both epistemological and ontological reasoning for choosing Stoic philosophy as a practice. Stoic practice was seen by participants to be aligned with their natural tendencies, ontologically, while providing a practical and simple epistemological framework applicable across scenarios.

To further deepen our knowledge of the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace, Objectives 3 and 4 progressed the study toward how these

principles were specifically being applied under the various circumstances identified and the associated benefits and challenges participants experienced through their applications, respectively. By considering the survey and interview results through inductive and deductive analyses, the study showed the principle of *physics* was predominantly applied in circumstances where greater acceptance of the dichotomy of control was useful, such as when overcoming disappointment, work dissatisfaction and changing scenarios. This developing acceptance led to experiential practical wisdom being applied through the principle of *logic* to better manage emotional responses and improve clarity in decision-making. As participants explored and reflected upon their emotional attachments to scenarios, they displayed a transition from individualistic to universal mindsets focused more on the application of the principle of *ethics* for the common good and through the provision of guidance to others.

Finally, exploring the nature and characteristics of Stoic philosophy as applied in the workplace, addressing study Objective 5, allowed for closer consideration of the *virtuous intent* participants displayed in applying this practice within their workplaces and lives more broadly. The value placed on the Stoic virtues of temperance, courage, practical wisdom and justice was implicitly and explicitly expressed by participants through their intentional way of *being* in the workplace as a contribution to the common good. Thus, in simplistic terms the main findings from this study which contribute new empirical knowledge on how the principles of Stoic philosophy might be applied more broadly within our workplaces and to what effect suggest the following:

- The Stoic principles have been, are and can be applied across scenarios, contexts, professions and within different cultural/national settings.

- From an individual perspective, the application of the Stoic principles appeared to help people manage their responses to challenging circumstances which seemed to reduce stress levels and build confidence.
- From an organizational perspective, the application of the Stoic principles may improve colleague/stakeholder interactions, decision-making and adaptability to change.

Based on these empirical findings and contributions to knowledge, there exists further opportunity to explore how these Stoic principles could be applied more broadly within our workplaces through the integration of a Stoic approach within professional development programs. In this final chapter, I present my musings on how a Stoic approach might contribute to and progress extant research into professional development program design before articulating future research opportunities emerging from the findings of this study. In the next section, I return to my initial justification for undertaking this study provided in the introductory chapters of this thesis as it relates to the need for greater focus on philosophical ontologies within the workplace. I explore these philosophical considerations the context of leadership and professional development.

Stoic Integration within Professional Development Initiatives

Jarvis et al. (2013) identified the elements of 'non-linearity' and 'emergence' as important for participants of development programs to understand their roles differently in so much as what they do and do not control, as was found in this study with regard to participants' experiences, as I interpreted through their practice of Stoic *physics*. Jarvis et al. (2013) also

recognised the need for participants to learn how they contributed to or influenced circumstances (expressed in this thesis in terms of the practice of Stoic *ethics*) rather than focusing on attempts to control outcomes. Jarvis et al. (2013) further found importance in providing liminal space within a program, away from the day-to-day working environment, for participants to work through anxieties and challenges collectively (i.e. here relating to Stoic *logic*).

Greater appreciation of the integral nature of emotion within the workplace may contribute to improved interactions and decision-making (Küpers & Weibler, 2005); as indicated through the findings of this study, from a Stoic perspective, through the regulation of emotion so as to make decisions that serve the common good rather than individual desires. The diversity of thought and engagement with alternate perspectives fostered through this approach to communication between individuals and throughout organisations forms an important part of navigating uncertainty and reducing anxieties and could well be fostered through development initiatives (Jarvis et al., 2013).

Jarvis et al. (2013) used complex responsive processes (drawn from complexity theory) to focus on the importance of relationships in designing, delivering and evaluating leadership development programs, particularly through times of change. They suggested that it was the relationships of all members within the organisations that provided the continuity and stability of the contextualised narrative required to manage through changes. Bringing conversations out of the margins and into the mainstream communications of the organisation was seen to help participants to navigate the required changes throughout the organisation (Jarvis et al., 2013). This aligns with the Stoic doctrine of social practice and community mindedness

through sharing our experiences; one might envisage a time where philosophers, teachers, disciples and the general public would congregate under the 'Stoa' for the intent purpose of engaging in discourse and rhetoric.

Professional development initiatives grounded in a Stoic approach of shared and experiential learning could serve to build the social capital of organisations, beyond 'leadership positions' as such, while encouraging engagement in the learning and experiential process (Bolden, 2010; Jarvis et al, 2013) which, in turn, could potentially foster more astute practices encompassing virtue and wisdom (Case & Gosling, 2007). Deepening this approach through greater consideration of "pheno-practice", in so far as developing wisdom through engagement with the dynamics of consciousness, behavioural, system and cultural dimensions (Küpers, 2007), may serve to liberate professional development initiatives from cognitive oversimplification of highly complex environments and psyches. This opens the opportunity for experiential and transformational learning opportunities integrated into practice-based development initiatives aimed at emboldening a continual practice of wisdom, *phrónêsis*, for the common good through the phenomenology of lived experience (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015). It is noted that "[like] all virtues, phrónêsis is an operational habit or result of habituation that is acquired and developed through deliberate and effortful repetition of acts aimed at developing them" (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015, p. 496).

In the context of integrating these perspectives into the design of development initiatives, Avolio (1996) also emphasised the need to foster a culture of learning throughout all levels of the organisation with an integral understanding of how to make decisions and undertake actions aligned with the direction of the organisation and with the intention of doing

what is ‘right’ to stimulate the organisation to transform forward. Avolio’s (1996) approach differed from that of Jarvis et al. (2013) and Bolden’s (2010) in that the direction the organisation takes remained within the responsibility of nominated leader positions rather than collectively and therefore is not strictly aligned with a non-hierarchical Stoic approach. However, the importance placed upon a learning culture and desire to develop professional capabilities with consideration of ethical perspectives are shared themes.

Jarvis et al. (2013) focused on evaluating the interplay of relationships in the design of a leadership development program by a higher education provider for the UK National Health Service while ensuring the program enabled participants to apply learnings into the organisational environment within which they worked. This approach was justified through contending that the market for this type of program would not benefit from further attention on ‘heroic’ leadership styles or ‘grand’ narratives but rather from a program that allowed for participant reflection and time to implement learnings into their workplace; entailing a focus on “embodied habitualized practice and reflexivity” (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015, p. 496) aimed at changing the leadership narrative (Schedlitzki et al., 2015). Thus, here it is suggested that the design of development initiatives should “[embody] decentralization, social responsibility and collective learning” and encourage “the growth of social capital” (Grint, 2005a, p. 144).

Experiential learning has been highlighted as an important element in developing professional capability (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). Bolden (2010) identified with the need for an integration of knowledge acquisition, practical application and reflection as fundamental experiences. However, Bolden was careful to establish that these experiences be clearly linked to the direction of the organisation and desired outcomes of the program in addition to carrying

a long-term commitment by the organisation for continual development, if genuine development was to be achieved. Similarly, Raelin (2004) expressed *work-based learning*, based on the principles of collective leadership, as an approach to professional development that provided opportunities for action learning, collective knowledge creation and the development of a learning culture, all within the workplace. Raelin (2004) stated that,

> … work-based learning calls for replacing the acquisition of skill with the development of meta-competence. Meta-competence is competence that transcends itself. Rather than focus on job-specific skills, participants learn situation-specific principles that can attend to the variability in work demands. (p. 133)

Through work-based learning opportunities, participants can be introduced to reflective activities as individuals, pairs and in groups to facilitate better understanding of their own contribution to each situation in addition to being exposed to multiple scenarios through other participants' experiences (Raelin, 2004). Consistent with this sentiment, Youngs (2017) identified with a *leadership-as-practice* approach which decentralised and distributed leadership by focusing on the practice and process of leadership regardless of individual traits or organisational structures. This shifted the dialogue from "leader and leadership, to the practice of leading" which removed the need for reference to positions or individuals and allowed for "a dynamic view of an organisation" while focusing on reflective practices (Youngs, 2017, p.147).

Thus, there are a number of concepts and practical applications that have been and continue to be explored and, while perspectives and suggested approaches may vary, the

sentiment of developing wisdom through experience and reflexivity could be further informed through a Stoic approach; providing a footing to explore the development of a framework for integrating the practice of Stoicism within workplaces. This thesis has provided grounding for the development of a framework to further address a gap in our understanding of implementing a Stoic approach into practice, based on the experiences shared by study participants. The findings of this study serve not only as insight into current practices but also indicate where to inquiries might progress.

The division of theory and practice that Schön (1991) was critical of, as expressed in the previous chapters, appeared to play a key role in how the principles of Stoic philosophy were experienced. As a practice that is directly applicable to a range of experiences, Stoic philosophy provided a method of combining theory and practice as experiences unfolded and as practitioners reflected on them. Schön (1991) was critical of the systems that we have created in our societies that have become more about process, status and conformity than actual learning. As evidenced through the experiences of study participants, the nature of Stoic practice provides a chance to change how we learn in the workplace by liberating us from rigid models of management and leadership, allowing for a more nuanced and intrinsically adaptable approach to be applied. There is no set or ideal model of Stoic philosophy; it is a set of practices and disciplines which individuals choose to take up. From my perspective, committing to these practices allowed interviewees to *experience* Stoic philosophy in their lives and workplaces freely and without self-deprecating judgement. One possible direction for future study that would build on my preliminary findings would be to explore ways in which Stoicism might inform some kind of professional practice development program; one, however, that would avoid being doctrinaire and preserve practitioners' sense of independent freedom of choice.

Future Research Opportunities

In this section, I suggest some areas for future research which the findings of this study inspire, including: (1) the development, implementation and evaluation of a Stoic framework applied in workplaces; (2) the need for further inquiry into the historical context of Stoicism; and (3) how best to communicate this practice in contemporary environments. As such, there remains opportunity for further research into developing and applying a framework for practicing Stoicism within workplaces supported by empirical studies into the results of similar and complementary initiatives. The overall environment, dynamics and interactions among employees, colleagues and stakeholders where the principles are being applied would also need to be explored and, ideally, observed.

With regard to developing, implementing and evaluating a Stoic approach applied in workplaces, two main questions emerge: (a) how can a Stoic philosophical basis – the pursuit of virtue and the common good – be embedded within professional development initiatives and, (b) how might one evaluate a program informed by Stoicism to establish the efficacy of such an approach? Work already done in this space, including but not limited to, Rooney, Küpers, Pauleen and Zhuravleva's (2019) work on devising a framework for developing embodied wisdom and Schedlitzki, Jarvis and MacInnes' (2015) considerations of reflectivity using Greek mythology contributing to the design of leadership development programs and how these might be evaluated, as well as the insights provided by McKenna, Rooney and Boal's (2009) work on evaluating wisdom and Küpers and Weibler's (2005) research on evaluating the effect of emotion, contribute to understanding how best to approach this from a Stoic

perspective. The Stoics themselves, of course, would provide the most sage guidance in this regard, however, inquiries into contemporary applications of concepts aligned with the Stoic tenets will be useful reference points.

With regard to communicating this practice in contemporary workplace environments, the comments from the participants of this study on the challenges and benefits they experienced through applying the principles in their workplaces, indicated that one of the main challenges was interacting with others who did not practice Stoicism and themselves being viewed as unemotional, detached or uncaring. I see this as a key area to focus on in so far as how to communicate the Stoic principles in a way that resonates with contemporary applications, specifically within workplaces. Similarly, in the comments by survey respondents on their experiences with the social media groups, the same challenge was identified with some contributors being seen as more interested in showing their own knowledge or opinions than genuinely helping others. Again, there is opportunity for further education on and research into the application of the principles for the common good rather than self-indulgence and how best to communicate this. Interestingly one respondent suggested that “Stoic demeanour is not always a good fit for the organisational culture”. Is this due to the nature of the workplace environments that have been created or is it in the way the principles are introduced and/or practiced that make it difficult to implement them? Most probably it is a combination of several interacting factors and processes that would merit further research. Building upon the findings of this study, a more sophisticated consideration of the learning methods applied in ancient Greece at the Stoa and to teachings designed by philosophers for Roman Emperors, for example, and how these might be applied to social media and other modern-day communication strategies is therefore warranted.

The results of this study showed, practitioners perceived an improvement in their own performance within the workplace as well as generally, due to the focus becoming less about what they liked or did not like about someone or the situation they were dealing with and more about getting on with what they could control (i.e. their own responses). Thus, there was greater focus on what needed to be done and less on what were perceived to have been 'distracting' or irrelevant elements within the workplace. Future research might explore whether this perceived improvement in performance was realised within the organisational environment or noticed by others and what form the performance improvements took, if they did exist. It might also examine whether these improvements were picked up through contemporary performance appraisal measures and processes.

In reading the book *Stoic Virtues* by Christoph Jedan (2009), it was evident to me that there was a profound need by the Stoics to integrate what we experience with what occurs in the 'cosmos' as the natural flow of things. Fortunately, there is a body of research referred to throughout this thesis that considers the nuanced comprehensions of workplace dynamics, beyond what common performance measures might indicate. These nuanced interactions with our environments are important considerations to build upon the findings of this study, specifically with regard to how the practice of the Stoic principles is experienced by those interacting with these dynamics. The Stoics held a view of our need to be at one with what occurs naturally, which entailed acknowledging both natural occurrences as well as our own complex responses to these, providing a basis from which future studies might be designed.

As this study focused on the experiences of participants in their own practice of Stoicism in the workplace, there remains a missing component of exploration of these practices within the broader workplace culture. As the 'self-help' industry has focused on problematisation of the internal self to form solutions to one's experiences of the external (Mygind, 2021), there is the risk of developing passive self-indulgence in an effort to preserve one's own well-being above 'doing what is right'. Equally, there is the risk that 'inadequate self-management' may become organisational rhetoric to shift blame to the individual rather than addressing systemic issues or multiple and potentially incongruent organisational discourses (Huber, 2019; Mygind, 2021). Stoicism was founded on the basis of its differentiation from other philosophical practices of the time with regard to social equanimity, equality and the common good as core constructs. Thus, by its very nature, Stoicism invites reflexive self-subjectification as one attempts to relate to and reflect upon their contribution to the whole through the perspective of universality (Hadot, 2001). To integrate Stoicism into contemporary workplaces, universality beyond self-interest or consequence must be explored more fully with regard to the empirical effects on the common good of individuals practicing the Stoic principles.

As our workplaces are varied in gender, culture and ethnicity, I was somewhat disappointed that there were not more female interviewees contributing their experiences to this study. This remains an area for future exploration into the female contribution to Stoic philosophy in the past and present. Perhaps by unearthing and sharing some historical Stoic women and their contributions, modern day women might be more drawn to this philosophy as a practical application in their own lives and workplaces. The writer interviewee, for example, had noted that there was more male engagement with Stoicism than female and she saw this as disappointing as the female perspective would be, in her view, invaluable to the

discussion on how to apply the principles. She was less concerned with the aspects of anxiety or depression as these relate to emotions and more focused on having the expression of emotion normalised through better articulation of emotion which she saw the practice of Stoicism abetting. She observed through the social media groups dedicated to Stoic philosophy that there was a male "competition and warriorship" that permeated much of the discussion instead of a focus on the useful application and exploration of different experiences. Even the points of discussion within the groups appeared to this interviewee as male engendered issues which may have been attempts to negate the topic of emotion completely, inadvertently and at times directly pushing their own emotional responses onto others. This (false) impression that Stoicism lacks or neglects emotion, to this interviewee's mind, was a disincentive to potential female practitioners who do not necessarily want to completely avoid emotion but rather learn how it fits within our lives and how to manage and use it effectively.

There was also a relatively strong representation of study participants from the US and from professional backgrounds, leaving an opportunity for future research that develops greater appreciation of the cultural differences and commonalities that may exist with the interpretation and application of Stoic philosophy in various workplace environments around the world. In addition to this broadening of the scope of professions, there may be opportunity to explore how significant changes to workplace environments and dynamics, such as those experienced through the COVID-19 pandemic, affected the specific workplace scenarios encountered by individuals and how these were managed using Stoic principles. Of particular interest, might be the further dissolution of work life and home life precipitated by the pandemic. Given that Stoicism is proffered as a philosophical *way of life* that transcends socially constructed boundaries, one wonders whether the approach might equip practitioners better for coping with post-pandemic professional life. This and other explorations into broader workplace and

participant contexts would contribute to the Stoic intent to present the philosophical principles as a practice for everyone (Asmis et al., 2014b) and how that might be done within contemporary and rapidly changing workplaces. Thus, the insights and findings from this study serve as important markers for future research into the practical application of a Stoic approach across cultures, genders and professions within the workplace and, indeed, more broadly.

Final Comments

While this study invites further exploration, the findings also deserve further articulation and communication through publication. For example, the experience of emotion within contemporary workplaces, as outlined in Chapter 7, and the psychological perspectives this provokes warrants wider distribution and attention, contributing to existing research on Stoicism and emotion (Graver, 2007). The findings of the application of the principle of *logic* also invite specific attention on practical wisdom within organisation studies and how this informs decision-making practices (Depew, 2016; Intezari, 2018; Intezari & Pauleen, 2017). Ethical considerations brought to the fore in Chapter 8 of this study suggest contributions to the common good are highly desirable within workplaces and organisational contexts, highlighting this as another theme meriting broader publication. Finally, further articulation of the virtuous intent of Stoic philosophy may well serve to dramatically shift the way in which we approach workplace dynamics, performance measures, leadership practices and development initiatives. A divergence from *process* for the purpose of efficiency and competency within workplaces, for example, may be instigated through the Stoic perspectives of *practice* for the purpose of efficacy and understanding shared in this study. Sharing the nature of Stoic reflective practice may contribute to extant debates on management learning

and education that take disciplines and practices rooted in ancient wisdom traditions as their focus or point of departure (Ramsey, 2014).

While this study has come to an end, I am inspired by what study participants have shared with me and aim to continue to progress this area of research and share the new and unique knowledge gained through this study. My journey through the course of this study has opened opportunities to contribute to leadership, management and organisational theory and practice through philosophical perspectives and practices that have, thus far, received little attention in contemporary literature. The possibility of further integrating the benefits participants of this study have already begun to experience through their application of the principles of Stoic philosophy within workplaces is an exciting prospect. To be able to contribute to helping people more effectively navigate the challenges they face through the knowledge and experience I have gained throughout this study gives me great personal satisfaction and inspiration. Thus, this study provides an important elementary foundation in this exploration of what Stoicism has to offer within contemporary workplaces.

Appendices

Appendix A

Social Media Contact Schedule

Group	# of Members	Admin Contact	Confirmed Support	Confirmed Ethics and intent to issue survey on social media site	Posted Link to Survey
Stoicism Group [Stoic Philosophy] – FB Page	approx. 67k members	Donald Robertson	Yes	notified of ethics approval 29 March 2020 [confirmation received]	29/3/2020 31/3/2020 3/4/2020 6/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
Stoicism Group [Stoic Philosophy] – LinkedIn Page	approx. 1700 members	Donald Robertson	Yes		7/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
The Psychology of Stoicism, Buddhism & Epicureanism	approx. 29k members	Eric Sherman	Yes	notified of ethics approval 29 March 2020 [confirmation received]	29/3/2020 31/3/2020 3/4/2020 6/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
Applying Stoicism	approx. 8k members	Travis Hume	Yes	notified of ethics	29/3/2020 31/3/2020

				approval 29 March 2020 [confirmation received]	3/4/2020 6/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
Traditional Stoicism	approx. 5k members	Chris Fisher	Yes	notified of ethics approval 29 March 2020 [confirmation received]	Can no longer locate this group on FB
The Practical Stoic Mastermind	approx. 4k members	Simon Drew	Yes [podcast invite – when survey comes out]	notified of ethics approval 29 March 2020 [confirmation received]	29/3/2020 31/3/2020 3/4/2020 6/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 12/5/2020 Podcast session 1 April 10am
Stoicism	Approx. 26k members	John Castleford	Sent request 3.4.2020 Yes Yes 6/4/2020		6/4/2020 9/4/2020 12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
The Stoic Professional LinkedIn	614 members				12/4/2020 16/4/2020 21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
LinkedIn post from my personal profile	417 connections				12/4/2020 16/4/2020 [28/4/2020 - shared

					post from LL socials]
LinkedIn and FB from Learn Leadership profile	94 FB followers 40 LinkedIn followers				12/4/2020 16/4/2020 [28/4/2020 - post similar to 29/4/2020] 12/5/2020
Stoicism and Psychology	approx. 2k members	Alexander MacLellan Donald Robertson – moderator	Yes	notified of ethics approval 29 March 2020	21/4/2020 29/4/2020 12/5/2020
The Daily Stoic	164k followers	m.me/dailystoic; https://dailystoic.com ; email via website form	[did not receive a reply]		
7 Groups Confirmed	***135k members reached***				

FB Group Post – initial post – 29/3/2020:

Have you used Stoic philosophy in the workplace? I'm currently researching how we can apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

As part of my PhD, I have designed a survey to explore how the Stoic principles are already being used in the workplace by people, like yourselves, who are interested in, learning about and applying Stoic philosophy in their lives.

Please click the link below if you'd like to share your experiences and contribute to this research on applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

https://jcubusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yyr1puFLnwXnQV?fbclid=IwAR3YDoA3tmNFi7UVZYykCy9qGPeAwdtuplITiPM785bnEFPUDgg0m4vIjkY

FB / LinkedIn Post – 12/4/2020:

Have you used Stoic philosophy in the workplace? I'm currently researching how we can apply the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

As part of my PhD, I have designed a survey to explore how the Stoic principles are already being used in the workplace by people, like yourselves, who are interested in, learning about and applying Stoic philosophy in their lives.

I've had a great response so far to the survey with many people also opting to take part in an interview to share their experiences with applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

Please click the link below if you'd like to share your experiences and contribute to this research on applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

https://jcubusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yyr1puFLnwXnQV?fbclid=IwAR3YDoA3tmNFi7UVZYykCy9qGPeAwdtuplITiPM785bnEFPUDgg0m4vIjkY

FB and LinkedIn posts – 16/4/2020:

What an amazing few weeks it has been since I launched my survey on applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. I've received a great response from people taking the survey and many have also opted to take part in an interview with me to share their experiences with applying Stoic philosophy in their workplaces.

I've spoken with people from all around the world, including the UK, US, Canada and Sweden, and from a wide range of industries and professions. This study is proving to be a truly global experience!

The survey and option to participate in an interview are still open and I encourage you to take part in this research which will help others engage with the principles of Stoic philosophy in a meaningful and practical way.

Please click the link below to take part.

https://jcubusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yyr1puFLnwXnQV?fbclid=IwAR3YDoA3tmNFi7UVZYykCy9qGPeAwdtuplITiPM785bnEFPUDgg0m4vIjkY

FB and LinkedIn posts – 21/4/2020:

What an amazing few weeks it has been since I launched my survey on applying the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. I've received a great response from people taking the survey and many have also opted to take part in an interview with me to share their experiences with applying Stoic philosophy in their workplaces.

I've spoken with people from all around the world, including the UK, US, Canada, Dominican Republic and Sweden, and from a wide range of industries and professions. This study is proving to be a truly global experience and I look forward to speaking with more people in the coming weeks.

The survey and option to participate in an interview are still open and I encourage you to take part in this research which will help others engage with the principles of Stoic philosophy in a meaningful and practical way.

Please click the link below to take part.

https://jcubusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yyr1puFLnwXnQV?fbclid=IwAR3YDoA3tmNFi7UVZYykCy9qGPeAwdtuplITiPM785bnEFPUDgg0m4vIjkY

FB and LinkedIn post – 29/4/2020

I had a great conversation a few weeks ago with Simon Drew from the Practical Stoic Mastermind on Stoic philosophy in the workplace that I thought some people might find interesting [link below]. The research survey I mention in the video will remain open for another few weeks as will the opportunity to participate in an interview with me for those who are interested in sharing their experiences. The link to the survey is provided below the video on Simon's website. So far, I've spoken with people all over the world and from many different professions and industries and it has been wonderful to hear of their experiences and insights.

www.simonjedrew.com/chrystie-watson

FB and LinkedIn Post – 12/5/2020

A massive thank you to those of you who have participated in my survey on Stoic philosophy in the workplace. I've interviewed people from a variety of professions and locations around the world. I'm truly amazed at and grateful for everyone's generosity of time and enthusiasm in sharing their experiences. The results of this study will definitely go toward helping many others to apply the principles in their workplaces, and beyond…

The survey and opportunity to share your experiences via an interview will be closing soon. I have capacity to do a few more interviews and, while I welcome anyone who wants to, I would particularly encourage the female Stoics among you to share your experiences with me.

Please click the link below to take part in the survey and interview.

https://jcubusiness.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yyr1puFLnwXnQV?fbclid=IwAR3YDoA3tmNFi7UVZYykCy9qGPeAwdtuplITiPM785bnEFPUDgg0m4vIjkY

Appendix B – Survey

Exploring the application of the principles of Stoic Philosophy in the Workplace Survey

James Cook University, Human Research Ethics Committee #: H7663

INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace

You are invited to take part in a research project exploring the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace. The aim of this study is to explore how the principles of Stoic philosophy are being applied in workplaces. The project will collect information that may lead to recommendations and a framework for applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to workplaces in the future. The study is being conducted by Chrystie Watson and will contribute to a PhD qualification at James Cook University. Based on your engagement with Stoic philosophy through social media, you are invited to engage with this study as a respondent to a survey and will be invited to participate in an interview with the researcher to share your experiences, should you choose to do so. The details of the survey and interview you are invited to participate in are outlined below.

Survey

If you agree to be involved in this study, you will be directed to the online survey following your indication of consent to participate. The survey questions are designed to gain a better understanding of the reasons for which you have chosen to apply the principles of Stoic philosophy to workplace situations, which principles you have applied and the prevalence of the circumstances and principles applied across survey respondents. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Interview

The interview stage is designed to allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding and interpretation of the specific experiences you have had with the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in your workplace. During the forty-minute interview you will be asked

to reflect upon and share your experience(s). The interviews will be audio recorded to allow the researcher to ensure accurate representation of the information provided.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. Your responses and contact details will be strictly confidential.

The data from the study will be used in research publications and reports (e.g., academic journal articles; conference proceedings/presentations; thesis). You will not be identified in any way in these publications or presentations.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the Principal Investigator as per details below.

Principal Investigator: Chrystie Watson, College of Business, Law & Governance, James Cook University, Email: chrystie.watson@my.jcu.edu.au

Supervisor: Name: Dr Josephine Pryce, College of Business, Law & Governance, James Cook University Phone: Email: josephine.pryce@jcu.edu.au

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact: Human Ethics, Research Office, James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811 Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)

Please read the following statement and indicate your consent below.

I understand the aim of this research study is to explore how the principles of Stoic philosophy can be applied to the workplace.

I consent to participate in this project, the details of which I have read in information provided.

I understand that my participation will involve responding to a survey and that I will be invited to participate in a forty-minute interview with the researcher at the end of the survey. I understand that there is no obligation for me to participate in an interview regardless of my participation in the survey and that I will be required to give my consent to be interviewed

should I decide to participate in an interview. I agree that the researcher may use the results of the survey and interview as described in the information above.

I acknowledge that:

- taking part in this study is completely voluntary and I can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice;
- that any information I give will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify me with this study without my approval.

It is a requirement of ethics approval that respondents of this survey indicate their consent to participate. If you wish to participate in the survey, please select 'I consent to participating in this survey' below. If you do not wish to continue with the survey, thank you for your time and you can now exit the survey. If you have questions about the study, please contact the principle investigator.

O I consent to participating in this survey

Q1 How many years have you been practicing Stoicism?

O 0 - 5 years

O 6 - 10 years

O over 10 years

Q2 How would you rate your level of understanding of Stoic philosophy?

O Early stages of learning

O Average level of understanding

O Above average level of understanding

O Expert

Q3 Please select which of the following social media groups you are a member or follower of:
[*Select as many as applicable*]

- ☐ The Stoicism Group [Stoic Philosophy
- ☐ The Psychology of Stoicism, Buddhism & Epicureanism
- ☐ The Daily Stoic
- ☐ Applying Stoicism
- ☐ Traditional Stoicism
- ☐ The Practical Stoic Mastermind
- ☐ Stoicism and Psychology
- ☐ Other_____
- ☐ Other _____

Q4 Approximately how often do you engage with the social media groups dedicated to Stoic philosophy?

O 2 or more times per day

O Once per day

O 2 or more times per week

O Once per week

O 2 - 3 times per month

O Once per month

O Less than once per month

Q5 Have you found the social media group(s) you interact with have influenced or informed your Stoic practice?

O Yes

O No

Q6 Please briefly describe the culture you have experienced through your interactions with the social media group(s) you identified previously. For example, have you found an informative, supportive and/or helpful culture or have you found little that interests you or that the group discussions are unhelpful, aggressive or rude? Please use your own words to describe the culture you have experienced.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q7 Please list other sources you have engaged with to inform your Stoic philosophy practice. [*Please select as many as applicable*]

☐ Reading

☐ Attending presentations

☐ Listening to Podcasts

☐ Watching videos

☐ Joining off-line Stoic groups

☐ Speaking with colleagues or friends

☐ Other _____

☐ Other _____

Q8 What circumstances have you applied the principles of Stoic philosophy to? [Please select as many as applicable.]

☐ I have not applied Stoic philosophy

☐ Relationships and/or Friendships and/or Partnerships

☐ Workplace Situations

☐ Personal Growth and Development

☐ Advising Others

☐ Other _____

☐ Other _____

Skip To: Q9 If What circumstances have you applied the principles of Stoic philosophy to? [Please select as many... = Workplace Situations

Skip To: Q15 If What circumstances have you applied the principles of Stoic philosophy to? [Please select as many... != Workplace Situations

Q9 Have the social media group(s) you interact with influenced how you have approached workplace situations?

O Yes

O No

Skip To: Q10 If Have the social media group(s) you interact with influenced how you have approached workplace sit... = Yes

Skip To: Q11 If Have the social media group(s) you interact with influenced how you have approached workplace sit... = No

Q10 In what way did the social media group(s) influence how you approached workplace situations? [*Please select as many as applicable*]

☐ Advice from other members of the group

☐ Recommended readings posted to the group

☐ Stoic quotes posted to the group

☐ Posts by other members on their own experiences or challenges

☐ Other_____

☐ Other_____

Q11 A number of workplace situations have been provided in the list below. Please indicate which workplace situations you have applied Stoic philosophy to by selecting the specific Stoic principles that were useful in these situations. Definitions of each of the three main principles of Stoic philosophy [Logic, Ethics and Physics] have been provided. You can select more than one principle as they apply to the specific workplace situations. [*Select as many situations as apply to your experiences and add more situations as these apply to your circumstances. If you are unsure which principles apply to a situation that you have encountered, select 'Unsure'. If you have not encountered one of the situations, for example, 'Conflict Management', do not click any of the boxes for that workplace situation.*]

Logic

Logic, as experienced through Stoic philosophy, is a process of acknowledging "the impact of things or qualities on the senses" [*impression*], "the power of the mind to pass judgement on what the senses report" so as to draw an opinion [*assent*], to then "be submitted to the scrutiny of reason" [*conviction*], and finally, compared with experiences of others and "confirmed by the general verdict of mankind [ibid]" [*knowledge*] (Staniforth, 1976, pp. 11-12). Essentially, Logic is the process of progressively moving beyond your initial thoughts, opinions or judgements in order to gain a greater understanding of the circumstances.

Ethics

The regulation of one's own emotions that is required to obtain knowledge of what is socially good, beyond self-interest, and to resist action that would be deemed detrimental to others (Aristotle, 1962, p. 6; Book One, 1095a).The notion of 'the common good' defined as an awareness and consideration of alternative perspectives that may influence one's approach so as to achieve an end which satisfies more than one purpose. Ethics is consideration of how our own decisions and actions affect others.

Physics

An understanding that everything is continuously changing and what was once the whole can become a part of a different entity, as it were, and vice versa. An acceptance of what is within one's control [ie. one's own behaviours, beliefs and actions] and what is outside of one's control [everything else].

	Logic	Ethics	Physics	Unsure
Conflict Management	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improving Team Dynamics	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overcoming disappointment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Addressing bullying or harassment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improving your own performance and/or productivity	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussing performance issues with an employee	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overcoming work dissatisfaction	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leaving a job, team or organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Starting a new job	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparing for a difficult conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Decision making	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing a career or job change	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q12 Please select one of the five options [Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; or Strongly Agree] as your response to each of the below statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
By applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to my workplace, I am learning to think beyond my first impression or opinion of situations in order to enact a more considered response.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
By applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to my workplace, I am gaining a better understanding and consideration of others' perspectives and experiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
By applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to my workplace, I am learning to consider or seek others' perspectives and experiences when making decisions or assertions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Through my own reflections during my application of the principles of Stoic philosophy to my workplace, I am gaining a better understanding of the impact of my own actions and behaviours within the workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Through my own reflections during my application of the principles of Stoic philosophy to my workplace, I am gaining a better understanding and acceptance of the organizational parameters within which I work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13 Please briefly describe the main challenges you faced in applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

_____

Q14 Please briefly describe the main benefits you experienced in applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

Q15 Do you think Stoic philosophy is, or would be, a useful approach to apply in workplace situations?

O Yes

O No

O Not sure

This concludes the survey stage of this research project. Thank you for taking part in this survey and contributing to our understanding of the application of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

If you would like to continue to contribute to this research by participating in a forty-minute interview with the researcher to share your experience(s) in applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace, please indicate your consent below and provide contact details. Interviews will be conducted via video/phone and will be recorded for accuracy purposes. Your details will remain confidential and you will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

O I consent to participating in an interview regarding my experience(s) with applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

O I do not wish to participate in an interview

Skip To: QID29 If This concludes the survey stage of this research project. Thank you for taking part in this survey... = I consent to participating in an interview regarding my experience(s) with applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

Skip To: End of Survey If This concludes the survey stage of this research project. Thank you for taking part in this survey... != I consent to participating in an interview regarding my experience(s) with applying Stoic philosophy in the workplace.

Please provide your contact email below. I am expecting a high volume of response to the survey and may not be able to interview everyone who has indicated their interest in being interviewed. Whilst I will endeavour to respond to all potential interviewees via return email,

if you do not hear back from me regarding an interview, it is because I have had to sample a large volume of potential interviewees randomly. Thank you for your participation in the survey and for indicating your interest in being interviewed.

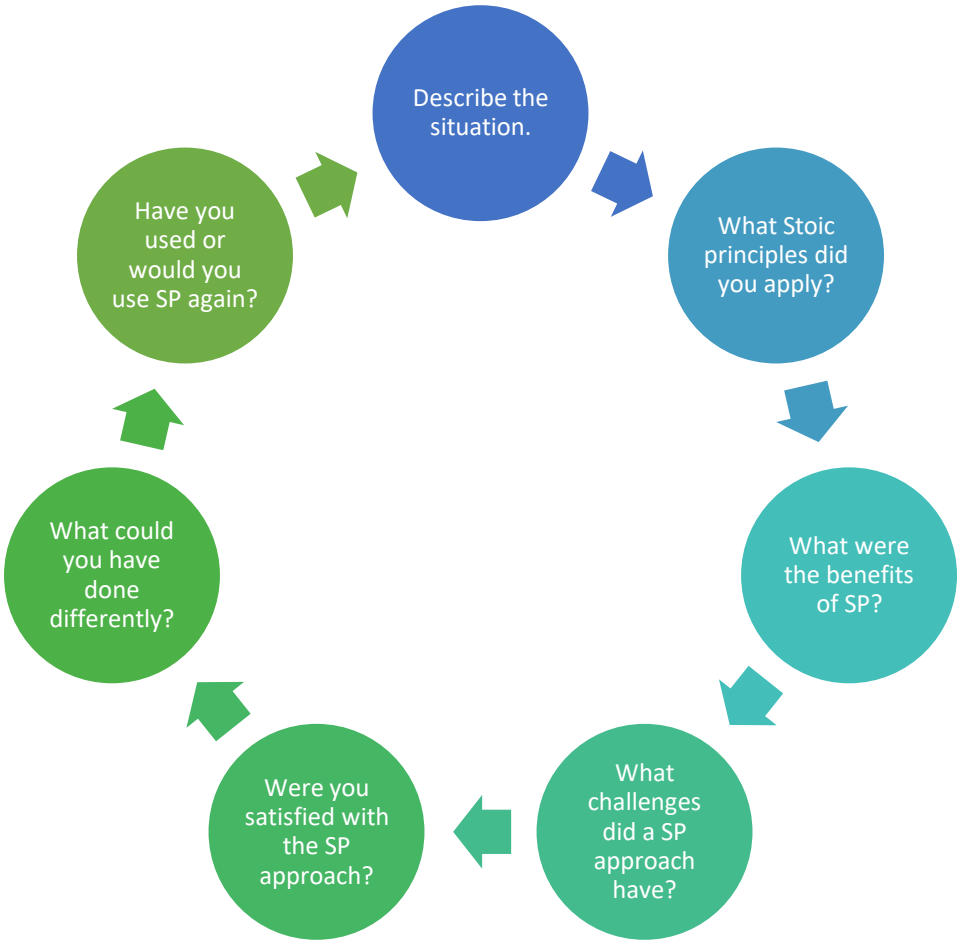
☐ Email _____

☐ First Name _____

☐ Surname _____

Appendix C – Interview Structure

Adapted Gibb's Reflective Learning Cycle (Gibbs, 1988) for the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy in the workplace.



Expanded Questions for Interviews:

1. Describe the workplace situation that you applied the principles of Stoic philosophy to.
2. What Stoic principles did you apply to your workplace situation?
3. What were the benefits of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to your workplace situation?
4. What challenges did you encounter when applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to your workplace situation?
5. Were you satisfied with the result the application of the principles of Stoic philosophy had in your workplace situation?
6. Is there anything you think you could have done differently to improve the result of applying the principles of Stoic philosophy to your workplace situation?
7. Would you recommend the use of the principles of Stoic philosophy for others to apply in workplace situations?

Appendix D – Interview Data File Saving Protocol

Interview data file naming protocol was consistently maintained as [interviewee initials, initials of their country and date of interview – day month year]. Audio, auto-transcript and final transcript files all had same file name prefix with specific suffix as per the nature of the file.

Example:	
Initials First Name.	**A**
Last Name	**M**
Country Canada	**CA**
Date Day	**28**
Month	April [**4**th month]
Year	**2020**
File Name	**AMCA2842020**

Audio Recording File Name	AMCA2842020-audio_only.m4a
Auto-transcript File Name	AMCA2842020-audio_only-autotranscript
Final transcript File Name	AMCA2842020-audio_only-final transcript

All interview data files were saved to multiple locations as follows:

Initial copy	OneDrive
Backup copy	USB
Analysis copy	NVivo project
Key data files	Copies of audio recordings and final transcripts emailed to my own email
External copy	Copies of transcripts and coding book emailed to primary advisor

Appendix E – Locations of Survey Respondents

United States	**13**
Arizona*†	
California*	*2*
Chicago, Illinois*	*2*
Colorado**	*2*
Iowa*	
Mannington, West Virginia*	
Michigan*	
North Carolina	
Utah	
Virginia*	
Washington	
Canada	**6**
Lesser Slave River, Alberta	
Ontario*	
Ottawa	
Quebec	
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*	
Terrace	
United Kingdom	**4**
Abingdon, Oxford*	
Carmarthen, Wales*	
Great Yarmouth	
Pontypridd, Wales*	
Australia	**3**
Brisbane	
Melbourne	
Mosman, NSW	
New Zealand	**2**
Ashburton	
Auckland*	
Denmark	**1**
Copenhagen*	
Dominican Republic	**1**
Santo Domingo*	
Finland	**1**
Helsinki	
Germany	**1**
Berlin*	
India	**1**
Maharashtra	
Ireland	**1**
Dublin	
Pakistan	**1**
Thatta, Sindh	

Philippines Metro Manila	**1**
Serbia Belgrade	**1**
South Africa Durban	**1**
Sweden*	**1**
Uruguay Montevideo	**1**
Total	**40**

* Interviewees

† Additional location added from interviewee location not identified by Qualtrics

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