Individualised work and wellbeing

Homeworking, self-employment and creative labour

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Declaration of authorship

I William Barnes hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis examines home-based, self-employed creative labour as an example of individualised work, and investigates its effect on subjective wellbeing. Despite the benefits of autonomy and the potential for meaningful and enjoyable work, questions and concerns remain about the burdens of precariousness, the attainability of self-fulfilling labour, the possibility of isolation, and the repercussions of work-life integration for leisure and home. To contribute to our understanding of these issues that are characteristic of individualised work, the thesis analyses how the intrinsic benefits, precarious freedoms, socialities, and work-life boundary dynamics of this work influence subjective wellbeing. 21 participants took part in the research. Questionnaires measuring emotion, satisfaction, and social-psychological functioning provided an assessment of their wellbeing, while participant-led video diaries and semi-structured interviews enabled an in-depth investigation of their experiences.

The questionnaires revealed positive subjective wellbeing across the sample, and an analysis of the interviews and video diaries helps to explain the influence of work to this end. While the vulnerability and uncertainty of work was a source of stress, the benefits of autonomy and to a greater extent the personal enrichment of creative labour evidently contributed to the high levels of wellbeing reported. The socialities of the work-home and independent creative labour as well as individualised networks of social spaces and connections mitigated experiences of isolation. Work-life integration and the precariousness and responsibility of work did have some negative consequences and could undermine the positive relationship between flexibility and leisure time satisfaction. Considering the emotional geographies of homeworking, the home remained a space of rejuvenation and the dynamics of the work-home were mutually enhancing of both domains, although feelings of entrapment and the importance and challenges of getting out of the house also emerged. To conclude, the thesis outlines the contributions made and avenues for future research and methodological design.

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Chapter One
Introduction

At the turn of the 21st century, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p. 3; see also Bauman, 1992; 2000; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) argued that society was undergoing a fundamental shift towards 'individualisation', seeing individuals "plan, understand, design themselves and act as individuals" rather than as part of a group or a community. "The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life" they wrote, "is the central character of our time" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, pp. 22-23). Driven by the pursuit of self-fulfilment and personal achievement, these characters are also the "actors, builders, jugglers, stage managers" of their own biographies, identities, social links and networks (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, pp. 22-23; see also Wellman, 2001; 2002). Being self-organised in this way, they stressed, requires integration, flexibility, initiative and tenacity and is characterised by the experience of "precarious freedoms" and insecurity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 16; see also Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992). As articulated by Fenwick (2003, p. 167), "limitless possibility co-exists with potential disaster for which individuals must take personal responsibility". In the context of work specifically, the de-standardisation of employment and the rise of flexible, insecure and informal work are regarded as emblematic of individualisation (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; 2000; see also Kossek and Kelliher, 2022). In this regard, and also in the context of the notions more general usage in signifying the "atomisation, self-realisation or social isolation of the individual" (Ebert, 2012, p. 7), self-employed work, homeworking, and work in the creative industries have been considered exemplary of individualised and individualising activity (Ekinsmyth, 1999; Fenwick, 2003; Gill, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Ianni *et al.,* 2022; Mould, 2018).

Homeworking, self-employment and creative work have indeed been on the rise. A broad concept, homeworking can be defined as encompassing any paid tasks that take place within one's own home (Wapshott and Mallett, 2012), and overlaps with other terms such as home-based work and home-anchored work which can be used to qualify the use of the home as the primary place of work (Gough, 2013; Mikats, 2021; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007). The occurrence of work within the home has a long history. Pre-industrial society was dominated by families 'working' at home for self-sufficiency, and even since the industrial revolution and the subsequent separation of work and home, domestic labour in the form of cleaning, cooking and care work still occur within the home, although remaining primarily the responsibility of women and only typically remunerated when undertaken for others (Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Jupp *et al.,* 2020; Volti, 2012). However, the prominence of 'immaterial

work' along with the flexibility gifted by the rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in recent decades has seen the growth of homeworking and home-based businesses (Felstead, 2012; Gregg, 2011; Martella and Amann y Alcocer, 2022). Liberating work from the office and the factory, this reconfiguration of the home as a central location and legitimate place of paid work was identified several years ago as "one of the most significant trends in the post-industrial era" (Mason, Carter and Tagg, 2011, p. 626; see also Felstead, Jewson and Walters, 2005; Kelliher and Richardson, 2019; Pink, 2001). Since then, the trend has only continued. In the decade leading up to 2018 the number of people working mainly from their own home almost doubled in the United Kingdom (UK) from 884,000 to 1,542,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2019), and the relative success of the large scale 'homeworking trial' initiated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic under the work from home order looks to have further accelerated this trend (Office for National Statistics, 2022a).

The self-employed are considered "an increasingly vital component of the twenty-first century workforce" and are illustrative of a broader change in the structure of employment towards the detachment of the organisation and the worker (McKeown, 2019, p. 56; see also Kelliher and Richardson, 2019). Encompassing freelancers, independent contractors, sole proprietors and small business owners, the self-employed are workers that "derive their income by exercising their profession or business on their own account and at their own risk" rather than by working for an employer in return for a wage or a salary (Parker, 2004, p. 6). As well as accounting for the majority of home-based workers (Office for National Statistics, 2023), the number of self-employed workers in the UK rose to a high of five million prior to the seismic event of the COVID-19 pandemic making up 15% of the workforce (Office for National Statistics, 2022b), with solo self-employment in particular accounting for over a third of the employment growth that the country had seen since the 2008 financial crisis (Giupponi and Xu, 2020). Not confined to the UK context, this increase in self-employment has been attributed to a range of factors, including organisational decentralisation, institutional change, policy and socio-cultural trends (Arum and Müller, 2004; Dvouletý and Lukeš, 2016; European Commission, 2010; Kremer, Went and Knottnerus, 2017; Meager, 1992; Torrini, 2005; van Es and van Vuuren, 2011).

The creative industries have been reported to be the fastest growing industry in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2017), and as such has been exalted as the "the saviour of the economy" within public policy spheres (Hawkins, 2017, p. 1; see also Florida, 2002). Defined by their "potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2001, p. 5), the creative industries span a wide range of sectors from music, the performing arts and the visual arts to IT, software and computer services, and in doing so overlaps with the service and knowledge economy as well as the 'cultural industries'. Considered

exemplary of the rise of precarious and flexible employment (Gill and Pratt, 2008), the self-employed constitute nearly half of the workforce in the UK creative industries (Easton *et al.,* 2017). Moreover, careers in the creative industries are heralded as the pinnacle of a contemporary work culture that has become dominated by the "ideal of the enterprising self", the aspiration of doing what you love and the pursuit of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment (Duffy, 2017, p. 2; see also Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006), with creative work being tied to personal interests, passions and talents and creativity being understood to be innate to positive human functioning. As a result of these attributes and the nature of creativity, it has also been understood to be characterised by the merging of work and non-work life (Mould, 2018).

As an example of individualised work, the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative professionals are the focus of this thesis. Through this case study, a number of fundamental dimensions of individualised work are investigated, specifically the autonomy and precarious working conditions associated with self-employment, the pursuit and practise of intrinsically beneficial and self-fulfilling labour associated with creative work, and the social atomisation and networked individualism of independent, home-based work. Aided by boundary theory, it also foregrounds and engages with the integration of work life with personal life at the heart of home-based, self-employed creative labour. Through the spatial conflation of work and home life, the flexibility of self-employment, and the entanglement of work with leisure as a result of self-fulfilling labour and the pervasiveness of creativity, such work is also 'individualised' through its propensity towards being amalgamated as part of a broader notion of 'life' (Nippert-Eng, 2003).

Challenging traditional notions concerning the where, when, how and why of work (McKeown, 2019), there is a need to better understand these emerging characteristics and forms of contemporary work and the implications they have for the individual (Kelliher and Richardson, 2019). To do so, the dynamics of these individualised working practices are evaluated by examining the ways in which they shape the subjective wellbeing of home-based, self-employed creative professionals. Defined and conceptualised in line with traditions in Psychology, this focus on subjective wellbeing and the dimensions of positive human functioning that it encapsulates importantly judges individualised work by means of the personal consequences it has for the individual and the extent to which they are able to lead "a desirable and rewarding life" (Diener, 2012, p. 590). In doing so, the thesis engages with a number of current research agendas.

Turning first to self-employment, the experience and enactment of such work has been largely overlooked (de Jager *et al.,* 2016), and the "decline of corporations as providers of reliable jobs" means that understanding the lives of independent workers is of ever-increasing importance (Petriglieri,

Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019, p. 128; see also Ciolfi and Lockley, 2018). The connection between autonomy and job satisfaction amongst the self-employed has been well documented (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; Hundley, 2001; Lange, 2012; van den Born and van Witteloostuijn, 2013; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020). Nevertheless, further research is required into "the mechanisms that underlie … the relationship between self-employment and job satisfaction" (Binder and Blankenberg, 2021, p. 20), with space for qualitative studies to provide a better understanding of how autonomy materialises in day-to-day independent work and how these experiences in turn affect subjective wellbeing. Conen and Schippers (2019, p. 5) have also highlighted how the precariousness of self-employment is "seldom … the centre of attention", stressing that it is an important area of study given the limited recognition of such potential problems within policy debates which often promote self-employment, entrepreneurship, and small and medium sized enterprises.

With regard to creative work, Harriet Hawkins (2017, p. 60) has emphasised the need to scrutinise the daily experience of work in an industry that is "one of the great economic hopes of the era", urging for "careful thought" to be given to "those myths of the satisfied creative worker" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 69). While careers in the creative industries offer the potential for meaningful and enjoyable work, Hawkins (2017, p. 69) challenges popular narratives around the experiences of those in the creative industries by foregrounding the burdens of precarious, emotional, aesthetic and performative labour, and the potential "corrosion of the creative elements of their work". Along with studies of creative workers that have identified the autonomy of their self-employment as the reason for higher levels of wellbeing (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013), questions remain about the availability, materialisation and significance of creative work as personally fulfilling and enriching.

Bringing the place of work into consideration, Reuschke (2019, p. 1326) has asserted that research concerning the subjective wellbeing of workers needs "to pay attention to the continued trend towards individualised work in people's own homes". In particular, she states a need for more consideration to be given to the subjective wellbeing of the self-employed who work from home because of the potential repercussions of working predominantly from home (see Office for National Statistics, 2023) and being "disconnected from work relations" (Reuschke, 2019, p. 1344), especially with regard to social and professional isolation (see also de Jager *et al.,* 2016). Despite the potential difference in experience as a result of these circumstances and despite them accounting for the majority of homeworkers in the UK pre-pandemic (Office for National Statistics, 2014; cf. Office for National Statistics, 2023), the majority of research on homeworking has focused on employees, leaving the home-based businesses of the self-employed absent from "most existing research and theory-building" (Reuschke, 2015, p. 6; see also Reuschke, 2019; Siha and Monroe, 2006). Alongside Reuschke (2019), Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015) too have called on researchers to further examine the social

wellbeing of those for whom the home is the primary or the sole place of work, raising the possibility of isolation but also the possible establishment of alternative, personally crafted social connections and networks in response to these conditions. Previous work has investigated different aspects of social experience relevant to the individualised work of home-based, self-employed creative professionals, but a comprehensive study aiming to examine these dimensions collectively and discern their influence on subjective wellbeing is yet to be undertaken.

Finally, concerns have been raised about the potential boundarylessness of home-based, self-employed creative work. In his book *Against Creativity*, Mould (2018, p. 30) draws attention to the individualisation of creative work and its amalgamation with non-work life. As he explains, creative work is often a lifestyle, vocation and a passion, everyday life is a source of inspiration and a facilitator of productive creative thinking, and there is a prevalence of precarious and flexible working conditions across the industry. When unbound by physical space in the context of homeworking, the subsequent entanglement of flexible creative labour with the social, leisure and non-economic elements of life, according to Mould (2018), threatens to disrupt home life and the nature of the home as an important emotional and psychological space of sanctuary, detract from leisure, and have ramifications for mental health and work-life balance. By investigating the complex boundary dynamics between work, home, family and leisure for these workers (see also Field and Chan, 2018; Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019), this thesis looks to critically examine these claims and the assumptions made about the consequences of such potential integration. Specifically, two areas of inquiry emerge. Firstly, as a result of the pressures of precariousness, the flexibility of self-employment and the blurring of work and leisure under the conditions of self-fulfilling, enjoyable and creative work, questions arise about the consequences these dynamics have for their work-life interface and leisure satisfaction, which have been largely neglected in studies of the self-employed and their wellbeing (de Jager *et al.,* 2016; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). Secondly, the implications of this conflation of work and non-work life for the experience of home as a place is a promising field of study, both in the context of homeworking generally and with regard to home-based creative work specifically.

A primary aim of this thesis is thus to investigate the repercussions of this individualised, home-based work for the social relations, emotional experiences and meanings that constitute 'home'. In doing so, it builds upon a conceptual understanding of home as propounded by Blunt and Dowling (2022; see also Blunt, 2005). Maintaining that a defining feature of home is that it is both material and imaginative, they recognise and emphasise that home is created through the interrelationship of a physical dwelling, a set of feelings, emotions and meanings, and the social relationships of its inhabitants. While Blunt and Dowling (2022) draw attention to the fact that home can be constructed across multiple scales and can constitute a range of spatialities, it is the household that is the primary

site of home under consideration in this thesis. Taking an interdisciplinary approach to the study of wellbeing, it examines through a geographical lens the social and emotional parameters of subjective wellbeing as commonly defined in Psychology, and as such foregrounds the ways in which such subjective mental states can be intricately interconnected to places and spaces, such as the home.

Referring to the rise in homeworking, Reuschke (2019, p. 1345) has argued that the implications of these "changing geographies of work and workplaces" are "not only important for work–family research or organisational studies", but need "more attention in geographical research that seeks to better understand well-being and place." While Mould (2018) draws attention to the potential impact this individualised work may have on the experience of home, Hawkins (2017) has highlighted that little attention has actually been given to the role that home-based creative practices might play in the making and un-making of home, with Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 127) additionally indicating that "the spatiotemporal context in which creative persons live has consequences that often go unnoticed." With the emotional geographies of homeworking being a particularly underdeveloped research area (cf. Ahrentzen, 1997), there is potential to not only contribute to Geographical literature, but also the growing conceptual engagement and interest in place within Organisational Studies (e.g., Cartel, Kibler and Dacin, 2022; David, Jones and Croidieu, 2020; Lawrence and Dover, 2015; Wright *et al.,* 2021).

In light of these areas of interest, the thesis seeks to address the following research questions concerning the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative professionals:

1. How do the intrinsic benefits and precarious freedoms associated with these individualised working practices shape the subjective wellbeing of these workers?
2. How do the socialities of these individualised working practices shape the social wellbeing of these workers?
3. How do the work-life boundary dynamics of these individualised working practices shape the subjective wellbeing of these workers, specifically with regard to their leisure time and the emotional geographies of home?

Although the prevalence of homeworking and the precariousness of labour for these workers were shaped by the policies and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2021 (Creative Industries Federation, 2020; Oxford Economics, 2020; Reuschke and Felstead, 2020; Reuschke *et al.,* 2020), these conditions are not a focus of this thesis. The subject and research design of the project was devised prior to the outbreak in 2019, and while contingency was made to accommodate the influence of the pandemic, data collection occurred after the lifting of restrictions in 2021 meaning that the original research plan remained unchanged, and the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative professionals were not studied under pandemic conditions.

The thesis proceeds by first *conceptualising wellbeing* in chapter two. Tackling the age-old question of what it means to 'be well', this chapter begins by outlining the definition and dimensions of subjective wellbeing as mobilised for the purposes of this research and how it aligns with the term's philosophical traditions and its more contemporary uses in the social sciences. After highlighting the judgements, assumptions and Western values inherent to this conceptualisation of wellbeing through a consideration of alternative approaches and common critiques, it discusses geographical perspectives on wellbeing and the way they hone a sensitivity to the spatialities and personal particularities of wellbeing for this research.

The third chapter then provides a review of literature on *contemporary individualised work and wellbeing,* focusing specifically on the impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on subjective wellbeing. Focusing first on qualities and conditions of self-employed creative work, the significance of autonomy and precariousness for the experiences of self-employment are presented, along with the tensions between the proclamations of creativity and creative labour's life-affirming and fulfilling qualities and the conditions of independent and insecure work in the industry. The review then brings together an array of literature concerning isolation, alternative spaces and networks of social interaction, the relationships of the work-home and the socialities of independent creative work to help understand the potential impact that home-based individualised work could have on social wellbeing. Fundamental to the notion of the blurring of work life and personal life, the chapter also engages with boundary theory and research pertinent to homeworking and the experience of work-as-leisure, and the question of what consequences this could have for wellbeing and the emotional geographies of home.

The research *methodology* is outlined in chapter four. Comprised of participant-led video diaries and in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore experiences of work as well as questionnaires to provide wellbeing assessments, it outlines the innovative mixed-method approach taken to the study of individualised work's effect on subjective wellbeing, and the choice of the methods to this end. The criteria for participation, the stages of the recruitment process and the characteristics of the sample are then explained, before describing the predominantly digital and online data collection and analysis process which involved the use of Indeemo's mobile ethnography app, Zoom's video call platform, and NVivo's coding software. The chapter concludes by providing details of the ethical standards that the research met and the measures taken to minimise the risks posed to those involved.

Marking the start of the analysis and discussion of the data collected, a concise chapter five provides an overview of the *wellbeing assessments* provided by the questionnaires. Examining the quantitative data, the overall positive wellbeing of the sample is discussed, with particular attention drawn to the

strong sense of social-psychological functioning and the markedly lower leisure time satisfaction scores that were reported. Analysing the qualitative data of the interviews and video diaries, the subsequent chapters then discuss the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative work and the way they shaped the subjective wellbeing of the sample.

Chapter six on the *experiences of work and labour* begins the analysis of the wellbeing repercussions of the individualised working practices, engaging with the first research question concerning the intrinsic benefits and precarious freedoms of self-employed creative labour. It outlines how their creative practices were a profound means of self-realisation and an emotionally enriching and personally satisfying creative outlet that was enhanced by the professionalism and autonomy of their work. In doing so, it challenges previous emphasis that has been placed on autonomy as the preeminent factor behind the high levels of wellbeing amongst these workers as well as narratives of creativity's erosion under the conditions of work. Finding the vulnerability, uncertainty and fluctuations of such work to be a psychological burden largely irrespective of financial difficulties, it is also argued that the precariousness of self-employment does not necessarily need to result in material repercussions to have consequences for wellbeing. The significance of strategies taken to minimise such insecurities and the persistence of optimism are also discussed.

Chapter seven on the *experiences of isolation and connection* in turn address the consequences that this individualised, home-based work had for the social wellbeing of these workers, as encapsulated in the second research question. Acknowledging the anticipated issue of social and professional isolation, it reports a susceptibility to these problems, but details the good social functioning that prevailed amongst the sample as a result of the garnering and enhancing of positive social connections across an array of spaces and networks. In examining these social dynamics, it conceptualises the work-home as an integrative social space, drawing attention to its importance as a source of interaction, support and care, despite home-based flexible labour having the potential to 'erode' time spent with home-others. It contributes to the argument that physical social spaces and in-person interaction are of greater social value in comparison to their virtual alternatives and provides a counter narrative to the image of the creative workers as self-absorbed by suggesting that the 'social work' of their creative labour was important to their sense of contributing to the wellbeing of others. Finally, it discusses the value of recognition from clients and audiences for their self-esteem, given the absence of feedback from peers and managers and the non-traditional nature of their work.

Chapter eight on the *experiences of leisure and home* then answers the third research question interested in the supposed work-life integration of such individualised work and its consequences for subjective wellbeing, particularly in the context of leisure time and the emotional experiences of

home. In response to the concerns raised about the expected detriment of the blurring of these boundaries, it discusses the psychological pervasiveness of work, evidence of resultant negative emotional experiences, and measures taken to manage it. It also reveals the integration of work and leisure to be positively experienced overall, but how the draw of leisure-like work, along with the precariousness and the weak spatio-temporal boundaries of work and the demands of family life, could undermine the positive relationship between the flexibility of labour and leisure time satisfaction. In the latter half of the chapter, the emotional geographies of homeworking are the focus of attention, specifically the experience of the home as a place of rejuvenation and the synergism of the creative work-home, whereby the integration of these spheres positively enhances the experiences of both work and home. Raising concerns about the use of the home as the singular place of work, it also contributes evidence that prolonged periods of time spent working from home could cause feelings of entrapment and that regular environmental variation is both important for wellbeing and potentially challenging for these workers.

Outlined in the *conclusion* of chapter nine are the insights these findings provide for the research questions of the thesis and the knowledge contributions that are made regarding the individualised work of home-based, self-employed creative professionals and its influence on subjective wellbeing. This final chapter also considers what these findings say about the nature and experience of creative labour, self-employed homeworking and individualised working practices more generally, suggests directions for future studies on the subject, and evaluates the mixed-method design and the video diary method for research into subjective wellbeing.

Chapter Two
Conceptualising wellbeing

As "a notoriously abstract and unstable term" (Atkinson, 2013, p. 138), wellbeing has proven to be a challenging concept to define and study. In comparison to health's relatively simple description as the "presence or absence of specific diseases", the identification and measurement of "the presence or absence of a positive sense of wellbeing" is a far more ambiguous undertaking (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, p. 107). Amongst the diverse interpretations, theorisations and approaches that have been inspired to discern what it means to 'be well', there is however a loose consensus of wellbeing as being a "holistic conception of positive human functioning" that exceeds the physiological and biomedical confines of 'health' (Conradson, 2012, p. 16). As an area of intellectual debate with thousands of years' worth of history, the re-theorisation of wellbeing is not within the remit of this thesis. Instead, centring primarily around the work of Ed Diener, it adopts a conceptualisation of wellbeing as commonly studied in the field of Psychology which are firmly anchored in well-established philosophies of wellbeing. Interested in the relationship between wellbeing and place, geographical engagements with this conceptualisation are too subsequently utilised to guide an inquiry into the way in which some of its dimensions are intricately connected to home.

For the purposes of this research, wellbeing is defined as "a sense of completeness and balance in varied aspects of life" and "an embodied experience of being well" (Severson and Collins, 2018, p. 126-127). It thus attends to wellbeing on a subjective register; in other words, according to an individual's personal assessment and subjective evaluation of their own life (Diener and Ryan, 2009), rather than approaching it objectively via external indicators and impersonal assessments. To bring further clarity to how this definition of subjective wellbeing translates into an object of study, it is broken down into its constitutive dimensions, adopting what has been coined to be a components approach to the study of wellbeing (Atkinson, Fuller and Painter, 2012). The components of subjective wellbeing as identified by Ed Diener (see Diener, 2000; 1984), as well as his classification of social-psychological flourishing that are recognised as complementing these original elements (Diener *et al.,* 2010), are the dimensions of subjective wellbeing that will be evaluated and examined for the purposes of this research. Adopting terminology that has been previously used when describing the constitutive elements of subjective wellbeing (e.g., Conradson, 2012; Norrish and Vella-Brodrick, 2008), these components are categorised into the emotional dimension and the cognitive dimension (see **Figure 2.1**). While the emotional dimension encapsulates the experience of both positive and negative emotions, the cognitive dimension is comprised of satisfaction with life and life domains, and

important aspects of social-psychological functioning. Including purpose and meaning, engagement and competency in activities, self-esteem and optimism, it also incorporates various dimensions of social relationships. Encompassing the quality of relationships, contributions to the wellbeing of others and being respected by others, these elements of social-psychological functioning will be more generally referred to as 'social wellbeing' throughout the thesis.

Subjective wellbeing

Emotional dimension	
Positive emotions	Negative emotions

Cognitive dimension

Satisfaction
- Life satisfaction
- Satisfaction with important life domains (e.g., work and leisure)

Social-psychological functioning
- Social relationships
- Purpose and meaning
- Engagement
- Competence
- Self-esteem
- Optimism
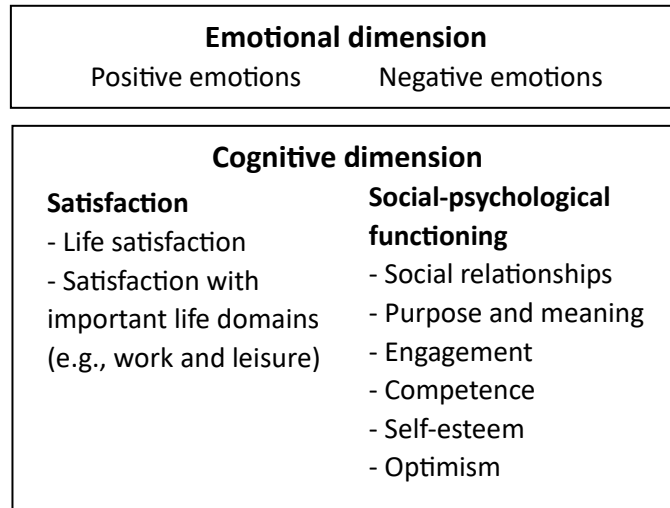
Figure 2.1. The dimensions that constitute subjective wellbeing for the purposes of this study.

Acting as a literature review on the concept, the remainder of this chapter is used to situate this understanding and mobilisation of wellbeing within its broader history and landscape. Charting its *philosophical and psychological foundations,* it demonstrates its continuity with the traditions of hedonism and eudaimonism and their translation within contemporary social scientific theory, before critically engaging with the *ontologies, epistemologies and cultures* inherent to this conceptualisation of wellbeing. To end, it turns to the *geographies of wellbeing* to outline how the discipline has theoretically engaged with the subject, and how geographical scholarship is used to hone an attentiveness and sensitivity to the spatialities of wellbeing.

Philosophical and psychological foundations

Attending to affect, satisfaction and social-psychological functioning, this study's conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing importantly incorporates the two traditions that have come to define wellbeing scholarship and research in the West and the explanation they provide for the parameters of what constitutes positive human flourishing. Originating in Ancient Greece where contemplations around what constitutes a good and flourishing life are typically thought to originate (Waterman, 1990), these historically opposed philosophies are known as hedonism and eudaimonism. Hedonism, which is attributed to Aristippus, can be more colloquially understood as happiness or pleasure-based wellbeing (Kahneman, Diener and Schwarz, 1999; Lampe, 2014), while eudaimonism, which is from the work of Aristotle, can be summarised as satisfaction and meaning-based wellbeing (Aristotle, 1985; Deci and Ryan, 2008).

According to Aristippus and the Cyrenaic way of life of which he was part, all human action should exclusively be done with the objective of increasing our wellbeing by maximising pleasure and minimising pain (Bradley, 2015). This hedonistic doctrine that a good life is a pleasurable life has, over the years, been subject to philosophical amendments (e.g., Bentham, 1823; Feldman, 2004; Mill, 1861; Strodach, 2012), critiques (e.g., Nozick, 1974; Veenhoven, 2003) and defences (e.g., Bradley, 2015; Crisp, 2006) which are beyond the scope of this literature review, but its legacy can be traced through to prominent work on happiness by eminent psychologists such as Richard Layard (2005) as well as the study of positive and negative affect. This is central to, for instance, Bradburn's (1969) description of psychological wellbeing but also Ed Diener's conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing. According to Diener (2000; see also Diener, 1984; Diener and Suh, 1997), subjective wellbeing is comprised of a number of components which includes positive and negative affect – in other words, experiences of pleasant and unpleasant emotions, feelings and moods – but also the cognitive dimension of life satisfaction and satisfaction with important life domains such as work and leisure.

This formulation of wellbeing as encompassing the experiences of affect and one's sense of satisfaction is the view that is "most commonly presupposed by social science research into well-being" (Bradley, 2015, p. 33) which, through Ed Diener's definition of subjective wellbeing, is integrated into this study's conceptualisation. The use of 'affect' as a noun however is often defined by, or used synonymously with, similar terms such as emotions and feelings within this field, including Diener's work (see Diener, 1984; 2000; Diener *et al.*, 2010), without much consideration of their differentiation. To be specific, 'affects' are trans-personal, pre-cognitive, visceral intensities that impinge upon the body (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; McCormack, 2006), and which become 'feelings' at the point at which they develop into immediate bodily states (Pringle, 1999;

Williams, 2001). Emotions, on the other hand, are "those aspects of 'feelings' that can be expressed, reflected upon and communicated to others" through shared cultural descriptions, concepts and social constructs (Horton and Kraftl, 2014, p. 229). On the basis of the term's representation of the state at which it becomes consciously registered and communicative, this thesis opts to use emotions conceptually as the term of reference for this dimension of subjective wellbeing (see **Figure 2.1**).

Turning to the second of the two philosophical traditions, eudaimonic scholars have criticised hedonism for its narrow focus on maximising personal enjoyment and instead posit that wellbeing should be about the pursuit of human excellence through self-realisation, personal growth and the finding of meaning in life (Niemiec, 2014; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 1993). While hedonism considers these circumstances to be important for wellbeing only if they lead to pleasure, a eudaimonic perspective sees them as the very dimensions of wellbeing (Atkinson, Fuller and Painter, 2012). As argued by its proponents, the experience of pleasure is possible "whilst participating in suboptimal, dysfunctional and even injurious patterns of behaviour" and individuals who are suffering and experiencing acute hardship can still report high levels of subjective wellbeing (Conradson, 2012, p. 16).

Eudaimonism too has heavily influenced modern Psychology's theorisation of wellbeing. In contrast to Bradburn's (1969) classification of psychological wellbeing and highlighting the divergence created by these two philosophies, Carol Ryff (1989; see also Ryff and Singer, 2008), taking a eudaimonic stance, outlines the core dimensions of what she termed psychological wellbeing to be self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth and autonomy. To do so, Ryff (1989, p. 1069) brought together the extensive work from within the discipline that had engaged with "the contours of positive functioning" including, for instance, Carl Rogers' (1961) concept of the fully functioning person, Carl Jung's work on individuation (Stein, 2006), Gordon Allport's (1937) theory of maturity and Abraham Maslow's (1954) well-known hierarchy of needs. Similarly, Richard Ryan and Edward Deci developed self-determination theory to guide investigations of what promotes and undermines positive human potential. Believing in "the importance of humans' evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation" (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 68; see also Ryan, Kuhl and Deci, 1997), they identified three innate psychological needs – autonomy, relatedness and competence – which, if satisfied, fosters self-realisation and the intrinsic motivation to continue this personal growth and development.

Within Positive Psychology – a field concerned primarily with studying "the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions" (Gable and Haidt, 2005, p. 103) – conceptualisations of wellbeing have integrated or considered the

philosophical approaches of both hedonism and eudaimonism. This was the case with the work of Martin Seligman who is widely considered to be the father of the Positive Psychology movement, whether in the form of his earlier authentic happiness theory (Seligman, 2002) or his later developed PERMA well-being theory (Seligman, 2011). Under the banner of authentic happiness theory fell three dimensions of happiness: the pleasant life, or the maximisation of pleasurable and positive experiences; the good life, or engagement in and development of enjoyed activities, strengths, virtues and passions; and the meaningful life, or the application of these strengths to the greater good. On reflection nearly a decade on, Seligman (2011) looked to "dissolve the monism of "happiness" into more workable terms" and better represent the true complexity of human flourishing (Seligman, 2011, p. 9), and did so through his PERMA well-being theory. To map out the building blocks of this theory, he used the acronym PERMA to signify the importance of Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment.

Complementing his work theorising and studying subjective wellbeing as the experience of affect and one's sense of satisfaction, Ed Diener and colleagues too developed their own Flourishing Scale to study "major aspects of social-psychological functioning from the respondent's point of view" (Diener *et al.,* 2010, p. 145). Measuring self-perceived success in the important areas of social relationships, purpose and meaning, engagement and competence, self-esteem and optimism, it importantly drew upon this influential work by the likes of Carol Ryff (1989; Ryff and Singer, 1998), Richard Ryan and Edward Deci (2000) and Martin Seligman (2002) as covered above, as well as others (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Dunn, Aknin and Norton, 2008; Steger *et al.,* 2008). It is because of this summation of the key theorisations and applications of eudaimonic wellbeing that these elements of social-psychological functioning are incorporated into this study's conceptualisation of wellbeing alongside the hedonistic dimensions of satisfaction and emotion. As well as embracing both traditions of hedonism and eudaimonism, this combination of the dimensions of subjective wellbeing and social-psychological functioning as identified by Ed Diener also mirrors the components of wellbeing often studied in the context of work and engages with the "multifaceted nature of wellbeing" instead of focusing on one construct, as other research has done (Forgeard *et al.,* 2011, p. 81; see also Grant and McGhee, 2021; Fisher, 2014).

Necessary to highlight is the overlap of this conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing with definitions of both mental health and quality of life. Often used interchangeably with wellbeing, mental health can similarly be understood as "an individual's mental state and ability to function within the environment" and their "intellectual, emotional and spiritual development … positive self-perception, feelings of self-worth and physical health … and intrapersonal harmony" (Manwell *et al.,* 2015, pp. 1-2, citing Alonso, 1960; Bhugra, Till and Satorius, 2013; Health Education Authority, 1997; Lubin and

Levitt, 2017; Mental Health Foundation Scotland, 2008; Sartorius, 2002; Sells, 1969; World Health Organization, 1948; 2004). Quality of life too can be described as "optimum levels of mental, physical, role (e.g. work, parent, carer, etc.) and social functioning, including relationships, and perceptions of health, fitness, life satisfaction and well-being" as well as "adequacy of housing, income and perceptions of immediate environment" (Theofilou, 2013, p. 156). Although not affecting this thesis' use of terminology, these commonalities demonstrate a continuity with other terms and concepts that are used to engage and grapple with the welfare of individuals.

Ontologies, epistemologies and cultures

This study's conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing is constructed from established and accepted theorisations and approaches to the subject, but nevertheless rests on ontological and epistemological judgements which alternative approaches and conceptualisations of wellbeing help to draw attention to. In response to the question of whether the fact of 'being well' "exists independent of our knowing and perceiving it" (Duberley, Johnson and Cassell, 2012, p. 17), such a subjective approach to wellbeing assumes the position that individuals are "the best judges of their own conditions" (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009, p. 42). In contrast, the objective list theory of wellbeing "holds that a plurality of basic objective goods directly benefit people" independently of their experience (Rice, 2013, p. 196). Research that analyses wellbeing objectively in this way uses measures that can be derived from physiological assessments such as in the form of blood pressure or cortisol levels, or from published health and socio-economic data (Conradson, 2012). Examples of the latter are commonplace in particular areas of Economics (Angner, 2016), but can also be found from within the discipline of Geography. As well as more recent research concerning the socio-spatial inequalities of wellbeing (e.g., Ballas 2013; Ballas and Dorling, 2012; Dorling 2011; Pacione 2003), geographical studies using such data to analyse the qualities of life and the wellbeing of populations can be traced back to the 1970s (e.g., Knox, 1974a; 1974b; 1975; McCracken, 1977; Smith, 1973). In his seminal research in this area, Smith (1973), for instance, examined largely publicly available data on income, wealth and employment, the living environment, health, education, social order, social belonging, and recreation and leisure.

Opponents of subjective wellbeing, perhaps in favour of its objective counterpart, shed doubt on the validity of self-reported measures. Desirability bias, particularly given the "moral imperative" to 'be well' in much of contemporary society (Cederström and Spicer, 2015, p. 4; see also Heintzelman *et al.,* 2015), as well as false consciousness, adaptive preference formation, the 'worried well', and inter-personal comparisons are issues that can be levelled against an individual's personal assessment of their wellbeing (Venkatapuram, 2013). Moreover, there is also the existential question of "whether

we have the same form of access to our moods and emotions as we do our bank accounts" (Cederström and Spicer, 2015, p. 74). Sigmund Freud (1915) for instance challenges the assumption that we as individuals have a transparent relationship with ourselves, while Giorgio Agamben (2007, p. 20) has shed doubt on whether someone who is happy can know that they are, believing that "the subject of happiness is not a subject per se and does not obtain the form of a consciousness". Yet without a comprehensive principle that justifies the inclusion of its components, objective approaches to wellbeing can be criticised for being problematically void of explanation and insufficiently subject-sensitive (Bradley, 2009; Hall and Tiberius, 2016; Sumner, 1996). As has been argued by Delhey (2004, p. 6), global objective indicators, for instance, are "selective, incomplete and arbitrary, because they are more in line with the researcher's choices than that of individuals"; a problem, he continues, that "can be avoided if people themselves, as experts, make an overall assessment of their life". Similar arguments too have been levelled at the capabilities approach (Robeyns, 2005).

The rationale for opting for subjective wellbeing in this research is also informed by the importance that is placed by individuals on being happy and satisfied in life and the conviction that "enabling people to be "happy" and "satisfied" with their life is a universal goal of human existence" (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009, p. 42). Caution though has been raised about the emphasis that is placed on the maximisation of individual wellbeing and happiness. An individualistic approach to wellbeing is considered necessary given the very nature of this work as being individualised, but as Cederström and Spicer (2015, p. 3) have warned, such a fixation on personal optimisation under the conditions of capitalism and neoliberalism, if unabated, can turn life into an exercise in wellness optimization" with "little room to live" (Cederström and Spicer, 2015, pp. 3-6). Imbricated with the thesis' focus on individualisation, the pressures of self-enhancement for and through employment are responsible for this, along with the culture of consumerism and neoliberalism's pervasive ideological commitment to the individual's capacity for self-determination. Academic research has been involved in the (re)inforcement of these norms and endeavours too (e.g., Achor, 2010; Robertson and Cooper, 2011; Seligman, 2002). These questions and concerns regarding the consequences of personal agency, individual responsibility and the pursuit of self-fulfilment for wellbeing though are the very focus of this thesis.

Finally, it is also important to stress that this study's understanding of wellbeing is culturally bounded. Conceptualisations of wellbeing are unable to be "disengaged from theories of what it is to be human and what life is for" (Scott, 2012, p. 16), but hedonism and eudaimonism predominantly dictate Western understandings of what constitutes the good life. Those of an Islamic faith, in contrast, believe that the fulfilment of the physical, material, and natural elements of our lives is not enough and that we have a series of 'spiritual needs' inbuilt in us that need to be satisfied for us to be truly

happy (Al-Jibouri, 2009). On these grounds, contemporary Muslim scholars strongly criticise both the hedonistic and eudaimonistic traditions for neglecting God, the afterlife, and spirituality (Joshanloo, 2017; Leaman and Ali, 2008; Yahya, 2001). In Chinese culture, there is an emphasis on relationships, but from the influence of Taoism and Buddhism, wellbeing is also about being in harmony with the change, contradiction and interconnection of reality and the dissatisfaction and imperfection of life (Joshanloo, 2014; Wang, Wong and Yeh, 2016). In the case of Aboriginal Australians, Torres Strait Islanders, First Nations Canadians and the Maori tribe of New Zealand, of greater importance is "the environment, connectedness to the land and to cultural and intellectual traditions, spirituality, and the extended family and community" (Sutherland and Adams, 2019, p. 51; see also Anderson, 1995). As such, wellbeing as theorised for the purposes of this research is in no way universal, instead being entangled with the cultural values of the context in which it is studied. Nevertheless, its malleability and generalisability still allow for such different culturally determined valuations of human experience and an individual's priorities to be accounted for (see Bradley, 2015). Spiritual fulfilment, for instance, could be an important source of purpose and meaning for some, harmony with the imperfection of life would register in life satisfaction measures, and the significance of extended family and community is accounted for through self-assessments of social relationships.

Geographies of wellbeing

Literature from Geography engaging with wellbeing is argued to be "relatively theoretically undeveloped" regarding its definition and the key philosophical debates that underpin it (Smith and Reid, 2018, p. 811; see also Edwards, Reid and Hunter, 2015). However, the discipline has made a distinctive contribution to the subject by drawing attention to the significance of place, space and context to wellbeing, which have been largely neglected "in current wellbeing scholarship dominated by economic and psychological approaches" (Smith and Reid, 2018, p. 807). Rather than assuming the individual to be static and living within an inert, Euclidean conceptualisation of space, health geographers have engaged with wellbeing as being emergent "out of assemblages of materiality, discourse, practices, techniques and affective intensities in ways that are place and situation specific" (Schwanen and Atkinson, 2015, p. 99; e.g., Atkinson and Scott, 2015; Conradson, 2005; Hall, 2010; Lea, 2008; Little, 2014; Panelli and Tipa, 2007). Place and the situations, spaces, activities and events of everyday life, they emphasise, shape wellbeing (Atkinson, Fuller and Painter, 2012; Schwanen and Wang, 2014). Instead of redefining what elements of human experience constitute subjective wellbeing, this geographical sensitivity to wellbeing can be used to draw attention to the way in which these human experiences are connected to and impacted by the geographies within which they unfold.

Particularly formative and influential in this regard has been Gesler's (1992; 2003) concept of the therapeutic landscape which has been used to explore the ways in which physical, social and symbolic environments contribute to healing and wellbeing. The "complex layerings of history, social structure, symbolism, nature, and built environment that converge at particular sites" (Kearns and Collins, 2009, p. 19; see also Duff, 2011), according to this work, can facilitate and enable stress relief, social connections, security and belonging, and restoration and renewal. A wide range of sites and spaces have been the subject of study. As well as beaches, parks and zoos (Collins and Kearns, 2016; Hallman, 2007; Palka, 1999) and sites specifically designed to promote health and wellbeing (e.g., Conradson, 2005; Davidson and Parr, 2016; Kearns and Collins, 2000), others have sought to draw attention to the therapeutic qualities of everyday spaces such as urban neighbourhoods (Braubach, 2016), community gardens (Milligan, Gatrell and Bingley, 2004), and, of significance here, the home (Coyle, 2004; Donovan and Williams, 2016; English, Wilson and Keller-Olaman, 2008; Nagib and Williams, 2018; Williams, 2002).

Broadening the scope of space's interrelationship with wellbeing, Fleuret and Atkinson (2007) incorporate the concept of therapeutic landscapes as part of their more comprehensive spaces of wellbeing framework, providing a lens through which to aid the identification of spaces that are enhancing or inhibiting of wellbeing. To encompass what they believe to be "the particularities of wellbeing geography", spaces of capability, integrative spaces and spaces of security are included alongside therapeutic spaces in the framework (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, p. 113). Spaces of capability refer to those spaces that could hinder or enable self-fulfilment, while integrative spaces encapsulate the demonstrated positive effects that rich networks of social associations could have, particularly those at a local scale. Finally, spaces of security capture the relationship between "social, spatial and individual support, and sensations, feelings and perceptions" (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, p. 113). However, there have been calls more recently from within Geography for there to be greater consideration of the relationality of wellbeing and its "performative unfolding … in particular space-times" (Smith and Reid, 2018, p. 14). Early work on therapeutic landscapes, for instance, has been critiqued for framing landscapes as the exclusive producers of a therapeutic effect, with scholars emphasising how it is instead the outcome of our diverse and complex interactions and relations with place that are generative of wellbeing and such therapeutic qualities (Conradson, 2005; Coleman and Kearns, 2015; Dunkley, 2009; Pitt, 2014).

Work from within the sub-field of Cultural Geography is also of relevance to this engagement with the geographies of wellbeing. Emotional geography, for example, has foregrounded the ways in which emotions emerge from and make up the lived geographies of place and space and are "intricately connected to specific sites and contexts" rather than being entirely "interiorised subjective mental

states" (Bondi, Davidson and Smith, 2005, pp. 3-5; see also Anderson and Smith, 2001; Bondi, Davidson and Smith, 2005). Mirroring the geographies of wellbeing literature, earlier work by humanistic geographers in the 1970s searched for essential, undifferentiated emotional responses to place, while greater emphasis has more recently been placed on the intrinsic relationality of emotions (Parr, 2005; Bondi, Davidson and Smith, 2005). Of principal significance to this thesis though is Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's (2022, p. 28 – emphasis in original) critical geographies of home framework and in particular their conceptualisation of the home as "*both* a place/physical location *and* a set of feelings". A key dimension of this framework, they posit that, while the house or household may demarcate the territory or space of the home, home is defined by the complex socio-spatial relations and the emotions that are attached to that place, and the meanings and imaginations that shape them. Given the significance of place to the emergence and formation of emotions and the centrality of emotions, meanings and relationships to the experience of home, the conflation of the places of work and home in the context of homeworking and its consequences for these geographies of home warrant attention.

Conclusion

In line with prominent theoretical work in Psychology, the conceptualisation of wellbeing that this study adopts importantly encompasses both hedonic and eudaimonic traditions of scholarship which have been so influential to Western understandings and research on the subject, and in doing so provides explanation and justification for the aspects of human experience under study. It also incorporates subsequent academic developments regarding these dimensions of subjective wellbeing within the social sciences, engages with the various components of wellbeing that are often studied in the context of work, aligns with the definitions of other concepts that are used to consider and contend with the positive functioning of individuals, and accounts for individual subjectivities. Despite challenges to the assumption that individuals are best placed to evaluate their own circumstances, the purpose of the research is shaped by the pursuit of happiness and satisfaction that permeates wider society. Finally, this conceptualisation of wellbeing is importantly complemented by geographical engagements with the subject. Building upon this determination of the constitutive psychological states of subjective wellbeing, work from the field of Geography crucially foregrounds the entanglement of such states with the places, spaces and contexts within which individuals are situated, most prominently with regard to the home in the context of this research. From this understanding of subjective wellbeing as outlined here, the following chapter provides a review of the literature that has engaged with these dimensions of functioning and experience in the context of contemporary individualised working practices.

Chapter Three
Contemporary individualised work and wellbeing

This chapter charts existing theories, research and work relevant to the study of the individualised working practices of homeworking, self-employment and creative labour and the effect they have on subjective wellbeing. It begins by discussing the trade-off between the autonomy and precariousness of *self-employment* and what is known about their implications for wellbeing, before turning to the experiences of *creative work;* specifically, proclamations of creativity's life-affirming and fulfilling qualities and their materialisation through creative work, particularly under precarious working conditions. Moving on to the *social atomisation and individualisation* associated with this work, the review engages with a broad spectrum of pertinent research concerning experiences of social and professional isolation, the establishment of alternative sources and forms of social connection and support, and the socialities of creative work. Given their centrality to the propositions and research agenda of this thesis, theories of *work-life boundaries* and their relationship with wellbeing are discussed, before outlining research and ideas about the relationship between *work and leisure* and *work and home* in this context. Both sections consider the blurring of work with their respective domains under the conditions of creative labour and self-employment, before the literature review concludes with a discussion of the current *emotional geographies of home* literature.

Self-employment

It has been widely understood that the self-employed enjoy a higher level of job satisfaction in comparison to employees (e.g., Andersson, 2008; Benz and Frey, 2004; 2008a; 2008b; Binder and Coad, 2016; Blanchflower and Oswald, 1998; Krause, 2014; Lange, 2012; Prottas and Thompson, 2006; Thompson, Kopelman and Schriesheim, 1992; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020). Explanations for this greater sense of satisfaction with work include skills utilisation (Hundley, 2001), interesting work (Benz and Frey, 2008a, 2008b), task variety, identity and significance and work feedback (Hytti, Kautonen and Akola, 2013; Schjoedt, 2009), but most studies to at least some extent attribute it to the greater autonomy they experience (Álvarez and Sinde-Cantorna, 2014; Benz and Frey, 2008a; Hundley, 2001; Hytti, Kautonen and Akola, 2013; Lange, 2012; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Schjoedt, 2009; van den Born and van Witteloostuijn, 2013; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020). Free from organisational structures and hierarchies, operating as independent actors in the market, and self-determining in the orchestration and direction of their day-to-day working lives, the

individualised nature of self-employment is accepted as contributing positively to their wellbeing in this regard.

Autonomy can be defined as the freedom, independence and discretion that an individual has to dictate and determine what they do in their job and when, where and how they carry it out (Annink and den Dulk, 2012; Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Emblematic of its recognised significance to the relationship between work and wellbeing, autonomy is a prominent component in both the job characteristics model and the demand-control-support model, both of which have been central to much empirical research on the subject within Organisational Psychology (de Jonge and Schaufeli, 1998; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Johnson and Hall, 1988; Karasek and Theorell, 1990). From a Marxist perspective, the agency, freedom, control and autonomy of the worker is understood as being paramount to the prevention of work from being an alienating force, allowing it instead to be a means of self-expression, self-development and enjoyment (Fromm, 2004; Horgan, 2021). As argued by Benz and Frey (2008a, p. 363), the importance of autonomy to work satisfaction in the context of self-employment comes down to 'procedural utility'; in other words "the value that individuals place not only on outcomes … but also on the processes and conditions leading to outcomes". Nevertheless, Binder and Blankenberg (2021) have drawn attention to how the mechanisms and processes that underpin this relationship between self-employment and job satisfaction remain to be fully understood. Up until now, most research connecting the job satisfaction of the self-employed to their autonomy in work has been entirely quantitative in nature, leaving space for qualitative research to engage more directly with the manifestations and experiences of such freedom and independence and the way they affect subjective wellbeing.

Leisure satisfaction has been largely neglected in studies of the self-employed and their wellbeing (van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). Of the quantitative research that has been conducted, self-employment has been associated with lower satisfaction with leisure time (Binder and Coad, 2016), although van der Zwan and colleagues, differentiating between different groups of the self-employed, found it to be significantly higher for the solo self-employed in comparison to employer entrepreneurs and wageworkers (van der Zwan and Hessels, 2019; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020). However, leisure satisfaction has also been discovered to drop for those who switch from wage employment to self-employment (Odermatt, Powdthavee and Stutzer, 2021; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). Hypothesising as to the factors at play, van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld (2018) have suggested that the greater autonomy of the self-employed may also provide them with the flexibility and control to mould their work with their non-work life in a way that benefits their leisure. As they equally stress however, the impact of "one's responsibility for all aspects of the business, the strong job involvement associated with self-employment, and the limited boundaries between work

and leisure … should not be underestimated" (van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018, p. 84; see also Huws *et al.,* 1996). The question of this tension between the freedom and the demands of self-employment, and its consequences for leisure time satisfaction, will be addressed as part of this research.

Counter to the portrait of the autonomous self-employed worker are concerns about the precariousness that often accompanies such independence. Considered to be an important yet neglected issue relative to the benefits of self-employment and a defining experience of such individualised work (Conen and Schippers, 2019), precarious work can be defined as any work that is "uncertain, unstable and insecure" where the individual bears the risk of business (Kalleberg, 2018, p. 3). Manifesting in the form of 1) inadequate income, 2) insufficient social benefits, legal protections and statutory entitlements, 3) the uncertainty of continuous work and employment, and 4) limited control over the labour process (Rodgers, 1989; Conen and Schippers, 2019), precarious work has been observed to have negative repercussions for mental health, job satisfaction and social relations (e.g., Bardasi and Francesconi, 2004; Lewchuk, 2017; Llosa *et al.,* 2018; Vives *et al.,* 2013).

While autonomy over work is understood to be a prominent characteristic of self-employment, the self-employed typically earn less (Hamilton, 2000; Sorgner, Fritsch and Kritikos, 2017; cf. Åstebro and Chen, 2014), experience greater variability in their income (van Praag and Versloot, 2007), and are at greater risk of low pay and in-work poverty in comparison to their employee counterparts (Horemans and Marx, 2017; Kalleberg, Reskin and Hudson, 2000; Kalleberg, 2018). Employment insecurity and the uncertainty of work is "a chronic experience for most" (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019, p. 128; see also Conen and Schippers, 2019; Conen, Schippers and Schulze Buschoff, 2016; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020), with the financial pressure of running a business being found to lead to self-exploitation and longer working hours (Hyytinen and Ruuskanen, 2007; Jurik, 1998). Without the social insurance that is offered by employers, they are of greater vulnerability to the risk of incapacitation from illness or disability and the risk of poverty in old age (Boeri *et al.,* 2020; Conen and Schippers, 2019).

Research investigating the wellbeing of the self-employed has found the solo self-employed to be significantly less satisfied with their income in comparison to employer entrepreneurs and wageworkers (van der Zwan and Hessels, 2019). While more likely to be satisfied with the type of work they do in comparison to paid employees, the self-employed are also less likely to be satisfied with regard to job security (Millán *et al.,* 2013). Financial precarity, money worries and debts have been observed to be "more strongly associated with poor well-being for the self-employed compared to the wage-employed" (Berrill *et al.,* 2021, p. 330), and were considered by Wang, Li and Coutts (2022)

to be partly responsible for the mental health gap between those in gig work and those in full-time employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Income uncertainty, the loss of business, and financial problems have been identified as key stressors for the self-employed and entrepreneurs (Lechat and Torres, 2016; Schonfeld and Mazzola, 2015), with job loss, the threat of job loss and spells of unemployment causing significantly more distress for this group of workers than for those in employment (Backhans and Hemmingsson, 2012; Hetschko, 2016). The stress and anxiety associated with the need to secure and maintain a steady stream of work have also been alluded to (Sang, Dainty and Ison, 2008; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019). Contrary however to this evidence base are the findings of Hundley (2001, p. 312), who reported job security as a positive contributory factor to the job satisfaction of the self-employed, with his participants seeing themselves as "being less at risk of losing their current job and as having better alternatives if they were to leave". While it has been argued that employment security rather than job insecurity might be a more suitable focus of analysis for the self-employed as it concerns the ability to find new work rather than the likelihood of losing one's job (Conen and Schippers, 2019), Hundley (2001, p. 312) nevertheless raises the insightful point that "the self-employed may derive feelings of security from the idea that their future is in their own hands".

Actions can be taken by the self-employed to help minimise the precariousness of their work, such as the diversification of income streams to help provide greater stability in the face of market volatility (Blanchflower, 2000), or the establishment of financial reserves to protect against temporary losses or downturns in work (Conen and Schippers, 2019). In their study of freelance journalists, Marín-Sanchiz, Carvajal and González-Esteban (2023, p. 467) discovered how job satisfaction was improved through the employment of what they referred to as the "freelancers' empowering toolkit", encompassing an array of strategies which included negotiating prices, rejecting inadequate offers, using social networks, developing powerful brands, joining unions and associations and undertaking training. Encompassing self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2006), psychological capital also appears to have an effect. Understood to reduce stress and increase wellbeing (Burke, 2017), the high levels of psychological capital amongst the entrepreneurs studied by Baron, Franklin and Hmieleski (2016) explained the lower levels of stress that they reported in comparison to a wider national sample despite the uncertainty, responsibility and demands of their work. The "above average … capacity to tolerate or manage stress" identified amongst these entrepreneurs was attributed to their attraction to, selection into, and persistence in their ventures (Baron, Franklin and Hmieleski, 2016, p. 758). Other studies too have concluded that entrepreneurship attracts optimists (Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Cassar, 2010; Dawson *et al.,* 2014; Puri and Robinson, 2013).

Creative work

Creativity is a widely used term and acclaimed endeavour. It has been variously defined as "the power to create something from nothing" (Mould, 2018, p. 4), as an act of improvisation and adaptation (Edensor *et al.,* 2009; Hawkins, 2017; Ingold, 2013), and as "the degree of originality, imagination, and self-expression in one's activities", with creative work being when "people solve problems, do different things in different ways, figure things out, and learn new things, using their skills to design and produce something" (Mirowsky, 2011, p. 7). Differentiating between different levels of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (2013) distinguishes between being *brilliant* in the way of being unusual, interesting, insightful and stimulating for others, *personally creative* in the way of experiencing the world in novel and original ways, and *Creative* in the way of changing culture, producing for instance new songs, ideas or machines.

Creativity is widely considered to be inherently and intensely enjoyable, pleasurable and satisfying. It has been proclaimed that there are "few greater pleasures in life than the satisfaction that comes from making something original and beautiful" (Huws, 2007, p. 1), and that the "excitement of the artist at the easel or the scientist in the lab comes close to the ideal fulfilment we all hope to get from life" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 2). For those working in the creative industries, the creative labour of the practitioner is thought to often be "the most interesting part of his or her life" and driven by the fun of its doing (Berardi, 2009, p. 79, cited in Hawkins, 2017; see also Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), and has been consistently found within research on the subject to be "profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable (at least some of the time)" (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p. 15; see also Gill, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). As a means of intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment then, creative labour can be considered emblematic of such qualities of individualised work and its significance to positive human functioning in this regard.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) concept of flow has been used to help explain this experience of creativity and creative work. Encapsulating "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4), such flow experiences dissipate the anxieties and worries of everyday life, result in pure senses of fun and enjoyment, and are conducive to happiness, self-esteem, sense of success and improved quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1994; 2002; 2014). Although a flow experience can be achieved through any activity, it is thought that some activities, including for example art, are particularly conducive to such states (Hytönen-ng, 2013). Considering flow experiences in the context of creative work, Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 118) writes that "when the challenges are just right, the creative process begins to hum, and all other concerns are temporarily shelved in the deep involvement with the activity". In turn, this state is followed by "the rush of well-

being, of satisfaction that comes when the poem is completed or the theorem proved" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, pp. 123-124). Play in particular appears to be principal to the relationship between creativity, flow experiences and wellbeing. It is considered the most prevalent of flow states, inherent to descriptions of the creative experience, and thought to be the act during which we become most human (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, citing Brown, 1959; Dillon, 1972; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1974; Ghiselin, 1952; Montmasson, 1932; Sartre, 1956; Schiller, 1884). As Sennett (2009, p. 9) similarly portrays of the craftsperson, "the relation between hand and head", the dialogue between practitioner and material, and the stimulating experimentation that results is intrinsically playful in nature; a state which he regards to be "so universal, so full of adult implication" (Sennett, 2009, p. 273).

The contention that creativity is innate to human nature is central to its understood significance to positive human flourishing. Csikszentmihalyi's (2013, p. 2) work on the subject is again of prominence here, as he argued that creativity "is a central source of meaning in our lives". Firstly, he states, it is what makes us human. Creativity is what distinguishes us from apes, he proclaimed, because "our language, values, artistic expression, scientific understanding, and technology – is the result of individual ingenuity" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 2). And secondly, when we are involved in the process of being creative, "we feel that we are living more fully than during the rest of life" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 2). In his book that became a cornerstone of 'happiness studies', Richard Layard (2005, p. 68) also asserts that "there is a creative spark in each of us, and if it finds no outlet, we feel half-dead".

Self-realisation and self-fulfilment are also widely associated with creative labour. The pursuit of one's interests, skills and values through work and the finding of a 'calling' are fundamental to the experience of what has been described as 'meaningful work' (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012; Lips-Wiersma, Wright and Dik, 2016), and are a means of deriving purpose, personal fulfilment and "the deepest forms of satisfaction or psychological success" (Geldenhuys and Johnson, 2021, p. 2; see also Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Duffy *et al.,* 2013; Hall and Chandler, 2005; Willemse and Deacon, 2015). Self-expression, self-actualisation, deep attachment and fulfilment have been qualities attributed to work in the creative industries, with love and passion understood to be a key motivational factor behind the pursuit of such careers (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Gerber, 2017; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Gill, 2007; Hawkins, 2017; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Menger, 1999; Ring, 2020; Taylor and Littleton, 2016; Turrini and Chicchi, 2014; Ursell, 2000). As Hawkins (2017, pp. 27-28) explains, against the "critical backdrop" of the "disenchanted factory worker" has emerged "the oft romanticised figure of the creative labourer … who is mentally and physically fulfilled by their work … a labourer who loves what they do and thus will put up with any hardship in pursuit of their goals." Moreover, research investigating the identity work of independent professionals suggests that this pursuit of work that defines, expresses and develops the self could be heightened for those that are self-employed in the

creative industries. Without the identity provided by an organisation, the independent professionals in Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski's (2019, pp. 152-160) study chose work that "reflected and bolstered the self" in a way which saw them "become in their work".

There have however been calls for these representations of the satisfied creative worker to be more closely examined in light of the precariousness and personal demands of this work and the balance of creative and non-creative labour, with some "celebrations of creative labour" being "deeply complacent about the conditions of such work" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011, p. 7; see also Hawkins, 2017). Despite the apparent enjoyment and self-actualisation of creative work, the industry is considered exemplary of the shift away from stable careers towards insecure, discontinuous and precarious employment, being dominated by project-based and short-term work and heavily reliant on self-employed and freelance labour (Easton *et al.,* 2017; Eikhof, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2019). In the context of the creative industries, the issues of pay associated with self-employment are potentially further exacerbated by the common love and passion for such work. With the exception of those few that earn substantial incomes and "command high levels of market power" (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010, p. 296), most creative workers compete in oversaturated markets against large numbers of non-professional workers and are thought to accept lower pay because of their innate desire for such work (Abbing, 2002; Hawkins, 2017; McRobbie, 1998; Miège, 1989; Mould, 2018). In an industry of professionals that feel they are underpaid (Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999), new media freelancers earn significantly less than employees (Gill, 2007), while many artists rely on supplementary work, financial help from others, or the support of savings, inheritance or benefits (Abbing, 2002; Bain, 2005; Becker, 2008; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1976; van Maanen, 2009). Pay in the creative sector can commonly be below the poverty line (Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018), and creative freelancers have been found to work for little or no money (e.g., Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018).

Attention has been drawn to the issues of insecurity and uncertainty that often accompanies the project-based and short-term work of self-employed and freelance workers in the creative industries, as well as concerns regarding insufficient financial benefits and protections and the prevalence of long hours and 'bulimic' working patterns (Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Gill, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2002; Pratt, 2000; Reidl, Schiffbänker and Eichmann, 2007). These conditions are considered to be similarly entrenched by this deep personal attachment and intrinsic desire to work in a creative capacity (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hawkins, 2017). Long hours dedicated to work for instance has been attributed not only to the pressures to earn, the uncertainty of work and the need to build reputation but also personal choice and will (Berardi, 2009; Gill, 2007). As Turrini and Chicchi (2014, p. 507) found in their study of 'hired labour' in the fields of

theatre, music, dance and video making, the "realization of desires, expression and self-fulfilment" through labour undermines time "as a unit of measure for compensation", thus increasing "the risk of self-exploitation".

Considering its repercussions for subjective wellbeing, those working in the creative industries are understood to be three times more likely to suffer from greater mental health problems, with short-term contracts, under-employment, irregular hours, financial insecurity and feelings of being undervalued found to be conducive to stress and mental health difficulties (Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). In a music industry dominated by self-employment and short-term project-based work, the experience of variable income and inconsistent contracts and the realities of often having to work for free has been found to be "psychologically destabilising", causing financial worries and impeding the ability of musicians to plan for the future and achieve key life milestones (Gross *et al.,* 2018, p. 15). Elsewhere in the creative industries, there are reports of limited satisfaction with job security and confidence in employment stability (Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999), with financial insecurity and uncertainty causing burnout, anxiety and frustration and limiting meaningfulness, self-realisation and autonomy in work (Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Long hours, intense work, acute competition and overworking are linked to exhaustion, worry, stress and sleep disorders, and are thought to explain the high prevalence of mental health problems and the lower levels of subjective wellbeing in the UK film, TV and cinema industry (Gill, 2007; Kanngieser, 2012; Wilkes, Carey and Florisson, 2020).

Despite being underpaid and overworked and regardless of the clear effect these conditions can have, these creative workers have still expressed satisfaction with their work (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Kinman and Jones, 2008). Mirroring qualities that have been identified amongst entrepreneurs (e.g., Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Baron, Franklin and Hmieleski, 2016; Cassar, 2010; Dawson *et al.,* 2014; Puri and Robinson, 2013), optimism is also thought to be found in 'self-actualising' individuals and creatives (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Maslow, 1954), with those working in the creative industries having been found to be hopeful and optimistic about their work despite irregular work and poor financial rewards (Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). Optimism then, which in this thesis is conceptualised as a dimension of wellbeing (Diener *et al.,* 2010), is likely to be an important area of consideration.

There are also questions about the experience of creative labour and the availability of opportunities to be creative in these jobs. As Bauman (2000) argues more generally, we should be cautious of those propositions that suggest that work provides uninhibited opportunities for individuals to become who they want to be and achieve their ambitions. It has been suggested that the work of the 'creative precariat', despite being motivated by the prospect of enjoyable and fulfilling work, is in fact

dominated by repetitive tasks, administrative work, networking and self-promotion with limited possibilities for self-actualisation and opportunities to participate in the production of ideas (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hawkins, 2017; Hracs and Leslie, 2014). According to Morgan and Nelligan (2018, p. 2) there are "highly trained and talented creative aspirants" having to "perform low-paid edge-work" in the hope that it enables a career break, and research by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p. 158) has found the necessity for multi-jobbing to inhibit the development of the "skills and expertise necessary to thrive". There is evidence too that the extent to which they have autonomy and control over the labour process and their capacity to be creative is limited (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; McRobbie, 1998), while Hawkins (2017) draws attention to the physical and emotional demands of performing emotional and aesthetic labour.

Moreover, research that has investigated the relationship between creative work and wellbeing does not consider positive experiences of creative practice to be of significance. Analysing national and pan-national survey data, the higher levels of job satisfaction amongst artists in comparison to those in non-artistic work as identified by Steiner and Schneider (2013) and Bille *et al.,* (2013) were attributed by the authors to the higher levels of self-employment among artists and their higher levels of autonomy and control. In what they considered to be the first study to examine the relationship between creative jobs and subjective wellbeing, Fujiwara and Lawton's (2016) analysis of their large-scale survey data found higher levels of subjective wellbeing relative to those in non-creative jobs to only be experienced by those in 'traditional' creative jobs (e.g., architecture, crafts and the arts). With those in occupations defined as 'creative' by the neoliberal creative economies narrative (e.g., marketing, film and IT) in contrast reporting lower levels of subjective wellbeing, the divergence in experience was similarly explained by the greater autonomy, freedom and control and also the significantly shorter working hours of the traditional creative sectors. Poon and Shang's (2014) assessment of Florida's (2010) contention that creative workers experience a higher level of wellbeing than blue-collar workers further cements a verdict that the enjoyment and fulfilment of creative labour is perhaps not a prominent factor influencing the wellbeing of these workers. Although stipulating that their analysis of household survey data "does not permit a rigorous inference of causality" (Poon and Shang, 2014, pp. 581-582), they concluded that cultural and social life was "more likely to contribute to creative workers' happiness" rather than their actual work.

This thesis seeks to contribute to this literature regarding the experiences of independent creative work. It aims to do so by engaging with these debates concerning the materialisation of fulfilling and pleasurable labour and its relative importance to wellbeing, and those challenges posed to the narrative of the satisfied creative worker in light of this and the precariousness of their working conditions. By comprehensively studying their working lives and considering the multitude of

wellbeing dimensions that are thought to be affected, and by using qualitative methods to more directly examine how the specific elements of their work shape their wellbeing, this research is well positioned to make this contribution. As argued by Hawkins (2017), critically examining and understanding the experiences of those working in the creative industries is important given the idealisation of the creative worker and the valorisation of the creative economy. Emblematic of individualisation and concerned with the personal consequences of such work, an in-depth scrutiny of the romanticisation of independent creative labour and the way it shapes subjective wellbeing is a central research agenda for this thesis.

Social atomisation and individualisation

Encompassing the quality of their relationships as well as their contribution to the wellbeing of others and their sense of being respected (Diener *et al.,* 2010), the social wellbeing of those engaged in home-based, individualised work is an important subject of consideration which this research engages with. In response to questions about the consequences of their social atomisation particularly with regard to the possibility of isolation or the emergence of unique social dynamics (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Reuschke, 2019), this section brings together diffuse literature pertinent to the social experiences of homeworking, self-employment and creative work.

As a consequence of the absence of social interactions and relationships typically provided by the traditional workplace, the contribution of homeworking to experiences and feelings of isolation for employees has been identified across a wide range of studies (Bartel, Wrzesniewski and Wiesenfeld, 2012; Baruch, 2001; Clark M.A., 2000; Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Golden, Veiga and Dino, 2008; Huws, Korte and Robinson, 1990; Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Mann, Varey and Button, 2000; Morganson, Major and Oborn, 2010; Schinoff, Ashforth and Corley, 2020; Whittle and Mueller, 2009). Research into isolation amongst home-based workers has, according to Hislop *et al.* (2015, p. 230), "almost exclusively been focused on employed rather than self-employed homeworkers", but some research has found these issues to occur amongst this group (Caza *et al.,* 2022; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Hislop *et al.,* 2015), and has been alluded to in others (Ahrentzen, 1992; 1997; Ammons and Markham, 2004; Goodwin *et al.,* 2021). Of particular pertinence to the focus of this research, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p. 157) concluded from their own study that isolation was "a danger for most freelance creative workers".

Although overlapping, a distinction can be made between social isolation which refers to a lack of satisfactory social relationships, interaction and sense of belonging (Biordi and Nicholson, 2013; Lam and Lau, 2012), and professional isolation which, in the context of the self-employed, can be defined

as a lack of adequate interaction and support for work-related needs (see also Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Smith and Calasanti, 2005). Although a potential downside to homeworking for both the employed and the self-employed (Bartel, Wrzesniewski and Wiesenfeld, 2007; Hislop *et al.,* 2015; Kurland and Cooper, 2002), there are reasons to believe that self-employed homeworkers are at greater risk of social and professional isolation and loneliness. The long working hours associated with self-employment appear to potentially contribute to social isolation and feelings of loneliness (Akande, 1994; Gumpert and Boyd, 1984), and self-employed homeworkers are less likely to have colleagues to communicate, collaborate and develop supportive and rewarding relationships with, nor offices to visit or use (Hislop *et al.,* 2015; cf. Halford, 2005). Moreover, the absence of feedback, praise and recognition from managers and peers as well as their separation from other groups as a result of homeworking could also impact their sense of being respected for what they do and their subsequent self-esteem (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997; Darwall, 1977; Grover, 2014; Hodson, 2001; Honneth, 1995; Northouse, 2004). Exacerbating these issues, there is the risk of home-based businesses being misperceived as 'hobby enterprises' particularly for women (Mikats, 2021), and a perceived lack of value being placed on work has been reported amongst creative workers (Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018).

Central to the practicalities of homeworking, the use of ICTs for communication purposes is emblematic of the way in which social networks today are created and maintained in and across virtual space and cyberspace as well as physical space (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002; Wellman, 2001). While these technologies can inhibit an individual's ability to 'escape' work (Hislop *et al.,* 2015), they have been found to help home-based employees maintain social interaction with colleagues, remain in the loop with work, overcome feelings of solitude and isolation, and form meaningful relationships (e.g., Ammons and Markham, 2004; Halford, 2005; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009; Sias *et al.,* 2012). Synchronous forms of communication such as mobile phones and more prominently now video conferencing are thought to be particularly effective in this regard, offering immediate feedback, more natural forms of communication, opportunities for informal interaction and a greater sense of social presence that 'less-rich' asynchronous media such as email cannot (Daft and Lengel, 1984; 1986; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009; Workman, Kahnweiler and Bommer, 2003). Their replacement of in-person communication nonetheless can still be called into question. Considered to be the richest form of interaction (Daft and Lengel, 1986), being face-to-face and working in a collocated environment, it is argued, offers the most salient and unrestricted interactions that enable a psychological closeness and social presence that is irreplaceable (Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Lal, Dwivedi and Haag, 2021; Olson *et al.,* 2002; Short, Williams and Christie, 1976). As Bancou and Gabriagues (2023, p. 13) seek to draw attention to with their concept of 'focal co-presence', the spatial proximity and shared temporality of

physical co-working facilitates embodied forms of communication and access to the emotions of others. In comparison, the 'minimal co-presence' of virtual interaction only enables individuals to share the same temporality, and in doing so limits these embodied and emotional forms of connection and interaction.

Waged work is one of the most important sources of sociality for many (Weeks, 2011), and concerns have been raised about the rise of the virtual organisation and teleworking and the subsequent creation of a society afflicted by detachment and communication problems and dominated by instrumental relationships (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997). In contrast, commuting to a workplace has been considered to negatively impact social satisfaction and the establishment of strong, local communities (Delmelle, Haslauer and Prinz, 2013; Putnam, 2000), and office work has been condemned as "an empty parody of a real human social life" characterised by instrumentalised and orchestrated relationships (Horgan, 2021, p. 121). The solitude of homeworking too is in fact enjoyed and desired by some (Ahrentzen, 1997; Christensen, 1988; Fonner and Roloff, 2010; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009), with social detachment and less frequent interaction with others better suiting those with particular personality traits and allowing individuals to better focus on work, have the freedom to think and be creative, and maintain better work-life balance (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Heilmann, 1988; Jeyasingham, 2019; Leonardi, Treem and Jackson, 2010; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007).

As suggested by Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), homeworkers have been found to find and foster other forms of social contact and interaction, and in doing so demonstrate the self-orchestration of personalised social networks and connections that is understood to be characteristic of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Recreating the relationships and connections typically offered through organisations, they meet up with other homeworkers during lunch breaks, get support from families and friends, and develop work-based support networks both online and in-person for advice, companionship, expertise and business leads (Ahrentzen, 1997; Ammons and Markham, 2004; Clark M.A., 2000; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Ekinsmyth, 2011; Kjaerulff, 2010; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019). Interaction with clients helps to address issues of social isolation, and they regularly socialise with friends and relatives, benefit from strong community connections, and participate in social activities (Ahrentzen, 1997; Ammons and Markham, 2004; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Dahl and Sorenson, 2009; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007). Getting out of the house and visiting local amenities for social contact as well as putting on music, the television or the radio are also actions taken by homeworkers in this regard (Ahrentzen, 1997; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Goodwin *et al.,* 2021; Hislop *et al.,* 2015).

The establishment of social networks and participation in social spaces can be considered to be of particular significance for independent creative workers, given the importance of social encounters and the sharing of ideas to the creative process as well as the importance of this sociality for opportunities, development and support when working in the industry (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Merkel, 2019). In addition to socialising in bars, clubs, restaurants, pubs and coffee shops (Currid, 2007; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Lloyd, 2006), co-working spaces are also particularly prevalent amongst those working in the creative industries (Scott, 2008; Spinuzzi, 2012; Waters-Lynch and Potts, 2017). Defined as "flexible, shared and community-oriented workspaces" (Merkel, 2019, p. 527) and considered an "emancipatory practice challenging the current neoliberal politics of individualisation" and the social isolation it can entail (Merkel, 2015, p. 124, citing Lazzarato, 2009), these spaces and the interaction and socialisation with other co-workers that they offer can be an antidote to the solitude of the home office (Merkel, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012). As hubs for social working and networking, they are an opportunity to be amongst a milieu of likeminded people who encounter the same difficulties and challenges and who, helped by the 'curatorship' of co-working hosts, can provide feedback, guidance, ideas, knowledge and even partnerships (Merkel, 2015; Spinuzzi, 2012). For those working independently in the creative industries, the provision of resources and support from these co-working spaces, as well as recognition, meaning and belonging, can be particularly important in the face of the informality, competitivity, uncertainty and risks they experience (Merkel, 2015, citing Merkel and Oppen, 2013; see also Merkel, 2019).

Whether in the form of places such as co-working and community spaces or in the form of more distributed and unlocalised professional and personal networks, these practices and measures are often inherently spatialised, and as such can be considered examples of socio-spatial strategies (de Certeau, 1984; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Paasi and Metzger, 2017; Roca, 2020). These spaces and networks can also be considered examples of social infrastructure, both in the form of "public spaces and places that support social connection" but also in the form of "the informal social and economic cooperation" of people (Latham and Layton, 2022, pp. 661-662; see also Simone, 2004). In line with the overarching theme of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), they are also exemplary of the rise of networked individualism whereby each person engineers their own ties, networks and connections rather than simply assimilating into a group of those around them (Wellman, 2001; 2002).

Simplistic associations of homeworking and social isolation can also over-represent the home as a space of solitude, when in fact socio-spatial relations are at the very heart of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022). The flexibility afforded by self-employed homeworking can be conducive to juggling work and family commitments and maximising time with children, although this is shaped by gender norms and

can be negatively impacted at times by "heavy workloads, double working-days and unequal domestic work-share arrangements" (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018, p. 188; see also Baines, Wheelock and Gelder, 2003; Bell and la Valle, 2003; Gray and Hughes, 2005; Haddock *et al.,* 2006; Marsh and Musson, 2008). Those at home nevertheless provide social interaction during the working day that helps to relieve isolation in a way that "suggests that the social responsibility of the workplace is ... reallocated from colleagues to family members" and other co-habitants (Lal and Dwivedi, 2009, p. 270; see also Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Felstead and Jewson, 2000). In some cases, they even take on unpaid roles in support of the homeworker, as well as accommodate and adapt to the presence of work in the home (Baines and Gelder, 2003; Baines, 2002; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001; Sullivan, 2000; Wapshott and Mallett, 2012).

In a similar vein, narratives that depict the creative worker as self-centred, self-reliant and focused on self-expression and a personal passion can detract from the affection and responsibility for others and the sociality at the centre of much creative work (Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021; Alacovska, 2020; Banks, 2006; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009; Scharff, 2016). An important dimension of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012; Lips-Wiersma, Wright and Dik, 2016), "mutual help, solidarity, human well-being and social engagement" (Alacovska, 2020, p. 739) and a "commitment to wider community, ecological and social issues" (McRobbie, 2016, p. 118) have been identified as underpinning and permeating through creative work in a variety of different contexts (see also Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021; Alacovska, 2018; Harvie, 2013; Sandoval, 2018). Through facilitating the participation and engagement of audiences, customers and the wider public with creative activities, programmes, experiences and products, creative workers are also in a position to contribute to the wellbeing of others, given their association with the promotion of happiness, confidence, self-esteem, satisfaction and social connectivity (e.g., Ali-Haapala, Moyle and Kerr, 2020; Ateca-Amestoy *et al.,* 2016; Thomson *et al.,* 2018; Wilson and Sharpe, 2017). As discussed by David Gauntlett (2011) in his book titled *Making is Connecting*, creativity is inherently social in the way it enriches the world with meaning and connects people together and to wider social and physical environments.

While work has engaged with these various dimensions of social experience pertinent to the individualised work of the home-based, self-employed creative professional, they have not yet been investigated together under one holistic study with the explicit aim of discerning the collective influence they have on the social wellbeing of these workers. A key objective of this research is thus to examine the experiences of isolation, the relative significance of in-person and technology mediated interaction, the use of alternative social networks, the relationships of the work-home and the sociality of independent creative work in line with self-assessed social functioning scores. In doing so, it offers to provide greater clarity and nuance concerning the social realities of such individualised work and

answer questions regarding susceptibility to experiences of isolation and the possible establishment of personally crafted social connections in response to the conditions of social atomisation.

Work-life boundaries

At the foundation of Mould's (2018) proposition that home-based flexible creative work renders work and non-work indistinguishable and that it threatens to 'colonise' the home is the concept of work-life boundaries and their dissolution. Boundary theory and border theory have been developed to highlight the organisation and interrelationship of life domains such as work, home and leisure and the activities, 'selves', people and things that they encompass. As posited by Christina Nippert-Eng (1996a; 1996b; 2003) on the boundaries between work and home, all possible boundary relationships are thought to exist on a spectrum between 'integration' and 'segmentation'. At one extreme you have *complete segmentation*, where all thoughts and practices are designated to either of the two mutually exclusive domains. In this scenario these domains are demarcated by impermeable spatial, material, temporal, psychological, social and behavioural boundaries, with the individual in question alternating between two different 'selves'. At the other extreme you have *complete integration*, where no thoughts and practices are designated to specific domains and the individual in question is "one amorphous self" who experiences everything as multipurpose and part of "one giant category of social existence" (Nippert-Eng, 2003, p. 266). The majority of people, it is emphasised, will find themselves somewhere in the middle rather than at either of these two extremes. Such boundaries are continuously re-enacted, changed and modified, and the extent of segmentation or integration may vary between different 'elements' of the boundary. These outcomes, as Nippert-Eng (2003) explains, are determined by 1) our own internalised cultural constructions of each domain, 2) the socio-structural constraints that emanate from them, and 3) the personal practices or 'boundary work' through which we enact these constructions and constraints.

A range of work has contributed to the development and refinement of the conceptualisation of work-life boundaries. Bi-directionality, for instance, has been examined, with the extent of integration or segmentation differing depending on whether it is the mixing of elements from the work domain into the non-work domain or vice versa (Bulger *et al.*, 2007; Hecht and Allen, 2009; Kossek *et al.,* 2012). Suggesting the existence of two distinct boundaries between two domains rather than one, this complicates the possibility of categorising individuals as being either 'segmenters' or 'integrators'. Others have distinguished and differentiated between boundary preferences, which refers to the level of segmentation or integration that is desirable, and boundary enactment, or the actual level of segmentation or integration achieved to meet and fulfil the demands of both domains and roles (Allen, Cho and Meier, 2014; Ammons, 2013; Kreiner, 2006). Similarities between domains, as well as personal

identification, the expectations, awareness and involvement of others and wider cultural factors such as gender have also been identified as important in determining the extent of segmentation or integration and the occurrence of balance or conflict between them (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000).

In addition to segmentation and integration, Sue Campbell Clark (2000) has introduced the idea that the *flexibility* and *permeability* of borders determines the extent of *blending* between the domains of work and home and presents the borders of the work-home as being *flexible*, *permeable* and thus *blended* in this regard. In their study of who they termed home-based 'connected freelancers', Gold and Mustafa (2013, p. 208) concluded that perhaps "'liquidity', 'porosity' or 'elasticity' may be better terms to conceptualise the nature of teleworkers' and freelancers' boundaries than integration-segmentation, not least because such terms allow analysis of the ways in which work penetrates their mental life." But while much thought has been given to the boundary relationships between work and home, Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva (2019) have identified a number of gaps in this literature which are of pertinence to other dimensions of the individualised working practices being studied here. Of particular significance to the research questions and agendas of this thesis, they have identified the need to examine how those experiencing employment and income insecurity such as the self-employed negotiate the relationship between work and life and have called for more consideration to be given to the transition between work and a broader range of non-work activities such as hobbies and volunteering. In light of their investigation into knowledge professionals on flexible working arrangements, Field and Chan (2018, pp. 7-8) too have called for the formulation of a "new form of boundary theory" and for future research to examine the "fuzzy boundaryless nature" of their work-life interface and the ways in which they "navigate work and home, family and life".

According to Mould's (2018) statement, the blurring of creative work with leisure and non-economic life and the breakdown of socio-spatial boundaries between work and home would suggest that home-based, self-employed creative workers could be an example of extreme integration (Nippert-Eng, 2003), blending (Clark S.C., 2000), liquidity, porosity or elasticity (Gold and Mustafa, 2013). Mould (2018) has warned that this disintegration of boundaries threatens to have negative repercussions for wellbeing, particularly with regard to leisure time and home life. However, boundary theory does not identify segmentation as favourable over integration. Such dynamics can still be a means of fostering balance and harmony between different areas of life, and individuals have agency to implement tactics and strategies in the pursuit of desired boundary dynamics (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 2003). As such, interesting questions are posed regarding the extent and experience of work-life integration for home-based, self-employed creative professionals, which this research investigates. In preparation to study these dynamics and the wellbeing consequences

anticipated by Mould (2018), the next two sections of this literature review engage with the work-leisure boundaries of creative work and the work-home boundaries of homeworking.

Work and leisure

'Leisure' emerged as a discrete domain to that of work in the wake of industrialisation and urbanisation (Kanter, 1997). Since this epochal shift, work has customarily come to demarcate those instrumental tasks that are completed in return for financial gain or other extrinsic benefits essential to one's livelihood (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000; Locke and Latham, 1990; Piotrkowski, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1987), while leisure, broadly speaking, refers to those activities that "are intrinsically satisfying, pleasurable, and beneficial to the individual … and allow the individual to psychologically detach from conventional work" (Smith *et al.,* 2022, p. 563, citing Mainemelis and Ronson, 2006; Sonnentag *et al.,* 2014; Sonnentag, 2012). In contrast to work, there is a level of freedom and autonomy with regard to the choice of and participation in such activities that is typically unavailable within the confines of employment structures and economic necessity (Kabanoff, 1980).

Such dynamics remain widespread today. Segmentation is fundamental to the workings of particular sectors such as those in the service and manufacturing industries, most people still have to work to live, and leisure continues to be valued amongst workers for the space and time for autonomy and self-expression it provides away from the demands and obligations of labour (Banks, 2009). Capitalists and governments too have valued leisure for its economic and political benefits. However, this distinction between work and leisure has increasingly become blurred for those working in post-industrial divisions of the economy, of which the creative and knowledge industries are a prime example. The engaging and skilled nature of such work has become a significant source of intrinsic reward, enjoyment and self-fulfilment traditionally obtained primarily from leisure pursuits, and arguably offers levels of autonomy and freedom that are conventionally characteristic of non-work time (Lash, 1994; Lewis, 2003).

In her book *Lost in Work*, Amelia Horgan (2021, p. 51) attributes this shift to neoliberalism's political project and its endeavour to break down the power of organised labour and "extract profit from more and more of human social life". The rendering of work and leisure indistinguishable, the 'gamification' of work, the imperative to enjoy work and the presentation of every hobby as an opportunity for money making, she argues, is about opening up "the playful elements of human personality" for exploitation (Horgan, 2021, p. 51). Nevertheless, back in the 1950s, Theodor Adorno (1994) wrote in his essay *Work and Pleasure* that the rigid division of work and leisure, while advantageous with regard to economic rationalisation, is constrictive to our humanity as it confines work to monotony and

tediousness and isolates leisure from the serious and meaningful elements of life (see also Burke, 1971). Such a "cunning intertwining of pleasure and work", he argued, would leave "real experience still open" (Adorno, 1951, p. 130); in other words, allowing the joys of leisure to be blurred with the importance and purposefulness of work. Yet under the conditions of contemporary capitalism, this experience of work as the domain of self-determination, happiness, meaning and creativity has been found to be at the expense of the non-work domain, which instead can become defined by the experience of estrangement, restriction and drudgery (Hochschild, 1997). Capitalism's confinement of self-development to the world of work as a result of the time demands of jobs and the loss of other sources of meaning and fulfilment from other parts of life is a concern that Horgan (2021) herself has raised.

As already discussed, creativity is thought to be a vital source of meaning, self-expression, fulfilment and enjoyment in our lives. Creative work is understood to be imbued with these qualities, born from and overlapping with hobbies and passions and is such emblematic of this growing indistinguishability of work and leisure in the new economy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Richards and Milestone, 2000). Richard Florida (2014; see also Florida, 2002), whose writings on the 'creative class' have come to be a hugely "popular manual of contemporary economic development thinking" (Bayliss, 2007, p. 893), has argued that leisure is undertaken by these workers "not for its own sake but to enhance the creative experience – which for the creative class, is work" (Florida, 2014, p. 144). Identifying fundamentally as "creative beings" (Florida, 2002, p. 171) and becoming the "rugged individualists" aspired for by Adorno (1941, p. 306), work and leisure become indiscernibly absorbed into a lifestyle of creative experience, and the pursuit of creative self-fulfilment and development. Moreover, Florida – and others too (see Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Mould, 2018) – have drawn attention to the difficulty of turning creative thinking on and off. Rendering the boundary between work and leisure porous, ideas and solutions are believed to arise just as much when playing, dreaming, showering, driving or gardening, for instance, as when 'at work'. In explaining this dynamic, it has been contended that semi-automatic activities like walking, driving and swimming free the mind for connections to be made and ideas to be formed, and life experiences, impressions and feelings often influence and inspire the work of creatives (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013).

Florida's work has been criticised for considering the creative class to be one homogenous group (Banks, 2009), and studies interested in work-leisure boundaries across sectors that fall under the creative industries have reported a mixture of experiences. There are those, such as knowledge workers, who have been understood to place no emphasis on the distinction between work and non-work (Field and Chan, 2018), with participants in Ciolfi and Lockley's (2018) research echoing Florida in the viewing of leisure activities as a part of their work and as offering opportunities for quasi-

professional development. However, a divergence of boundary dynamics across the segmentation-integration spectrum can be observed between different groups of workers within the same industry (e.g., Henninger and Gottschall, 2007; Törhönen *et al.*, 2019). Being an amateur rather than a professional (Juniu, Tedrick and Boyd, 1996) and having greater freedom and autonomy over work (Falcão, Gomes and Spracklen, 2022) appear conducive to integration, while work pressures, exhaustion, boredom and repetitiveness thwart it (Thompson, Parker and Cox, 2016).

Along with Mould (2018), others too have alluded to the potential impact of always being 'on', particularly for leisure time satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Hawkins, 2017; Reuschke, 2019; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). While the blurring of work and leisure could mean a greater sense of enjoyment and fulfilment in work, it could have negative consequences for wellbeing if it undermines designated leisure time. As posited by the effort-recovery model, participation in non-work activities and the process of physically and mentally detaching from work is important to replenishing the energy and resources that are used when working (Meijman and Mulder, 1998; Sonnentag and Fritz, 2007; Sonnentag, 2003; Winwood, Bakker and Winefeld, 2007). In their study of employees Wepfer *et al.* (2018; see also Derks *et al.,* 2014) found this to be true, with work-to-life integration resulting in greater exhaustion and less work-life balance as a result of lower participation in recovery activities.

Work and home

Mirroring work and leisure, work and home also became established as separate domains in the wake of the industrial revolution, developing distinct "cultures and expectations" as a result of the socio-spatial separation of economic production and work from the domestic sphere and home life (Clark S.C., 2000, p. 748; see also Harvey, 1978; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983; Wapshott and Mallett, 2012). However, following the rise of homeworking, this locational separation of work and home is being collapsed for an increasing portion of the working population, and as such challenges the segmentation of these domains and the separation of work from 'personal life'.

Studies of boundary management in the context of homeworking have largely focused on the experiences of employees (Mustafa and Gold, 2013). For these employees, the breakdown of typical spatio-temporal boundaries demarcating work and home can offer opportunities for the productive coordination of these two domains, but also the possibility of unpaid overtime, work-life conflict, the 'invasion' of work into the household and the disruptions of domestic matters (Tietze, Musson and Scurry, 2009, citing Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007; Holloway, 2007; Hyman *et al.,* 2003; Hyman, Scholarios and Baldry, 2005; Sullivan, 2000; Tietze and Musson,

2005; see also Kelliher and Anderson, 2010). As a consequence of the "ontological limbo of being neither here nor there" (Tietze and Musson, 2005, p. 1344; see also Halford, 2005), the successful fulfilment of roles in both domains can be a challenge (Tietze and Musson, 2010; Koslowski, Linehan and Tietze, 2019). However, employees have deployed a range of boundary management strategies to address these issues. Varying in their permeability, flexibility, and rigidness, such boundary work has been used to better 'protect' one realm from the other and establish more order and regularity so that it is clearer which sphere they 'belong' to and when (Baruch, 2000; Cohen, Duberley and Musson, 2009; Mirchandani, 1998; Sullivan, 2000; Tietze and Musson, 2003; 2005; Tietze, 2005).

Managing the boundaries between work and home is also a principal challenge for self-employed workers working from home, but under different conditions. They do not typically have the same level of job security or a social domain of colleagues, and unlike homeworking employees, they do not have the temporal boundary of set working hours that are adopted or imposed from an external organisation, a regulated workflow, or an external workplace to visit and juxtapose against the 'home' (Annink and den Dulk, 2012; Mustafa and Gold, 2013; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001). Similar to their employee counterparts, research has found self-employed homeworkers to experience issues of 'switching off' and stopping work as a result of the pressures of insecurity and personal responsibility and the blurring of work and home (Gold and Mustafa, 2013; Hilbrecht and Lero, 2014; Hislop *et al.,* 2015; Mustafa and Gold, 2013). However, the self-employed also adopt an array of strategies to help manage the integration of these domains, such as through the creation of physically separate workspaces, the establishment of routines or the management of their ICT use (Mustafa and Gold, 2013; Sayah, 2013).

While boundaries can be established and performed to help regain a greater sense of order in the context of homeworking, a level of integration can have its advantages. As has already been stressed, segmentation is not necessarily favourable over integration, and balance and optimal conditions between the two domains can be achieved at any point along the spectrum, depending on the context (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000). Moreover, studies interested in the wellbeing-repercussions of work's boundaries with home and family life for employees has uncovered positive and negative outcomes of boundary management strategies in favour of both segmentation and integration. On the one hand, organisational level support and the personal favouring of segmentation has been found to be more beneficial for wellbeing and linked specifically to lower levels of stress, anxiety, depression, irritation and somatic symptoms, although being negatively associated with lower levels of job satisfaction (Edwards and Rothbard, 1999; Kreiner, 2006). On the other hand, less organisational support for segmentation and a greater preference for and enactment of integration is linked to work-family enrichment and job satisfaction, whilst also being associated with higher levels

of anxiety, depression, irritation and somatic symptoms as well as more work-family conflict (Edwards and Rothbard, 1999; Kreiner, 2006; McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015; Powell and Greenhaus, 2010).

Given both the intertwinement of work with leisure and non-economic life and the conflation of work and home life under the conditions of homeworking, it becomes clear that home-based creative work can mean that "times and spaces and work and leisure become almost impossible to distinguish" (Hawkins, 2017, p. 110). Emblematic of such boundary dynamics, although not necessarily in the context of creative work, is the example of the 'mumpreneur'. A term coined by Ekinsmyth (2011, p. 113; see also Ekinsmyth, 2014), mumpreneurs are self-employed homeworkers that attempt to find "congruence between their roles as 'good mothers' and business women" and do so by creatively utilising for work purposes the resources of their home and child-orientated neighbourhood spaces, as well as their role as a mother, their family, and their social networks of motherhood.

Demonstrating these gendered boundary dynamics specifically in the context of creative home-based work is Jana Mikats' (2021) case study of a lifestyle blogger. Despite creating a designated home office, the spatial proximity of their work and home life saw "the flexible use and rededication of work- and family-specific places or objects … the extension of work or family spaces depending on circumstantial requirements … and the situational adaption of routines" to deal with unpredictable rhythms and realities of both domains (Mikats, 2021, p. 205). Furthering this interweaving of work with home and family was the centrality of their everyday life to their content creation. Together with the breakdown of spatio-temporal boundaries, this boundarylessness of creative work, as anticipated by Mould (2018), saw her work 'colonise' her life and the lives of her husband and children. The consequences, however, resulted in both "conflicting demands and ambiguous expectations" but also "creative adaptions and mutual benefits", such as the enjoyment of spaces and objects for work by family members (Mikats, 2021, p. 209).

While the phenomenon of the mumpreneur and the flexibility of self-employed homeworking can enable the successful combination of employment and caring responsibilities, it can mean that women continue to operate within "the confines of gender-prescribed norms" (Ekinsmyth, 2014, p. 1242). Comparisons between studies investigating home-based artists suggest such gendered divergences in boundary management. Whereas male artists have been observed to negotiate the responsibilities, identities and spaces of home and work by setting up carefully delineated and guarded spaces for work either within or away from the home, female artists were instead found to have to temporarily 'improvise' studio space within the home (Bain, 2004; 2007; Fisher, 1997; Luckman, 2013). Demonstrating a difference between boundary preference and enactment, external studio spaces were desirable for these female artists but were often not feasible due to the cost and their

incompatibility with caring and domestic responsibilities. Instead, they were left with a set up that saw the domains of work and home spill into one another as a result of competing demands and required of them the constant switching between two modes of 'labour'.

Emotional geographies of home

There is a clear need to consider the implications of home-based creative work for the emotions and meanings of 'home' (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018; Reuschke, 2019). As argued by Mould (2018, p. 36), the breakdown of boundaries under the conditions of home-based, flexible creative labour can blur "the emotional boundaries between work and home" in a way that threatens to dismantle the home as an important place of emotional and psychological sanctuary. Employing a term used by Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith (2001), the process of working from home, he believes, is a form of 'domicide', with the former colonising and subsequently destroying the latter to the detriment of the dweller. This projection, though, could be criticised for downplaying the home's fundamental interconnection with wider society (Blunt and Dowling, 2022) and the agency of its inhabitants to resist this "importation of external capitalist power" (Wapshott and Mallett, 2012, pp. 73-74).

Others suggest the potential importance and entanglement of home with home-based, flexible creative labour. In discussing the conditions that are conducive to creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (2013) considered the home to be an important place for creativity, as it provides a sense of familiarity and comfort which can aid the preparation and evaluation of creative ideas and practices. "While a complex, stimulating environment is useful for providing new insights" he explains, "a more humdrum setting may be indicated for pursuing the bulk of the creative endeavor" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 139). Beyond just providing a 'tailor-made' space that allows you to feel at ease and in control though, the "supportive symbolic ecology" of home, representing one's "essential traits and values", reminds us of who we are in a way that enables us to be more unique in our creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 142). Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski (2019) also point to the possible centrality of home to the sensibilities of independent work. Without an organisation to dictate and contain their emotional experiences of work, freelancers and the self-employed endeavour to construct their own 'holding environments' to help them "manage the broad range of emotions stirred up by their precarious working lives and focus on producing work that let them define, express, and develop their selves" (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019, p. 124; see also Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). Created by cultivating connections to routines, people, purposes and also places, the home could prove to be significant to the formation of these emotional experiences.

The emotional experiences of home and the meanings that shape these experiences can range from security, comfort, belonging, desire and intimacy to insecurity, fear, exclusion, violence and estrangement (Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Chambers, 2020; Mallett, 2004; Rybczynski, 1987; Somerville, 1992; Tuan, 2004). As much as the home can be a haven of self-expression, status, privacy and grounding, it too can be a space of alienation. Early work by humanistic geographers conceived of the home as an "irreplaceable centre of significance" and personal attachment (Relph, 1976, p. 39; see also Dovey, 1985) and a "special place to which one withdraws and from which one ventures forth" (Tuan, 1971, p. 189), but its critique by feminist scholars for being idealistic and masculinist has paved the way for an acknowledgement of this breadth of experiences. The inherently gendered nature of domestic relations, labour, expectations and materialities, it has been argued, means that the home for women is as likely to be defined by oppression, confinement and estrangement as it is contentment and refuge (Allan, 1985; Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Friedan, 1963; Rose, 1993; Warrington, 2001; Young, 1997). An important dimension to this differentiation is the spatial separation of work from home with the home providing sanctuary and respite for those who go out for work but not for those for whom home is also the site of domestic unpaid work, which is a responsibility that typically falls on the shoulders of women (Blunt and Dowling, 2022). Given the spatial conflation of work and home in the context of homeworking however, interesting questions arise concerning its impact on the role of home as haven and a place of respite and rejuvenation.

Other research investigating socially differentiated experiences of home further draws attention to important factors at play. The alienation often experienced by those who identify as LGBTQ+ as a result of pressures of heteronormativity points towards the significance of being able to express and be oneself (Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Valentine, 1993), and the discomfort, loneliness, anxiety, fear and estrangement caused by rental restrictions and precarious housing demonstrates the essentialness of independence and security (Bevan, 2011; Ortega-Alcázar and Wilkinson, 2021). Of particular pertinence to the focus here on self-employed homeworkers and the repercussions of working predominantly from home are the findings of Imrie (2004) in his study of bodily impairment and its impact on one's sense of home. Highlighting the consequences of being homebound, participants restricted to the home because of their condition felt confined, isolated and entrapped, with privacy turning unfavourable and the home signifying deprivation (see also Allan and Crow, 1989). In stark contrast, Varley and Blasco (2000) illuminate the consequences of being physically and socially distant from home, with older men often struggling with feeling worthless, burdensome, out of place, and unable to relax at home after retiring as a result of their dislocation from the world of work and their role as provider. The development and attachment of positive meanings and emotional experiences to home in such circumstances nevertheless can be established through practices of homemaking such

as by means of material transformations, adaptations and personalisation, the adoption of routines and comforts, and the development of social ties and friendships (e.g., Baxter, 2017; Cook, 2014; Gorman-Murray, 2017; Harris, Brickell and Nowicki, 2020; Miller, 1988; Nasreen and Ruming, 2021; Schneider, 2022).

Research within Organisational Psychology has investigated emotional experiences associated with the practice of homeworking, unconnected to the space of the home. Focusing primarily on the experiences of employees, this work has found homeworking to be generally associated with greater positive affect and lower negative affect such as burnout, stress and irritation as a result of less travel and a reduction in interruptions (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Mann, Varey and Button, 2000; Redman, Snape and Ashurst, 2009). Negative emotions such as loneliness, frustration, guilt and worry though have also been reported to be caused by not working in an office, a lack of technical support, calling in sick and the impact on home life (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003; Mann, Varey and Button, 2000). However, very few studies have considered the emotional geographies of home in the context of homeworking practices despite the significant impact that the entanglement and conflation of work and home could have for these experiences.

Alongside a handful of studies that have alluded to the comforts of home in the context of homeworking (Goodwin *et al.,* 2021; Houweling, Power and Smith, 2022; Madsen, 2018), the only prominent example is the work of Ahrentzen (1997), which was cited in Blunt and Dowling's (2006) first edition of *Home*. Echoing the connection between being homebound and experiences of confinement as identified by Imrie (2004), Ahrentzen (1997) reported experiences of entrapment at home amongst homeworking women. These feelings of being 'chained', 'trapped' and isolated at home were however only found amongst women who lived with at least one other adult but no children; rarely were these experiences conveyed by women who lived alone, single mothers, or men. Establishing regular social contact with others, creating local business networks, getting out of the house daily and using local amenities regularly were ways in which these women would actively seek to mitigate these feelings. As found by research using experience sampling methods, lower locational variance and longer stays at home are associated with negative wellbeing outcomes and are predictive of depressive symptoms (Chow *et al.,* 2017; Müller *et al.,* 2020; Saeb *et al.,* 2015a; Saeb *et al.,* 2015b; Saeb *et al.,* 2016; Servia-Rodríguez *et al.,* 2017; Yue *et al.,* 2018). By studying the emotional geographies of homeworking through the case study of home-based creative work, this thesis aims to contribute to this nascent field at the intersection of Geography and Organisational Psychology, and answer questions about the role of creative labour in the making and un-making of home (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018).

Chapter Four
Methodology

This chapter begins first by outlining the *mixed-method design* of the research, specifically the reasoning for this approach and the respective roles and relationship of the quantitative and qualitative methods that were used, before explaining the choice of *questionnaires* and the decision to use both *video diaries and interviews*. An overview of the *recruitment* process and the study sample follows, after which a description of the data collection process is given. Broken up into two phases, it first discusses the design and implementation of the *video diary and questionnaire phase* and the way it was conducted using a mobile ethnography app and platform, before turning to the *interview phase* of the data collection process which was carried out both in person and online. The decisions and merits of using the digital technologies that were instrumental to both phases are addressed and considered in their respective sections. After presenting the *analysis* of the data that was undertaken with the help of qualitative data analysis software, the chapter ends with a review of the ethical procedures followed and the practices implemented to mitigate the risks posed to those involved in the research.

Mixed-method design

To investigate the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative labour and the way they shape subjective wellbeing, a mixed-method research design was adopted, using qualitative video diaries and interview techniques in conjunction with quantitative questionnaires. Quantitative methods remain the primary approach to wellbeing research (White, 2016), but a number of studies, mostly within the last decade, have employed qualitative research techniques alongside these methods. While many have used qualitative methods to inform the development of questionnaires or to support and challenge the results of quantitative analysis through triangulation and comparison (e.g., Kono and Walker, 2020; Taheri *et al.*, 2019; Camfield *et al.*, 2010; Hagler *et al.*, 2016; Jha and White, 2016; Ponocny *et al.*, 2016), others have used such methods to explore the processes and factors that affect the wellbeing outcomes recorded by quantitative measures (e.g., Cuenca *et al.*, 2014; Fahmi and Sari, 2020; Hartonen *et al.*, 2021; Perkins and Williamon, 2014; Webber, Hinds and Camic, 2015). The approach adopted for the purpose of this study aligns with this latter practise of mixed-method wellbeing research, with qualitative methods being used to explore the lived experiences of work and the way they influenced wellbeing outcomes that were comprehensively assessed by the quantitative questionnaires. This design was adopted because of its suitability in answering the thesis' research

questions concerning how the individualised working practices of home-based, self-employed creative labour shape the subjective wellbeing of these workers.

Predominantly qualitative in nature, the restrictions placed on the sample size by this mixed-method design prevents the representativeness and generalisability often prioritised by studies using these quantitative measures (Ponocny and Weismayer, 2016). This however is not an objective of this study. Aiming to better understand the influence of home-based, self-employed creative work on wellbeing, the emphasis here is placed on depth over breadth. In line with this research agenda, the use of the qualitative methods and their application in this way addresses a limitation of quantitative questionnaires; namely, the 'over aggregation' and subsequent loss of the multifarious life experiences, conditions, judgements and evaluations that lie behind the single numerical values they generate (Jha and White, 2016). Providing participants with the space to tell how they experience and evaluate their work, the interviews and the video diaries enable a clearer understanding of the factors and conditions that underpinning such answers (White, Fernandez and Jha, 2016; Jha and White, 2016), and can allow for an enhanced, more critical, interpretation of the quantitative wellbeing measures. As has been previously highlighted, these qualitative narratives can reveal "essential problematic aspects" of life that often remain concealed by the measures, provide a more person-specific assessment of them, and explain potential anomalies (Ponocny and Weismayer, 2016, p. 102; see also Ponocny *et al.,* 2016; White, 2016; Brangan, 2016). The strength of the quantitative wellbeing measures here are in the way they provide a standardised 'anchor' for the interpretation of these expansive, rich and 'thick' qualitative narratives as well as clear and precise indications and evaluations of subjective wellbeing more broadly to contextualise and frame these multifarious experiences.

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the participant-led video diaries and the semi-structured interviews were used to assess the emotional dimension of the participants' subjective wellbeing, and the influence and effect that their working practices had to this end (see **Table 4.1**). The PANAS was analysed descriptively to provide a comprehensive assessment of the emotional wellbeing of the participants, but due to the colloquialism of discussing emotions and feelings and the expansiveness of potential experiences, the questionnaire was not integrated into the design of the qualitative methods. Instead, the video diary method required participants to reflect on how their work affected how they felt, and as such explored the causes and conditions under which specific emotional states emerged in their day-to-day working lives.

The interviews, which investigated the relationship between work and wellbeing in greater depth and from a more general perspective, also provided qualitative insights into the effect of work on their emotional states. As well as there being specific questions on the emotional experiences of home,

emotional language was a common way for participants to express the subjective experiences and consequences of work, and the video diaries provided valuable insight into the effect their working lives had on their wellbeing in a way that helped to shape interview questions and topics of discussion. Further enhancing the depth, focus and efficacy of the interviews, the video diary method also offered the participants an opportunity to become accustomed to, and comfortable with, talking about themselves, their work and how they feel. Answering a relatively straightforward question about how their work affected how they felt ahead of the more challenging questions of the interviews, and without the direct 'presence' of the researcher, participants remarked on how it was effective at encouraging them to consciously acknowledge, express and process their thoughts and feelings.

	Emotional dimension	Cognitive dimension
Questionnaires	The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)	UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) satisfaction measures and the Flourishing Scale (FS)
Qualitative methods	Participant-led video diaries and in-depth, semi-structured interviews	In-depth, semi-structured interviews

Table 4.1. *The organisation of the research methods in line with the conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing.*

The single-item satisfaction measures of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), the Flourishing Scale (FS), and the semi-structured interviews were the methods used to assess the cognitive dimension of the participants' subjective wellbeing, and the influence and effect that their working practices had to this end (see **Table 4.1**). The UKHLS and FS measures were analysed descriptively to provide an overall assessment of participants' satisfaction and socio-psychological functioning, while the aspects of their working lives that influenced these self-evaluations, judgements and thoughts were investigated through the interviews. Due to their direct relevance to the research questions, the subjects covered by individual items from both questionnaires were used to help structure the interviews, with answers to some items being integrated into specific lines of questioning. The effect of their work on questionnaire items pertinent to their competency, engagement, social relationships and household income satisfaction were interpreted from the qualitative accounts, while questionnaire items concerning their job satisfaction, leisure time satisfaction, purpose and meaning and optimism were explicitly discussed because of the greater challenge of interpretation. The decision

to not integrate all UKHLS and FS item scores into the interviews in this way was taken to prioritise the flow and discursivity of the interviews and the depth of discussion and insight that these qualities facilitated. As they were not central to the research questions of the thesis, items examining participants' self-respect and their satisfaction with health, housing and life overall were not explored through the qualitative data, and instead only contributed to the overall measures of social psychological functioning and satisfaction.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a typical and accepted method for the collection of information on wellbeing (Linton, Dieppe and Medina-Lara, 2016; Michaelson, Mahony and Schifferes, 2012; VanderWeele *et al.,* 2020). Pre-designed and tested in line with the specific dimensions that constitute this study's conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing, the PANAS (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988), the UKHLS satisfaction measures (Jäckle *et al.,* 2017), and the FS (Diener *et al.,* 2010) were chosen to provide standardised, reliable and comparable assessments of the wellbeing of participants (see **Appendix 1** for copies of the questionnaires). By examining positive and negative emotions, satisfaction with life and life domains, and social-psychological functioning, the PANAS, UKHLS and FS measures respectively and comprehensively accounted for the various elements of subjective wellbeing in line with the thesis' conceptualisation (see **Figure 2.1**).

The PANAS measure was selected to assess the emotional experiences of the participants because of its direct investigation of affect, asking participants to score, using a five-point Likert scale, how often they feel against 20 adjectives which can be separated into two sub-scales – the positive affect (PA) scale and the negative affect (NA) scale. The sum of the scores for each of these two scales and their comparison in turn indicates the balance of positive and negative affect as experienced by the respondents. Since it's formulation, the measure has been the most popular means of assessing this dimension of subjective wellbeing, despite being criticised for omitting 'core' emotions, emphasising specific types of feelings and undifferentiating between emotions, moods and affect (Corno, Molinari and Baños, 2016; Diener *et al.,* 2010; Ekkekakis, 2013). However, it is still believed to be "a reliable and valid measure of the constructs it was intended to assess" (Crawford and Henry, 2004, p. 245), and has been found to be "internally consistent and have excellent convergent and discriminant correlations with lengthier measures of the underlying mood factors" (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988, p. 1069). Moreover, its reliability when applied to a two-week period, as it is used for the purposes of this research, has been successfully trialled (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988).

The satisfaction measures are from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS; also known as the Understanding Society survey), which is the largest longitudinal study of its kind aimed at providing important information about the social, economic and cultural circumstances and wellbeing of the UK population (Understanding Society, no date). Assessed using a seven-point Likert scale, the questionnaire contains single-item measures that ask respondents to consider their sense of satisfaction with their life as well as the five life domains of health, income, housing, work and leisure time. The design of these questions, specifically the wording, format and measurement used, were developed following a series of experiments across various waves of the longitudinal study (Jäckle *et al.,* 2017). Such single-item satisfaction scales are "established measures of evaluative well-being" (Reuschke, 2019, p. 1332; see also Binder and Coad, 2013; 2016; Dolan, Peasgood and White, 2008), having been found to be strongly interrelated and explainable by their correlation with objective measurable variables, and have performed well against multi-item equivalents (Cheung and Lucas, 2014; Schimmack and Oishi, 2005; van Praag, Frijters and Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2003; Wanous*,* Reichers and Hudy, 1997). As well as their validity, single-item measures were also chosen over multi-item options to minimise the demand placed on the participants who were also tasked with completing the PANAS and the FS questionnaires, a video diary exercise, and an interview.

Designed by Diener *et al.* (2010, p. 145) to examine the "major aspects of social–psychological functioning" that have been incorporated into this study's conceptualisation of wellbeing, the FS measure is the final wellbeing measure to be integrated into this quantitative assessment. A brief eight-item questionnaire, it uses a seven-point Likert scale to assess the self-perceived success of participants with regard to social relationships, purpose and meaning, engagement and competence, self-esteem and optimism and provide an overall score of their social-psychological functioning. In terms of its reliability and validity, Diener *et al.* (2010, p. 143) found the measure to have "good psychometric properties", demonstrating internal consistency and strong associations with other psychological well-being scales. These results have been further corroborated in other contexts (see Hone, Jarden and Schofield, 2014; Howell and Buro, 2015; Silva and Caetano, 2013), with "comprehensive demographic norms" having also been found (Hone, Jarden and Schofield, 2014, p. 1041).

Video diaries and interviews

Rather than being directed by the researcher, participant-led video diaries require research participants to collect multi-modal data about their life by recording their own video diary entries (Whiting *et al.,* 2018a). For the purpose of this research, participants were instructed to keep audio-visual diaries over a two-week period to reflect at the end of each day how their work had affected

how they felt, and was deemed an appropriate format to study the causes of specific emotional states for two reasons. Firstly, by prompting regular daily reflection, the method is able to attend to the short-term ebb and flow and variation of emotions that would be omitted from or distorted by the more synoptic accounts created by traditional interview techniques (Foley *et al.*, 2020; Holton and Riley, 2014; Schwarz, 2007; Scollon, Kim-Prieto and Diener, 2003; Whiting *et al.,* 2018a). The greater 'proximity' of the diaries to the emotional 'events' of everyday life instead enables a much more nuanced understanding of their emotional states and how they emerge (Bates and Moles, 2021; Bell *et al.,* 2015; de Leeuw *et al.,* 2018; Foley *et al.,* 2020). Secondly, the audio-visual format of the diaries – as opposed to written or audio-only formats – was chosen because of its ability to capture paralinguistic and bodily expression which are fundamental to emotional communication (Mehrabian, 1981). As Keltner *et al.* (2016, p. 471) explains, "emotional expression is a multimodal phenomenon", and as such vocal acoustics, tone and bursts as well as facial expressions, gestures and interactions with people and things are important dimensions to capture (Bachorowski, 1999; Bates, 2020; Christianson, 2018; Liebenthal, Silbersweig and Stern, 2016; Sauter and Scott, 2007; Simon-Thomas *et al.,* 2009; Spinney, 2009; Symon and Whiting, 2019; Whiting *et al.,* 2018a). While the rise in digital technologies has made video making "radically accessible for the nonprofessional user" (Shrum, Duque and Brown, 2005, p. 5) and opened up opportunities for such participant-led studies (Whiting *et al.,* 2018b), asking participants to make their own video recordings remains relatively unusual (Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018). Nevertheless, in utilising this video diary method for the purposes of this research, the project contributes to an increasingly popular in-situ and 'mobile' methodological approach to the study of health and wellbeing in Geography (Foley *et al.,* 2020).

Interviews were chosen to investigate the way in which the working lives of the participants shaped and influenced their self-assessed satisfaction and social-psychological functioning. They were also used to explore those emotional experiences associated with work more generally, further inquire about themes and experiences discovered through the video diaries, and more explicitly engage participants to consider the emotions and meanings of home and the effect their work had to this end. The method was chosen because of its strength in exploring how individuals "understand their world" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. xvii), the meanings they attribute to their lives, and the impact their feelings, values and experiences have to this end (Valentine, 2005). As 'a conversation with a purpose' (Eyles, 1988), interviews are able to provide the directness of inquiry necessary to probe and explore the life experiences and factors underpinning these evaluations, judgements and feelings and offer enough space and time for discussions around these themes to be rich, detailed and multi-layered (Burgess, 1984; Silverman, 1993; Valentine, 2005). To enhance these qualities, an in-depth, semi-structured approach to the interviews was adopted to 'dig deep' into the complexity of these stories

and narratives (Bryman, 1988; Davies, Hoggart and Lees, 2001), while allowing for new themes, points, ideas and issues brought up by the participants to arise and be discussed (Dunn, 2016; Longhurst, 2016; Silverman, 1993; Valentine, 2005). The design and implementation of the video diaries and interviews as well as the application of the questionnaires are discussed later in this chapter.

Recruitment

Research participants had to meet four elements of criteria. To ensure their work could be classified as 'creative' and to engage with a broad spectrum of different forms of creative labour, each participant worked within the creative industries as defined by the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2016) (see **Appendix 2**). Each participant was self-employed, but a distinction was not made between freelancers, independent contractors, sole proprietors and small business owners due to the general interest in experiences of precarious work and autonomy for those working on an independent basis. To guarantee that it was a full-time occupation, participants had to work for at least four days (or 18+ hours) a week on average, and they had to work primarily from home too so that homeworking was a prominent characteristic of their work and they could be classed as 'home-based' in this regard.

The objective of the study was to recruit 20-25 participants using a two-stage process; the first using personal networks to selectively approach individuals and ensure the inclusion of specific attributes and characteristics, and the second using social media and online channels to expand recruitment beyond the confines of such personal networks. With the help of close friends and family, the first stage involved compiling a list of people that were personally known who fitted the criteria outlined above. An example of purposive sampling, specific individuals were approached based on the nature of their work and their demographic characteristics. This was undertaken in a staggered process, prioritising potential participants as recruitment progressed to ensure a good variety amongst the sample in terms of gender, age, location, living arrangements, ethnicity and creative sector, although individuals were not favoured based on the particularities of their experiences.

To facilitate this first stage of recruitment, selected individuals were contacted via email or social media and were sent a one page 'call for participants' document containing the basic details of the study, the criteria for participation and what would be required of participants (see **Appendix 3** for a copy of the document). The circulation of this smaller summary document was used to gauge interest, secure participants in principle and build rapport with them before the much larger information sheet and consent form was sent closer to the beginning of the study. Such dialogue also provided some useful insight into the types of concerns or questions that individuals involved in the study may have, feeding into amendments to the call for participants document itself, but also the information sheet, consent

form, and the video diary guide that were later circulated. Some individuals declined to be involved in the study because they did not completely fit the criteria and were not available during the study period. Being too busy with work during the period and being too disorganised were also given as reasons. Although limited, the former explanation implies that the sample could to some degree underrepresent experiences of high workloads. While it was a concern that talking about emotions may be an issue for some, only two individuals that were approached expressed hesitancy at having to 'share' how they felt.

The second stage of recruitment centred around the use of social media and online channels to more publicly circulate the call for participants beyond personal networks. Using an academic and research-focused Twitter account, a tweet containing the same information as the call for participants document was posted to 1,133 followers (see **Appendix 3** for a copy of the post). Receiving 48 retweets and 28 likes, the post was able to reach 14,385 people in total on Twitter alone. As a result of the tweet, details of the study and how to get involved were also subsequently circulated in the newsletters of two large organisations: Engage, an organisation that represents arts educators, organisations, freelancers and artists; and Bristol+Bath Creative R+D, a Southwest England-based creative cluster funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In contrast to the purposive sampling method of the first stage, this second stage of recruitment was a form of volunteer sampling, allowing any individuals to come forward if they fitted the criteria.

Importantly, these two sampling processes were complementary. The first stage allowed for the calculated selection of participants, maximising participant variety in terms of demographics and work characteristics irrespective of pre-determined desires to be involved and to share particular experiences. However, this required a compromise in terms of scope, limiting the sampling to personal social circles and networks. Alternatively, the second stage allowed for the call for participants to reach a far wider audience through being shared and circulated by others. However, relying on interested individuals to come forward, this sampling method was unable to prioritise demographic and socio-economic diversity to the same extent and minimise the potential for sampling to disproportionately capture more acute cases.

21 participants in total were recruited for this research with around half being recruited by each of these respective processes. A sample size of between 20-25 was considered suitable for this study because of the scope, nature and purpose of the research and the contact time had with each participant (Marshall *et al.,* 2013; Morse, 2000). Focused on better understanding *how* particular elements of working life affect wellbeing, the research is primarily concerned with depth rather than breadth, meaning large numbers of participants were not a priority. Furthermore, the sample size had

to be limited due to the time and resources needed to organise and analyse the large quantity of data that was to be collected per individual, particularly as a result of the video diaries and interviews. The recruitment of 21 participants also provided space for the research to modestly accommodate important dimensions of diversity within the sample, and there was good variation amongst the participants with regard to both their work characteristics and demographics (see **Appendix 4** for a breakdown of this information for each participant).

Accounting for a wide variety of different professions, the work of the participants covered all nine of the creative industry sectors identified by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Participants spanned all income brackets from below £10,000 to above £50,000, with near equal proportions occupying the role of main income earner, subsidiary income earner, and equal income earner for their respective households. Working hours ranged from 21 to 60 hours a week, with over 70% working between 21-40 hours a week. Unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of time spent working from home on average varied, although all with the exception of one worked 50% or more from home. With regard to the length of time they had been self-employed in the creative industries, there were those that had only recently started their own businesses and those that had been self-employed for several years, although nearly 50% had been going for over a decade. The length of time they had been working from home for though was more varied. Turning to the demographics of the participants, all age groups from 18 to 65+ were accounted for, with the age ranges of 25-34 and 45-54 best represented. 62% of participants were female, and 14% were from black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) groups, mirroring similar statistics found by a larger survey of UK-based creative freelancers conducted by the Creative Industries Federation (Easton *et al.,* 2017). In terms of location, participants were from across England with the majority based in London, the South-East, and the South-West and living in inner city or suburban areas. Only three participants lived on their own, with just under two-thirds living with partners or spouses. Of the nine that still had children at home, all children with one exception were under 18.

Video diary and questionnaire phase

Broken up into two phases, the data collection process began with a two-week period where participants were asked to keep a video diary and complete two questionnaires. Taking place from Monday 18th October to Tuesday 2nd November 2021, this phase was orchestrated digitally using Indeemo's mobile ethnography app and platform and produced 211 videos and an estimated seven hours of footage alongside the completed questionnaires. The Indeemo app and platform was a service funded using the bursary from the New Scholars fellowship scheme. Primarily used by companies to better understand the behaviours and experiences of their customers, the software

enables the collection of videos (as well as photos and text-based data) and orchestrates the completion of tasks by participants via a mobile phone app, which are then accessible to the research team through a real-time online dashboard where it can be viewed and analysed.

Using the app, participants were asked to complete four tasks across the two-week period (see **Table 4.2** for the task list). The main task of this phase for the participants was to record a minimum of one video diary entry (one to three minutes in length) across eight different working days, reflecting on how work had affected how they felt throughout each particular day. Prior to beginning their video diaries though, participants were asked to complete two brief introductory tasks. The first of these was a basic information questionnaire, which collected demographic information (e.g., about age, gender, ethnicity, location and co-habitants) as well as general information regarding characteristics of their work (e.g., about occupation, income, hours worked, work locations and career history). The second was a video introduction task, which required participants to record a short piece to camera talking about themselves, their work, and what they do in their spare time. The purpose of this video introduction was to act as a 'warm up' for the participants and to get them used to talking to camera about themselves, but it was also a means of collecting useful contextual information. The final task that the participants had to complete was a wellbeing questionnaire at the end of the two-week period. This questionnaire was comprised of the PANAS measure which were applied specifically to the two-week period, as well as the UKHLS satisfaction measures and the FS measure which were asked more generally. While the PANAS measure was used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the participants' emotional states during this two-week timeframe, the UKHLS satisfaction measures and the FS measure assessed their cognitive wellbeing ahead of their interviews, which explored the underlying factors and conditions of their working lives that shaped these self-evaluations.

Task	Description	Task	Description
1. Basic information questionnaire	The purpose of this questionnaire task is to collect some basic information about you and your work. The questionnaire will take approximately **2-3 minutes** to complete. **Click on this link** to complete the questionnaire: https://rhul.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/basic-information-questionnaire-2 **Important:** Nothing needs to be submitted to the app for this task. Completion of the questionnaire via the link above is all that is required. *This task only needs to be done once. Please try and complete it during the first few days of the project.* ***This task was available on the app from 18th October***	**3. Video diary**	The purpose of this video diary task is to provide an insight into how your work (in particular working from home, being self-employed, and doing the kind of work you do) impacts the moods, feelings and emotions you experience day to day. Across the two-week period please revisit this task **at the end of each day that you've been working** and record a brief video of yourself (1–3 mins) reflecting on **how work affected how you felt throughout that day**. While video uploads are limited to 3 minutes, please feel free to upload more than 1 if you feel you have more to say. For more guidance on this task, please see page 3 of the **'diary guide'**. *This task needs to be done multiple times throughout the two weeks.* Required responses: 8+ videos ***This task was available on the app from 18th October***
2. Video introduction	The purpose of this task is to help me to get to know you, and what you do every day, a bit better. At the beginning of the two-week period, please record a **2-3 minute** video to introduce yourself, talking specifically about: • Your work (in particular what you do every day, where you work and whether you have any routines) • What you like to do when you're not working • Three things that usually make up a 'good' day While videos can only be 3 minutes long, if you feel you have more to say, please feel free to upload more than 1. *This task only needs to be done once. Please try and complete it during the first few days of the project.* Required responses: 1 video ***This task was available on the app from 18th October***	**4. Wellbeing questionnaire**	The purpose of this questionnaire task is to get a clear picture of how you have been feeling over the last two weeks, as well as your overall sense of wellbeing. The questionnaire will take approximately **4-5 minutes** to complete. **Click on this link** to complete the questionnaire: https://rhul.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/wellbeing-questionnaire-2 **Important:** Nothing needs to be submitted to the app for this task. Completion of the questionnaire via the link above is all that is required. *This task only needs to be done once and **will need to be completed by the end of the day.*** ***This task was available on the app from 1st November***

Table 4.2. *The task list that was embedded in the Indeemo app for participants to respond to. The list was also accompanied by an introduction which provided an overview of the tasks along with some tips for filming.*
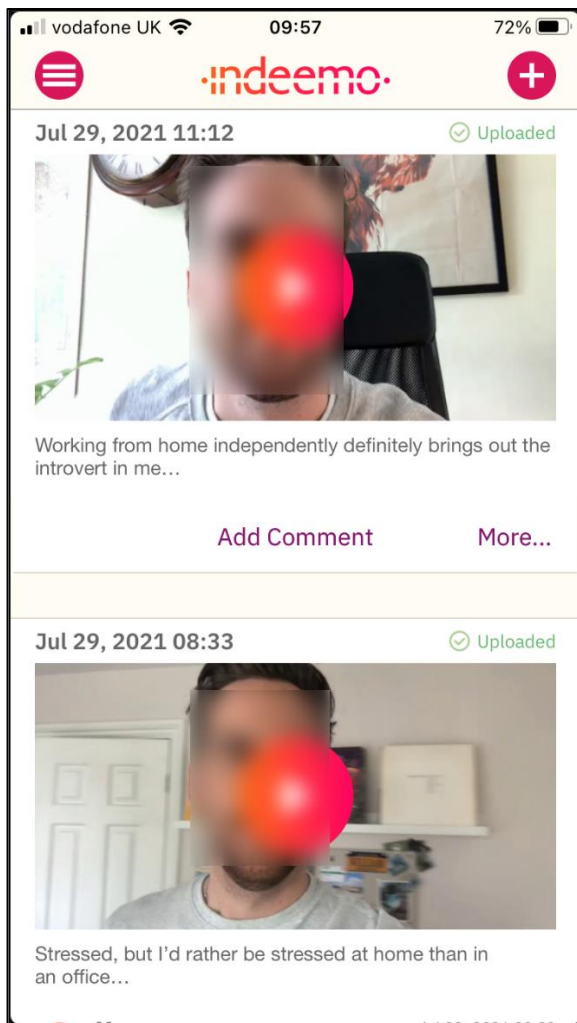
Figure 4.1. The interface of the app as viewed by participants, showing uploads made to the app. This screenshot was taken from the pilot study.
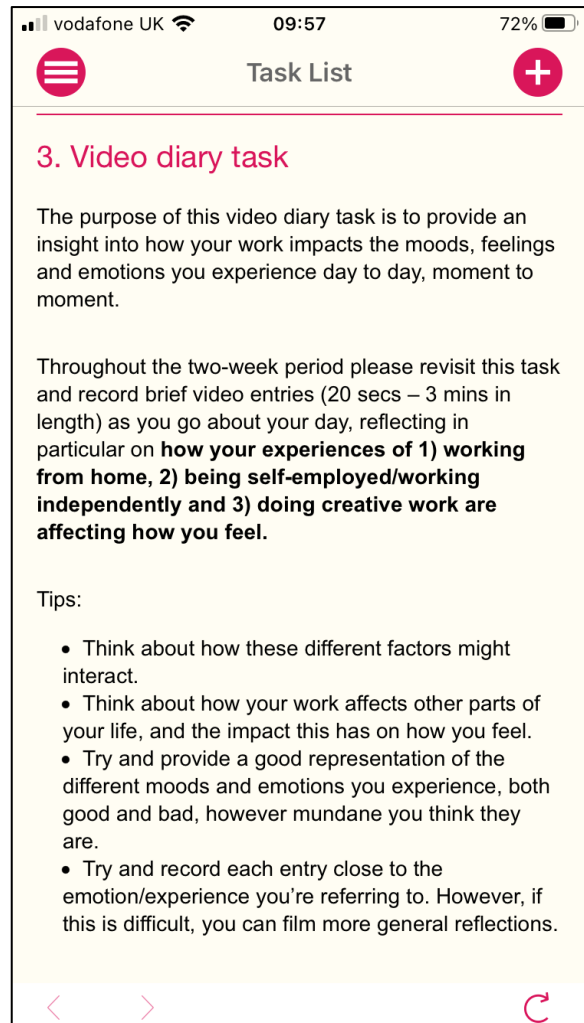
Figure 4.2. The interface of the app as viewed by participants, showing the video diary task description in the task list. This screenshot was taken from the pilot study. The task description depicted was subject to change prior to the main study.

In the app, participants were able to view the instructions for these tasks (see **Table 4.2**), post videos in response to the introduction and diary tasks, and access external links in the task list to complete the questionnaires (see **Figures 4.1 and 4.2** for screenshots of the app interface). The video entries and questionnaire responses that were submitted were only accessible to myself as the researcher via the online dashboard; participants were unable to view the entries and responses of other participants. Due to the complexity of these instructions, a video diary guide was circulated to all participants one week before the start of the two-week period detailing the sign-up process for the app, outlining the four tasks that would need to be completed, and offering further guidance on the video diary task (see **Appendix 5** for a copy of the video diary guide).

A pilot study of this first phase of the research was carried out from the 26th July to 9th August 2021, using myself and one other participant as respondents. Some of the objectives of this pilot study included running through the technical processes of using the app and associated software, checking the clarity of the task list descriptions and working out how to keep the participants engaged with the tasks throughout the study period. The main purpose of the pilot study though was to trial the video diary task. Originally, the plan for the video diary task was to ask participants to record brief video entries (20 seconds to three minutes in length) *as they went about their day* and reflect on how specific instances associated with their work were affecting how they felt. The rationale behind this original strategy was to maximise the 'proximity' of the diaries to the 'events' that affected their emotional states and also to capture any important interactions with artefacts, people and places in this regard. However, following observations of this trial, the decision was made to instead ask participants to record entries *at the end of each working day* and summarise how work had affected how they felt throughout that day.

The reasons for this decision were fourfold. Firstly, what was expected of the participants was clearer with respect to when to submit an entry and what to reflect on. Secondly, it significantly reduced the demand placed on the participants, asking them only to take time at the end of the day to contribute to the study rather than requiring them to remain observant and reflective throughout their day when work and other responsibilities were likely to take priority. As remarked by one individual during a discussion about the video diary task design, "when you're stressed, the last thing you want to do is stop and record a video diary about it." Thirdly, only a few videos produced during the pilot study contained any relevant contextual information, limiting the value of filming entries during or near the specific moments of interest. While it could be argued that filming entries at the end of the day fails to capture 'real-time' events and reflections, a comparison of entries from both methods draws attention to the potential for greater insight to be gained from more holistic and retrospective end-of-the-day reflections. And finally, the amended design of the video diary task allowed for a more effective reminder system to be put in place. With the expectation that most participants would post at the end of each working day, daily reminders were able to be sent every evening without concern for annoyance.

The pilot study was also used to trial the suggested length for each video entry. After practicing end-of-the-day diary reflections during the second week of the pilot study, it was deemed appropriate to raise the suggested lower limit for the videos to one minute after this new task design was adopted. However, the upper limit of three minutes, which was set by the app, did not seem to obstruct recording during the pilot. To accommodate for the potentiality of some participants exceeding this limit though, the description of the video diary task was amended to advise the participants to record

additional videos if they had more to say after three minutes. While there was the option to extend the upper limit of the video length to five minutes, the additional cost that this would have incurred would have restricted the number of participants that could been enrolled in the study due to budget constraints. However, during the main study, the three-minute limit did cut some participants off prematurely in a handful of entries, and when asked about their experiences of the video diary task at the end of their interviews, some comments were made about the restrictions that this time limit placed on the flow and depth of their entries despite being able to record additional videos. Future studies that use similar methods might benefit from avoiding such technical limitations.

The decision to allocate two-weeks for the video diary task was made in acknowledgement of short-term fluctuations in subjective wellbeing particularly over the course of a week, whilst also providing flexibility for the participants to complete entries for a number of different days (Brandstatter, 1991; Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Zelenski and Larsen, 2000). As observed in other studies using a video diary methodology, participants can find it hard to record across seven consecutive days, instead opting to record on various days over a larger period of time (Bates, 2020; Whiting *et al.,* 2018a). By suggesting a minimum of eight entries over a total of 15 days, individuals who did not work a typical five-day, 35+ hour week or who were unable to submit entries on particular days would still be able to complete entries for a number of different days. The success of this approach was evident during the data collection process. Despite a number of participants experiencing disruptions caused by illness, other commitments, house moves and unexpected reductions in work, each participant submitted an average of nine videos for the diary task.

The period of Monday 18th October to Tuesday 2nd November 2021 was chosen for this stage of data collection for two main reasons. Firstly, it was reasoned that the autumn dates avoided the potential impact of summer holidays on participation, whilst also avoiding the potential 'change in pace' that can occur with work for some in the build up to Christmas. Secondly, the second week of the fieldwork period was October half-term for schools. The inclusion of this week allowed for changes in the homeworking dynamic and the repercussions of having children at home to be observed amongst those participants with school age children. It is recognised that this two-week period remains only a snapshot into the ever-changing lives of these participants, with more cyclical variations across the course of the year being indicated by some, for instance in the form of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or the seasonal nature of their work. Although beyond the capacity of this research, replication of the video diary task along with the wellbeing questionnaire during different periods across a year (or longer) could be an interesting avenue for future research to consider.

The decision to implement this first phase of the research using a smartphone app and digital platform was deemed appropriate in light of the ubiquity of smartphones in the UK, with 84% of adults owning one in 2020 (Boyle, 2020). Throughout recruitment and the data collection process, there were no indications that this decision led to the exclusion of any potential participants. As well as having a healthy balance of 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' as indicated by the age groups of those involved (Holton, 2021), no individuals declined involvement in the study because of technical concerns or the requirement to own a smartphone that runs iOS 11 or above or Android 6 or above. Only one participant requested technical assistance prior to the study with regard to setting up and navigating the app. The use of the Indeemo smartphone app and platform instead offered a number of benefits. As an intuitive app on a device that, for the majority of owners, is regularly used and kept on their person (Holton, 2021), it was supportive and encouraging of participation and continued engagement throughout the two-week period (Bloustien and Baker, 2003; de Vries, Baselmans and Bartels, 2020; Whiting *et al.,* 2018a). The online dashboard that was available to myself as the researcher enabled real-time interaction and communication with the participants as well as the monitoring of task activity (Raento, Oulasvirta and Eagle, 2009). As already mentioned, reminders were also able to be sent to the participants from this dashboard. Pinging up on their smartphones as a notification, this system was used to send targeted prompts to those that were yet to complete specific tasks, but also to send daily reminders to record video diary entries. These were sent between 7:30pm and 8:30pm every evening to all who had not yet posted for that day, each uniquely crafted to continually emphasise the focus on emotional experiences and their causes. Evidencing the effectiveness of this process, nearly all participants posted regularly across the two-week period, with some making references to these reminders in their video diary entries.

The dashboard also allowed for comments to be left under posts. This function was used at least once in the case of each participant to reassure them that their videos were interesting and insightful and, if necessary, to tactfully emphasise to them the purpose of the video diaries. The final key advantage offered by the Indeemo software package were the analysis functions available on the dashboard, which included an editable and integrated auto-transcription feature, a tagging feature, and the ability to filter entries by respondent, task, keywords, date, or tag (see **Figures 4.3 and 4.4**). These functions helped to address key problems often encountered when using video diaries in research, specifically the transcription, preliminary analysis and organisation of the videos (Bell and Davison, 2013; Gylfe *et al.,* 2016; Read, 2019; Whiting *et al.,* 2018a).
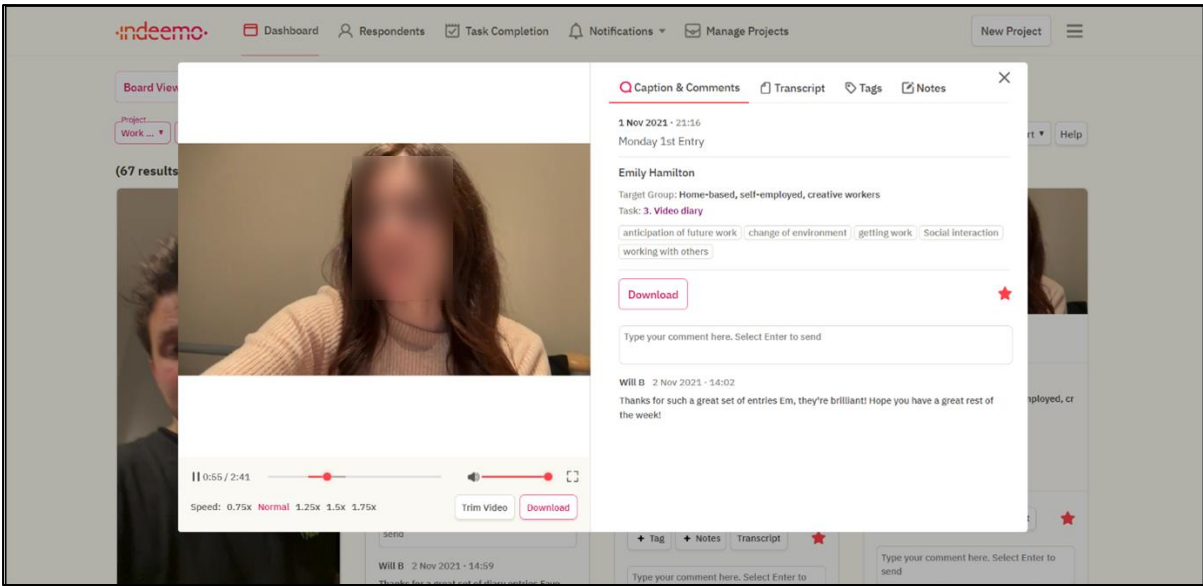
Figure 4.3. A view of the Indeemo dashboard with an entry from a participant selected. The tags that have been allocated to this entry can be seen above the 'Download' button, and a comment left on the video can be seen below.
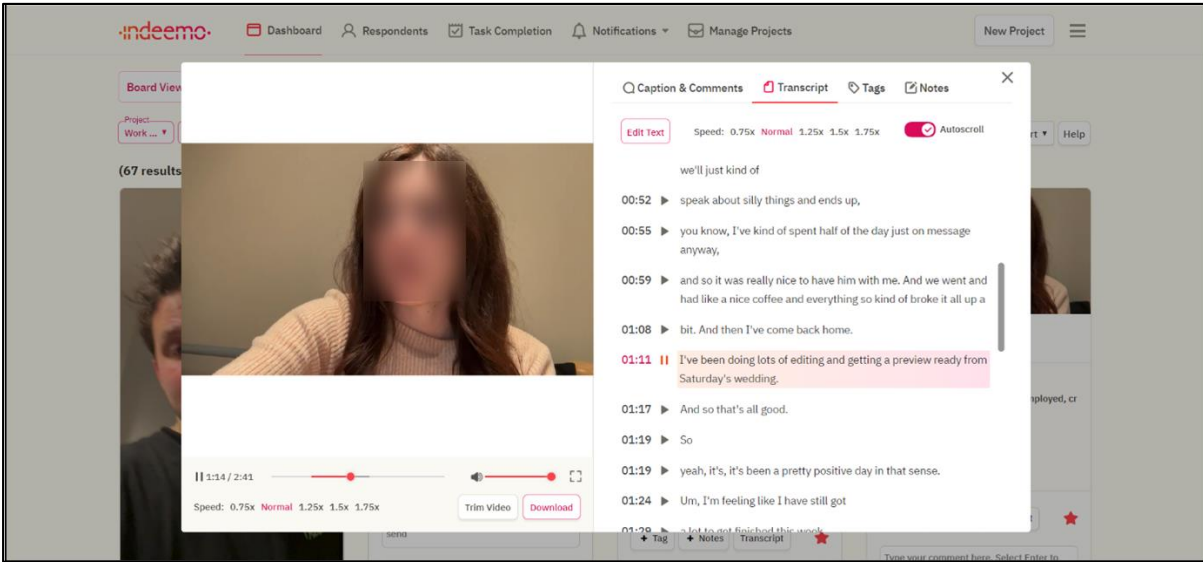
Figure 4.4. A view of the Indeemo dashboard with an entry from a participant selected to display the auto-transcription that has been generated by the software and which has been further edited manually.

Interview phase

The interview phase of the study was initiated two weeks after the conclusion of the video diary and questionnaire phase. From the 16th November to the 16th December 2021, individual one-to-one interviews were held with each participant, and accumulated in total over 30 hours of data. Although it has been suggested that two or more interviews per participant can allow for missed information to be accounted for and for new leads to be explored (Laslett and Rapoport, 1975; Padgett, 2012; Seidman, 2006), single interviews were opted for in the context of this research. Pertaining to arguments that participants find multiple interviews to be burdensome (Brannen, 1988), this decision was made in light of the demands already placed on the participants to complete the video diaries and the questionnaires, as well as the time and resource constraints of the project.

Of the 21 interviews, nine were held in-person and 12 were conducted online using Zoom, which is a popular video conferencing platform. The option of an in-person interview was offered to all participants who were reachable by car or train within a three hour round journey. Of the 15 that met this criteria, two participants opted for their interview to be conducted over Zoom, while four in-person London-based interviews that had been organised for December were moved online following the rise of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 and the subsequent Government directive to work from home if possible during this time. For those that were conducted in-person, each participant was given the option to decide where they would like the interview to take place, as recommended by Padgett (2012). However, it was suggested that their own homes would be an appropriate location on the grounds that it was convenient for them, quiet, and likely to be a place they feel in control, comfortable and safe to share personal information (Burns and Grove, 2005; Davies, Hoggart and Lees, 2001; Elwood and Martin, 2000; Goss and Leinbach, 1996; Longhurst, 1996; Valentine, 2005). Additionally, due to the significance of the home in this research, this arrangement also offered an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the context within which many of the subjects of interest took place (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Of the nine interviews conducted in-person, eight took place at the home of the participant, with the exception taking place in a coffee shop.

Prior to the lockdowns and the restrictions on in-person interaction that were implemented around the world in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, online interviewing was already becoming more widespread and increasingly being valued "in and of itself as a valid and legitimate research method" (O'Connor and Madge, 2017, p. 422; see also Hine, 2005; Hooley, Wellens and Marriott, 2012; James and Busher, 2009; Salmons, 2015). However, with users of Zoom in the UK increasing nearly 20-fold during the first few months of the pandemic alone (Ofcom, 2020), the normalisation of video conferencing platforms for both personal and professional interaction has been unprecedented (Self,

2021). As a result, many of the drawbacks of online interviewing, such as technological requirements and familiarity and competency with such technologies amongst participants (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014), have been minimised. In the context of this research, the option to interview online using Zoom permitted the inclusion of participants from around the country without incurring associated travel costs. While it is acknowledged that the 'head shot' view of video calls limits the observation of body language and the imbrications and 'messiness' of in-person conversation can morph into more structured discourse (Cater, 2011), the audio-video format of Zoom still provided access to verbal and nonverbal cues and allowed for the creation of rapport (O'Connor and Madge, 2017; Sullivan, 2012). Only in one case did technological problems cut an interview marginally short.

A general interview guide was created to ensure that each interview covered all themes of interest, investigated the various wellbeing outcomes under consideration, and sustained momentum (Padgett, 2012; Treece and Treece, 1986; Valentine, 2005; see **Appendix 6** for a copy of the interview guide). The items in the guide were categorised and ordered to steer the interview appropriately and effectively, with the majority of questions being accompanied by useful probes and potential follow up questions (Dunn, 2016; Padgett, 2012; Valentine, 2005). After some general conversation, each interview began by re-emphasising the informality and purpose of the discussion and was used as an opportunity to reassure the participant that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering, and reconfirm with them that they were still happy for the interview to be recorded. Opening with "simple-to-answer" and "non-threatening" questions (Dunn, 2016, p. 157), the participants were asked how things had been since they had completed the video diary task as well as how they had come to do what they do.

The main body of questions that followed were pre-organised into three main groups. The first section focused on the pros and cons of their work and how it affected their subjective wellbeing and satisfaction with various aspects of their life, while the second section explored the way their independent homeworking influenced their relationships and social connections. The third section focused more specifically on elements of social-psychological functioning, as well as the emotions and meanings of home. Participants regularly used emotional language to describe the influence their work had on their wellbeing, but the design of these sections and questions directed them to consider the cognitive dimensions of wellbeing in this regard, either through the subjects they engaged with or by means of explicitly questioning the answers they gave when completing the UKHLS and FS questionnaires. Only one participant had felt an answer to have changed by one Likert point since completing the questionnaire a month prior, suggesting a temporal stability in these satisfaction and social-psychological functioning measures during this timeframe.

Having covered these larger and potentially more sensitive and challenging discussions, the guide then moved the interview towards a series of questions that 'wound down' the conversation asking them for instance to reflect on their optimism about things in the future, how they had found the research process, and whether there were any other things they wished to raise or ask. For each participant, pertinent results from the wellbeing questionnaire, as well as contextual information provided by the basic information questionnaire, video introduction, and video diary entries were integrated into this guide to aid the efficacy of the interview process. While the general structure of the guide was followed, the direction of the discussion did influence the specific order of questions to allow for the flow of conversation to be maintained, and new questions were formulated in response to areas of interest that arose during the discussion.

Each interview was recorded to produce a complete record of the discussion for accurate and thorough analysis, allow for natural conversation to flow, and enable attention to be given to movements, expressions and gestures (Valentine, 2005; Whyte, 1982). For those that were done in-person, an Olympus Linear Recorder was used as the primary recording device, while the voice recorder app on an iPhone was used as a secondary recording device in case of technical error or issue. For those interviews that were conducted on Zoom, the built-in recording features of the software were used, while the Olympus Linear Recorder was used to provide a back-up recording. During the interview, keywords, remarks and points were noted down. As well as acting as reminders for potential follow-up questions, these jottings were also used to inform the notes that were written up after each interview for the purposes of documenting things of interest and developing themes. The transcription of each interview was facilitated by Otter.ai, which uses AI software to generate basic transcripts that were then subsequently edited and refined.

Analysis

Due to the small sample size, inferential statistical methods were not applied to the quantitative data sets provided by the PANAS measure, UKHLS satisfaction measures and FS measure. The data were instead analysed descriptively to provide assessments of the sample's wellbeing and used alongside the qualitative data to evaluate the influence of work on specific dimensions of subjective wellbeing on an individual basis. Tagged accordingly to remain distinguishable, the qualitative data from both the interviews and the video diaries were analysed together under one coding framework. This approach was deemed appropriate for several reasons. The qualitative methods were similar in design (both collecting data using prompts or questions), overlapped in subject (both capturing emotional experiences and generalised remarks), and were interconnected, with data from the video diaries

being further investigated in the interviews. Moreover, the findings of the research are organised by theme rather than wellbeing outcome.

Coding enabled the identification of patterns and the development of themes with regard to the influence of work on subjective wellbeing (Hatch, 2002; Saldaña, 2016). Pre-coding of the video data was undertaken using the Indeemo tagging system, and throughout both stages of data collection, notes were kept to begin the identification of potential codes, patterns and themes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 21). Directed by these preliminary codes and notes and the key concerns, debates and discussions at the centre of the research, an initial coding framework was then constructed. Composed of three categories that aligned with each of the three research questions, these categories in turn housed codes and sub-codes that were more specific, observable and detailed (see **Appendix 7** for this coding framework). Content and concept-based and providing the foundation for further detailed coding at a later stage, this process was an example of structural coding (Saldaña, 2016), and each category and code was given a short description that outlined the coded datum's qualities and properties and its inclusion criteria. The influence of work on subjective wellbeing was discerned through the statements or examples provided by the participants, their explicit connection to the wellbeing outcomes as recorded by the questionnaires, or in some instances the paralinguistic and facial expression captured by the audio-visual data. Data that helped to explain the absence of particular work characteristics and experiences in this regard were also coded for, and attribute coding was also used to collect additional information on career history, future plans, and reflections on the research process and methodology. The development of the coding framework was an ongoing process, being modified throughout the first cycle of coding. Original codes were refined, reconceptualised, and amalgamated and new codes were conceived in response to their application to the data, with the final number of categories and codes falling within Friese's (2014) recommended range. To facilitate a deeper engagement with the nuances of the themes covered by each code and to further refine those codes that were particularly large, a second cycle of coding that dealt individually with each sub-code was then undertaken to produce smaller, more comprehensible codes. The development of these sub-codes similarly evolved during this second cycle of coding.

The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to streamline the implementation of this coding. The video and audio data from the video diaries, video introductions and the interviews were used alongside their respective transcripts to allow for the analysis to account for the paralinguistic and facial expression that can be key to interpretation, particularly in the context of emotions. Cases were created for each individual participant with information provided by both the basic information questionnaire and the wellbeing questionnaire being added as case classification data. Memos were

assigned to each interview and video entry to retain the preliminary notes, as well as the comments and contextual information attached to the videos that was downloaded from the Indeemo dashboard. They were also used to record overarching themes and interrelationships between codes in the context of singular interviews and capture any trends or patterns across the video diary entries of each participant. The annotation function was used to preserve any interpretation of paralinguistic and facial expression, as was relevant contextual information, dialogue and questioning.

In presenting the analysis, the findings of the wellbeing questionnaires and the measures they provide are discussed in their entirety in chapter five and are integrated into discussions of the qualitative data in chapters six, seven and eight as they examine the work-related factors and experiences that are of consequence to the subjective wellbeing of the participants. While chapter five is structured by wellbeing dimensions, chapters six, seven and eight are structured by theme. In these latter discussion chapters, single scores of the UKHLS satisfaction measures and the FS measure for individual participants are examined in the context of the interview and video diary data, and graphs demonstrating the distribution of scores for each of these items are used to contextualise references to the wellbeing of the sample with respect to specific elements. Statements are regularly made referring to the number of participants that explicitly connected their UKHLS satisfaction and FS scores to a particular attribute or experience of work, but these do not correspond to the figures provided in these graphs. Individual item scores of the PANAS measure are not referenced and discussed in the same way as those of the UKHLS satisfaction measures and FS measure, although some interpretation is provided. This is because they were not integrated into the qualitative methods and because of the greater ambiguity of individual items. A narrative approach is taken in the presentation of the data in these chapters. Although including all information of relevance to the point being made, more space is given to those stories or cases that help to provide explanation, context and nuance, which offer acute examples and are particularly emblematic of the phenomenon being discussed. The source of the data, whether video diary or interview, is stated.

Ethics

Adhering to the requirements as stipulated by Royal Holloway, the ethical standards of this study were approved following a full review by the University's Research Ethics Officer, two members of academic staff, and the Chair-delegate of the College Research Ethics Committee. To adhere to the Economic and Social Research Council's (2019) framework for research ethics and Royal Holloway, University of London's (2019) research ethics guidelines and pass this review, a number of parameters and practices were implemented.

Measures were put in place to minimise the risks posed to participants involved in the research. Due to the private and potentially emotional nature of the topic (Birch *et al.,* 2002), the intention to place personal reflections in the public arena, and the possibility of initiating 'changes in self-understanding' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), care was taken when inquiring about the wellbeing of the participants. While the research had the potential to be a positive experience for the participants through offering them an opportunity to appraise their daily lives and the effect it has on their wellbeing, there was also the possibility it could lead them to confront or assess things in ways they might not have wanted or in ways that would be more appropriate for a trained counsellor to address. It was likely that participants would "welcome the opportunity to tell their story to an empathic, nonjudgmental listener" and would be capable of "handling themselves and their emotions" in such circumstances (Padgett, 2012, p. 140). However, as Mitchell and Irvine (2008, p. 35, citing Cotterill, 1992; Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2006) explain, "moving toward a pseudotherapist role can be ethically inappropriate if researchers are not trained in this field".

In line with Royal Holloway, University of London's (2019) ethical guidelines, individuals had to verify on the information sheet and consent form that they did not have pre-existing severe mental health conditions to help mitigate the chance of participants having negative experiences during the research process (see **Appendix 8** for a copy of the information sheet and consent form). Prior to and during the study, it was stressed to participants that they did not have to, and were not expected to, place themselves in any situation that they did not feel comfortable with, and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point without having to give a reason. Although unused, a wellbeing support postcard that could be sent to participants was prepared detailing mental health and wellbeing services in case wellbeing-related issues that required appropriate support emerged during the course of the video diaries or interviews (see **Appendix 9** for a copy).

In addition to these initiatives that were put in place to safeguard the wellbeing of participants, procedures were also implemented to aid myself as the researcher to deal with the potentially sensitive and emotional nature of the study. Journaling, as well as being a tool for the development of ideas, was also used as a process of acknowledging and working through personal experiences of the research process and stories that were encountered. To provide space for this necessary reflection and sustainably manage the mental demands of conducting in-depth interviews, no more than five interviews were organised per week, typically with only one per day. The project supervisors were also available to provide support if needed, although this did not prove necessary. These controls and measures, along with those also put in place to protect health and safety with regard to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and general travel and fieldwork risks, were outlined in the risk assessment form that was approved by the relevant Health and Safety Coordinator (see **Appendix 10**).

While participants retained relative control over the personal information they shared in their video diary entries, further steps were taken to ensure that interview questioning and practise did not lead to the elicitation of information that participants may later regret sharing. Firstly, any pre-established friendship or rapport that had been developed during the study was not unethically exploited as a means of accessing details of a participant's life (Duncombe and Jessie, 2002; Finch, 1984). Secondly, participants were reassured that they did not have to answer any questions in the interviews or the questionnaires that they did not want to and they were encouraged to ask for conversations to move on from subjects they did not wish to discuss. Thirdly, vigilance and a responsiveness to participants' coping strategies was ensured (Goodrum and Keys, 2007; Kavanaugh and Ayres, 1998), and the pace, depth and direction of the discussion was led by them during times of heightened emotion (Graham, Grewal and Lewis, 2006; Mitchell and Irvine, 2008). In some instances, it was deemed necessary to change the subject, and in one case, terminate the interview (Dunn, 2016).

In the eventuality that a participant wanted to retract any information that they had provided, opportunities to do so were available. At any point during the two-week video diary fieldwork period, participants were able to delete any entries they had uploaded if they had changed their minds about what stories or details they were comfortable sharing. They were also notified that, after the conclusion of the data collection process, they were free to request copies of their audio files, transcripts, videos and documents, with the option of making changes to or removing their answers up until the conclusion of data analysis which was estimated to be around August 2022. Continuing to provide agency to the participants with regard to their data, the decision as to whether the participants wished to be anonymous or identifiable, and in what forms their data may be published, was decided by the participants themselves. While default academic practice is to secure the anonymity of all that are involved (Sinha and Back, 2014), participants were asked whether they would like their real name or a pseudonym to be used in research outputs. Each participant was also able to choose whether they would be happy for their video diary entries to be shown in presentations, whether they would like to choose which entries could be shown, or whether they would prefer none of their entries to be shown at all. Although they were reassured that they would be free to change their decisions at any time, it was stressed that publications or presentations may have already been completed and circulated in line with their previous preferences (Hall, Sou and Pottinger, 2021).

The security of the data was also well managed by all relevant parties involved. Indeemo, Online Surveys and Otter.ai, which were the companies involved in the processing of the video diaries, questionnaires and interviews, complied to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), encrypted the data both in transit and when stored, and identified the researcher/institution as the data controller. In preparation for analysis, all data were exported to an encrypted computer file located on a

University OneDrive account, with access only available through password-protected devices. The opportunity to enable data sharing as encouraged by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) was declined because of its sensitive and personal nature, the potential for such an arrangement to negatively impact recruitment and the openness of respondents, and the inability to remove direct and indirect identifiers present in the video diary data.

Written consent from all participants was obtained prior to data collection. To ensure they were informed about what they were consenting to and were aware of the various ethical dimensions of the study as outlined above, the information sheet that was attached to the consent form (see **Appendix 8**) outlined the following:

1. The aims, nature, focus and purpose of the research.
2. What would be required of them, and any potential risks and benefits of participation.
3. How the data would be recorded, used, stored and disseminated; who would have access to the material; and the date after which data cannot be excluded.
4. Their control over their anonymity, the questions they answer, and the information they have provided after it had been collected; their freedom to withdraw from the research at any point without a given reason; Royal Holloway's GDPR statement.
5. Contact details for both myself as the researcher and the supervisors of the project.
6. A series of questions to ensure each participant met the criteria for the study, had an appropriate smartphone, would be available and working during the two phases of the study, and that they did not suffer from a severe mental health condition.

In turn, the consent form was used to confirm that each participant:
1. Had read the information sheet, agreed to the terms and conditions of the research, and had any questions answered.
2. Understood and accepted data management procedures and the risks of participation.
3. Was aware of their rights concerning their data and their involvement.
4. Had decided on the parameters of their anonymity and identifiability.

Due to the significant time requirements of participation, each participant was offered a £50 Amazon or Love2Shop voucher upon their successful completion of the study. This expense was covered by a bursary obtained through the New Scholars fellowship scheme. As a relatively small sum and in the form of a voucher, this arrangement was not in place as a financial incentive to entice individuals to sign up, instead being seen as a means of importantly recognising the contribution the participants made to the research and partially compensating them for the time and effort that they had devoted

to it (Dickert and Grady, 2008). Suggesting that the voucher may have served as an incentive for some, one participant had planned to use it to help them to pay for expensive work equipment, and another indicated that they would be using the voucher to pay for a Christmas present because they were short of money. Others however had forgotten about it, requested for the voucher to be swapped for a charity donation, and explained that their motivation was to support research on self-employed creatives and share their experiences.

Chapter Five
Wellbeing assessments

This brief chapter provides an assessment of the participants' subjective wellbeing as derived from the questionnaire measures. It first evaluates the cognitive dimensions, discussing the *satisfaction* measures provided by the single-item UKHLS questions and the *social-psychological functioning* measure provided by the FS questions, before turning to an assessment of *emotions* as provided by the PANAS measure. From this analysis, it is concluded that a positive sense of subjective wellbeing across all dimensions is reported by the sample.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with life and satisfaction with important life domains were moderately positive amongst the sample (see **Table 5.1**). The results for life satisfaction and satisfaction with health, household income, housing and work were relatively comparable, with participants on average feeling 'somewhat satisfied' (5.18/7) for each of these items (SD = 1.32). An anomaly amongst these satisfaction scores was the participants' satisfaction with their amount of leisure time. Markedly lower than the other scores, the average answer was that they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (4.19/7). Moreover, the range of responses was more diverse (SD = 1.94), with answers ranging from 'complete satisfaction' to 'complete dissatisfaction'. Given the focus on work and the interest of this research on the effect of precariousness and the relationship between work and leisure, the results for job satisfaction, household income satisfaction and leisure time satisfaction are explored further in accordance with the qualitative findings in the coming chapters.

Satisfaction (seven-point Likert scale)	M	SD	R
Satisfaction with health	4.95	1.24	3-7
Satisfaction with household income	4.95	1.32	3-7
Satisfaction with housing	5.29	1.38	3-7
Satisfaction with the amount of leisure time	4.19	1.94	1-7
Satisfaction with present job	5.38	1.16	2-7
Satisfaction with life overall	5.33	1.06	3-7

Table 5.1. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and range (R) for the single-item UKHLS satisfaction measures. Participants were asked how satisfied they were with their life and with various life domains using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from completely dissatisfied (1) to completely satisfied (7).

Social-psychological functioning

Participants scored particularly highly in their self-assessment of social-psychological functioning, averaging a total score of 47/56 and a mean score of 5.92/7 (SD = 0.81) (see **Table 5.2**). Demonstrating a similar coherence to that of the satisfaction scores, there was a consistency in average scores across each individual item of the FS scale. Pertinent to discussions of self-fulfilment, participants on average 'agreed' (5.97/7) that they led a purposeful and meaningful life, were engaged and interested in their daily activities, and were competent and capable in the activities that were important to them. With regard to their social wellbeing, they 'agreed' (5.83/7) that they had supportive and rewarding social relationships, contributed to the happiness and wellbeing of others, and felt respected by others. They also 'agreed' (6/7) that they were a good person and lived a good life and were optimistic about their future. No participants disagreed with the statements pertaining to their social-psychological functioning for five out of eight of these metrics, further demonstrating a positive sense of wellbeing across the sample with regard to this measure. The influence of their working lives on all of these individual dimensions of social-psychological functioning, with the exception of self-respect, are discussed in the next chapters.

Social-psychological functioning (seven-point Likert scale)	M	SD	R
'I lead a purposeful and meaningful life'	5.76	0.94	3-7
'My social relationships are supportive and rewarding'	5.81	1.33	3-7
'I am engaged and interested in my daily activities'	6.1	0.89	3-7
'I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others'	5.96	0.74	5-7
'I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me'	6.05	0.59	5-7
'I am a good person and live a good life'	5.95	0.51	5-7
'I am optimistic about my future'	6.05	0.74	5-7
'People respect me'	5.71	0.72	4-7
Aggregate measure:	**5.92**	**0.81**	**4.13-7**
Average aggregated score:	**47.38**		

Table 5.2. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and range (R) for the FS social-psychological functioning measure and its individual items. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the statements outlined above using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Emotions

Finally, participants demonstrated positive emotional wellbeing, with their experience of positive emotions during the two-week period of study being greater than their experience of negative emotions by a score of 32 to 20 (see **Tables 5.3 and 5.4**). On average, participants experienced positive emotions between 'moderately' and 'quite a bit' (3.59/5) (SD = 0.87), while they experienced negative emotions 'a little' (1.99/5) (SD = 0.98). The most prominent positive emotional experiences were the feelings of being interested and determined, with participants on average experiencing these states 'quite a bit' (4/5 and 3.95/5 respectively). With regard to the negative emotional experiences, feelings of irritability were notably more frequent than other emotions, with participants on average feeling irritable more 'moderately' (2.81/5). Whilst these results provide a reliable and standardised assessment of their emotional wellbeing, specific emotions and their causes are predominantly explored in greater detail throughout the next three discussion chapters using the qualitative data provided by the video diaries and interviews.

Positive affect (five-point Likert scale)	M	SD	R
Interested	4	0.71	3-5
Excited	3.23	0.94	1-5
Strong	3.1	1	1-5
Enthusiastic	3.76	0.94	2-5
Proud	3.48	0.87	2-5
Alert	3.62	0.74	2-5
Inspired	3.62	0.86	2-5
Determined	3.95	0.80	2-5
Attentive	3.67	0.73	2-5
Active	3.43	1.08	1-5
Aggregate measure:	**3.59**	**0.87**	**1.8-5**
Average aggregate score:	**31.86**		

Table 5.3. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and range (R) for the positive affect scale of the PANAS measure and its individual items. Against each item, participants were asked to what extent that they had generally felt that way during the two-week period of the video diary study using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5).

Negative affect (five-point Likert scale)	M	SD	R
Distressed	2.24	1	1-4
Upset	2.14	0.79	1-4
Guilty	2.05	1.24	1-5
Scared	1.71	0.9	1-4
Hostile	1.33	0.73	1-4
Irritable	2.81	1.21	1-5
Ashamed	1.33	0.58	1-3
Nervous	2.29	1.15	1-5
Jittery	2.1	1.34	1-5
Afraid	1.86	0.85	1-4
Aggregate measure:	**1.99**	**0.98**	**1-4.3**
Average aggregate score:	**19.86**		

Table 5.4. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and range (R) for the negative affect scale of the PANAS measure and its individual items. Against each item, participants were asked to what extent that they had generally felt that way during the two-week period of the video diary study using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very slightly or not at all (1) to extremely (5).

Conclusion

Overall, a positive sense of wellbeing was reported by the home-based, self-employed creative workers being studied across both cognitive and emotional dimensions. Participants scored particularly highly on the FS questions to demonstrate a strong self-assessment of social-psychological functioning. Positive emotions were experienced more frequently than negative emotions, and their sense of satisfaction with life and with important life domains was moderately positive, with the exception of leisure time satisfaction which was noticeably lower. Taking this overview and assessment of the subjective wellbeing as the point of departure, the subsequent chapters investigate the influence of individualised working practices on these outcomes using the qualitative data provided by the video diaries and the interviews.

Chapter Six
Experiences of work and labour

This first findings and discussion chapter addresses how the intrinsic benefits and precarious freedoms associated with the individualised work of home-based, self-employed creative labour shape the subjective wellbeing of these workers. To answer this first research question of the thesis, the chapter presents and analyses data provided by the video diaries and the interviews on the effect of work on emotional experiences and examines the answers to single questionnaire items pertaining to their satisfaction and social-psychological functioning in the context of the narratives presented by these qualitative methods. Specifically, it considers scores concerning competency, engagement and household income satisfaction, and reports on the explanations that participants gave for their answers to more abstract questions about their job satisfaction, purpose and meaning, and optimism. By focusing on the effects of autonomy, precarious working conditions, and the pursuit of fulfilling and personally enriching labour, it attends to elements of their working life that are important in building an understanding of the nature of this individualised work and the effects it can have on subjective wellbeing. As such, it aims to contribute to literature concerning the experience and significance of creative work as pleasurable and meaningful, the pros and cons of self-employment through the lens of wellbeing, and the interrelationship between the two (Benz and Frey, 2004; Binder and Blankenberg, 2021; Conen and Schippers, 2019; de Jager *et al.,* 2016; Hawkins, 2017).

The chapter begins by outlining participants' experiences of their creative work, specifically the wellbeing implications of *being creative*, the extent to which it enables the *satisfaction of the creative spark* and the meaning and purpose derived from this work in the form of *self-fulfilment and self-actualisation*. From this starting point, it then turns to consider the conditions within which this labour is practiced and the influence they have on the participants' wellbeing. It begins first by discussing *the benefits of autonomy* and the question of whether this was at the expense of them *making enough* in terms of income. The chapter then turns to the insecurities of their self-employed creative work, specifically the way it manifested in *the burden of responsibility* and *the uncertainty of work*, as well as their endeavours of *minimising insecurities* and their apparent *resolute optimism and confidence*.

Being creative

Demonstrating the realisation of intrinsically beneficial labour, the creative practices of the participants and the availability of opportunities for them to be creative regularly were of clear importance to their enjoyment and love of their work and consequentially their job satisfaction. While the high job satisfaction and general wellbeing of creative workers in comparison to those in non-creative occupations has been previously attributed to the autonomy, control and freedom they attain rather than their experience of the work per se (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013), these findings demonstrate their practising of their creative work to also be a significant factor. In questioning the myth of the satisfied creative worker, Hawkins (2017, p. 69) drew attention to how "the emotional and aesthetic forms of many of their labours … demand performance and management of physical and emotional bodies". Isolated participants did talk of the '*mental exhaustion*' (Natasha, interview) of creative thinking and mentioned feeling tired after long performances and creative problem solving. However, the experiences of their creative practices across the sample were overwhelmingly wellbeing-enhancing. As well as inducing a range of positive emotions, six participants explained that it was a key factor behind their positive sense of job satisfaction, and thus contributed to the generally good job satisfaction reported by the majority of the sample (see **Figure 6.1**).
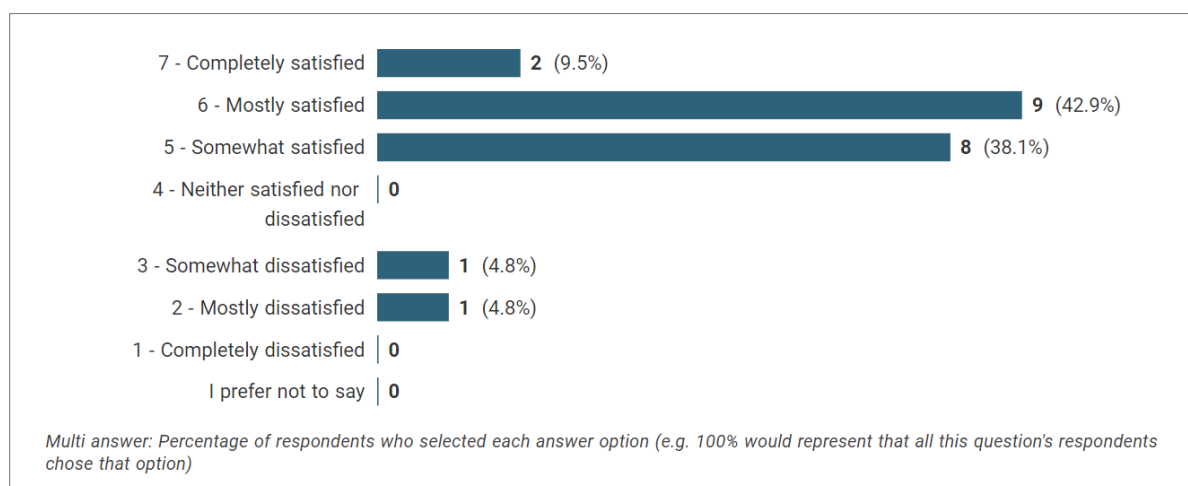
Figure 6.1. The answers participants gave when asked how dissatisfied or satisfied they were with their present job overall.

In line with the proclamations of creativity as being innately and intensely enjoyable, pleasurable and satisfactory (e.g., Berardi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Huws, 2007), a number of participants referred explicitly to the creativity of their work and how it was the reason why they so deeply enjoyed and loved what they did, in some cases leading to a strong sense of purposefulness and even to the sense of it not feeling like work. '*I get a lot out of my work*' said Mel in her interview; '*I absolutely love it and it's one of the things where I feel like so joyful, being creative in that way*'. Offering a '*creative outlet*' (Megan, interview) and the capacity to spend '*the majority of the time*' doing '*more creative things*' (David S, interview) as part of their day-to-day job was also important to the positive sense of satisfaction that they derived from their work.

In practise, the dimensions of creativity that were conducive to these positive experiences were numerous, encompassing the production of new cultural forms and the formation of ideas, the solving of problems, and the originality and self-expression embedded within the process (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Mirowsky, 2011; Mould, 2018). The act of making and creating for instance was a notable source of joy and contentment. Prominent amongst those in the more traditional arts and crafts professions, the refining and producing of architectural drawings, the making of collage and technology-based art, the mixing of music, the crafting of woodwork and the bringing to life of bears was something they loved, enjoyed and felt content doing. In the case of Rachel who was an artist and creative technologist, it was the specific characteristic of her creative practice that meant that she was 'somewhat satisfied' with her job. Joanne on the other hand was no longer a practising artist due to issues of time and money, but she still felt she was creative in her job as an arts educator and derived enjoyment from this. Rather than being about the creation and shaping of physical materials and tangible 'things', it was about '*connecting people and places and project ideas and models and ways of working that are innovative*' (interview). Similarly, Dennis, David T and Faye saw creativity in the problem-solving that lay at the heart of their work which gave them a '*kick*' (Dennis, interview) and a great sense of satisfaction in their job.

A personal connection to this process was salient in some of these accounts. Their own artistic interpretation and its uniqueness was a part of the enjoyment, and in the case of Emily the jobs that she loved the most and derived a strong sense of value from were those where she was given the creative freedom to express her own distinctive style of photography and take on the subject. For some it was less about enjoyment and more about the emotional release and mental benefits of being expressive, whether through the creation of artwork, the writing of a '*passion project*' (Sammy, interview) that was more vulnerable and personal, or the '*singing out*' of '*old feelings*' when with the choir, which Ben described as being '*very cathartic*' (video diary). As he explained in his interview, '*when we create, when we're making music, it's an emotional thing... we're releasing the build-up of*

our emotions from that day, from that week, from that month, from that year, from what's gone on.'
For the two actors, it was in fact about the crafting and performance of different personas, to for instance '*be braver*' or '*more sociable'* (Dennis, interview) or even be '*a completely different person*' (Daniel, interview). And, after having created something and completed a piece of work, there was often a strong sense of satisfaction, pride and accomplishment as well as motivation and excitement, as we can see from this example of Ben after he had finished making and recording music with one of his bands:

> *'I walked home very, very late at night, and listened to the monitor mixes of the songs that we recorded and it was great. They were so good and it made me feel brilliant… I felt proud of myself. It was self-esteem lifting… it's important in a creative job where you pour your heart and emotions out into your music - to be able to validate that and feel like what you're putting out is good and people deserve to hear it because it's so sensitive. At the very least, we should be loving ourselves and loving our own output. So yeah, that was a great end to yesterday'*
> (Ben, video diary).

When attempting to explore more deeply the qualities of the creative enterprise that are conducive to these wellbeing outcomes, interesting observations from the data are made. Despite the association of flow experiences with such artistic activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Hytönen-ng, 2013), only Alison spoke of feeling '*absorbed*' when creating her art, as she discussed the '*huge amount of enjoyment and pleasure'* (interview) that it gave her. The playfulness though that is thought to often be at the conjunction of flow experiences, creativity and wellbeing is more prominent (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). Considered by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) to be a compelling attribute of creativity, a group of participants on a number of separate occasions referred to their creative practices as being '*fun*' (Dennis, video diary; Duncan, interview; Daniel, video diary; Lucy, video diary; Stephen, video diary; Rachel, video diary; Ben, video diary), whether in the context of voiceover work, auditions, drama workshops, the operating of soft robotics for a festival, the playing of music, the making of installations or experimentation with technology. More explicitly, Rachel discussed her innate desire for creativity as being akin to a '*childishness*' and a '*silliness*' (interview), while Duncan explained how the setting up of his craft business alongside his architectural work was, although a valid business opportunity, primarily '*about having fun and playing with crafts*' (interview). Their comments suggested that this playfulness of creativity is widely stifled through the social norms and pressures of adulthood and professionalism, with a need for '*permission*' (Duncan, interview) to be creative through formal education, training and work. It was evident that there was something inherently enriching and life-affirming about utilising

the human faculties to create and bring something new into being and, as some remarks suggested, the relationship between head and hand was important in this regard (Hawkins, 2017; Sennett, 2009). When discussing how making artwork was good for her '*mental health*' and how it put her in '*a good headspace*', Alison contemplated that '*when you're making with your hands … it connects to your brain differently*' (interview). Likewise, when quizzed as to why she believed creative outlets to be so captivating, Megan felt that it was the '*wonder*' of being able to '*create something that you appreciate out of your own hands*' (interview).

These findings are in contrast to the conclusions of studies investigating the wellbeing of those in the creative industries, which place emphasis on the autonomy of self-employment to explain the positive wellbeing of particular creative workers (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013). More consistent with idealisations of creative endeavours (Berardi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Huws, 2007), the creativity of their labour was a great source of emotional fulfilment and satisfaction for these workers, and evidently contributed in part to the positive emotional wellbeing and job satisfaction that they reported. Rather than a process of discovery (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), it was the producing of things both material and immaterial, the solving of problems, and the originality and self-expression of their work that they enjoyed and loved, and although there was little evidence of flow experiences, creativity's playfulness and the connection between head and hand seemed foundational to these experiences.

Satisfaction of the creative spark

The satisfaction of a creative spark, which the participants considered to be an innate need of all humans, was achieved and even enhanced under the conditions of their creative labour, despite some evidence of repetitive and unfulfilling creative work and the encroachment of administrative work on time dedicated to their creative practice. Representative of the essentialist belief of creativity's life-affirming qualities and our inherent proclivity towards it (Berardi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013), Layard's (2005, p. 68) statement that there is a "creative spark in each of us, and if it finds no outlet, we feel half-dead" was discussed with the participants of the study. A strong consensus amongst the sample, 14 participants personally identified with this assertion and believed it to be true for each and every person. '*Everyone's creative in some sense*' (Daniel, interview) they maintained, even if '*sometimes it takes years to realise it or have the space to realise it*' (Megan, interview).

Participants felt that opportunities to realise their intrinsic creativity is not limited to the creative industries, with many drawing attention to the range of creative outlets that can be found outside of the world of work, whether that be around the house doing DIY or gardening or through a creative

hobby of some sort. In fact according to Dennis there is '*rarely an opportunity where you can't be a little bit creative*' (interview), with there being, in the words of Daniel, '*creativeness in everything*' (interview). If they were to find themselves in a situation where they could no longer work in the creative industries, participants said that they would seek to satisfy their creative spark through one of these outlets. Some even did so in their spare time alongside their creative work, and in the past had relied on them when other commitments got in the way of their ability to work.

The creativity of the tasks that those working in the creative industries undertake and the amount of time that they are actually able to spend being creative because the burden of other tasks and responsibilities has been called into question (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hawkins, 2017; Hracs and Leslie, 2014; McRobbie, 1998). In the case of these creative workers, not all labour associated with their practice, it seemed, was necessarily stimulating and engaging. There were a handful of occasions where tasks that were integral to their creative work felt '*repetitive*' (Rachel, video diary) and monotonous, like the editing of photos, the making of woodwork components, the assembling of databases, the writing of scripts for talks and presentations, or the practising of scales and arpeggios. Of more pertinence to the issue of work's impact on their creativity, there were a few instances of particular commissioned jobs being '*really boring*' (Natasha, interview), '*too comfortable*' (Mel, interview), '*quite repetitive*' and '*unenjoyable*' (Emily, interview) to the extent that they threatened to impact their creativity and their passion and love for what they did. In the case of Dennis, '*doing the same thing for nearly ten years*' due to the limits of his time had left him feeling '*very static*' (interview) in his career. The comments of two individuals working in arts education and creative advocacy seemed to suggest that greater creativity was to be found in the actual practise of art in comparison to their perhaps more auxiliary professions. Implying that her job supporting the creativity of young people was perhaps not completely fulfilling in this way, Valerie said she needed to consider what she wanted to achieve creatively, as she felt she did not have the time for her own creativity having not practised her own art professionally with the exception of one year after she had left university. Joanne who worked as an arts education consultant similarly said that '*in an ideal scenario … I would have a studio and I'd be making my own work*' (interview), citing a lack of time and money as a result of being a single mother as the issue.

Some participants did substantiate the narrative of creative work as being undermined by administrative, organisational and promotional work, with the dynamics of running a business at times limiting and hindering time dedicated to their actual creative practice. Alison remarked that the '*balance isn't quite what I'd like it to be*' (video diary), and both Stephen and Mel found that the less enjoyable admin work that they had to do could '*definitely encroach on the creative side*' (Stephen, interview) of their work which they enjoyed. '*That can … sometimes affect my mood*' said Mel, ''*cause*

I'm frustrated 'cause I just want to get through the admin stuff so I can be creative' (video diary). David S too felt frustrated by the amount of time that he actually got to spend doing photography because of the other jobs that came with being self-employed but acknowledged that there was in fact a trade-off between the quality and the quantity of creative time, with working independently giving him greater agency and autonomy with regard to his creative practice.

In the case of Faye, issues regarding both the quality and quantity of creative work were particularly acute, resulting in a creative unfulfillment and a loss of passion for graphic design that saw her undertake retraining for a new career as a nutritionist. Working in partnership with her husband, Faye found herself doing a lot of the account management work and other mundane work such as the '*pedantic guideline writing*' (interview). The day-to-day running and pressures of having your own small business, she found, combined with the demands of adult life, gets in the way and '*dampens your creativity*' (interview). Of the creative work that she did do, the extent to which it was creatively challenging was limited. The work she did for her main client was '*boring stuff that anybody could do*' (interview), little ongoing work inhibited opportunities for creativity, and many jobs felt uncreative because the specific requests of clients meant she was having less and less of a say in how jobs were done. As a result of '*doing less and less creative work*' (interview), Faye found herself '*falling out of love with it*' and feeling '*out of the loop*' (interview), leaving her doubting her ability, dissatisfied with her job, unfulfilled, and in need of a career change to refresh her passion and vigour.

Despite these caveats and individual experiences however, it was clear that the doing of the creative practice as a job was enhancing and supportive of creativity for a large number of participants, including several of those for whom their creative work could be limited and on occasion unfulfilling. Contrasting experiences in their current professions with previous work outside of the creative industries, they stated how they were '*definitely able to be more creative now*' (Millie, interview), and how, directly referencing Layard's quote, they felt '*whole dead, not half dead*' (Lucy, interview) in their old job. '*I felt like a caged, caged animal, because I just couldn't be creative*' Elizabeth (interview) said, reflecting on a period when she stopped her creative business due to hardship and went to work for a kitchen shop instead. Duncan, on the other hand, felt that if it was not for his job in architecture, he would not have '*found the permission*' to explore his creativity through sketching in his free time, which he found '*fun*', '*fulfilling*' and '*freeing*' (interview). The creative businesses of the participants, it appeared, enabled them to satisfy the creative spark within them in a way that was perhaps not possible when working 'non-creative' jobs.

Turning to the reason why this was the case, being able to do their creative practice for work rather than as a hobby allowed the participants to better dedicate themselves to their craft and thus fulfil

their potential. Although acknowledging that it was perhaps at the expense of security and normal working hours, David S said that '*there is greater creative fulfilment*' (interview) when you have your own creative business because your creative time is not pigeonholed. '*It would probably not be quite as fulfilling*' Stephen thought, when asked hypothetically how he would relate to his music if he did it as a hobby; '*if you spend less time doing it … you're not going to get as close to where you want to be*' (interview). Having taken their respective practices from hobbies to full-time jobs, both Steve and Emily had found this to be true. Enabling him to reach standards that he '*hadn't really known were possible*', going professional had changed Steve's '*relationship with woodwork … fundamentally*' (interview), while Emily's confidence and love for her photography had grown since doing it full-time because she was able to dedicate more time to it and continue to learn, improve, and discover her unique style. As others remarked, it both '*allows you to take it seriously*' (Rachel, interview), but also '*to be taken seriously*' yourself (Natasha, interview). Giving them the time and resources to pursue and apply themselves to their creative practice to the best of their ability, it goes some way in explaining the overwhelmingly positive sense amongst the sample that they are competent and capable in activities that are – as will be evident in the next section – important to them (see **Figure 6.2**).
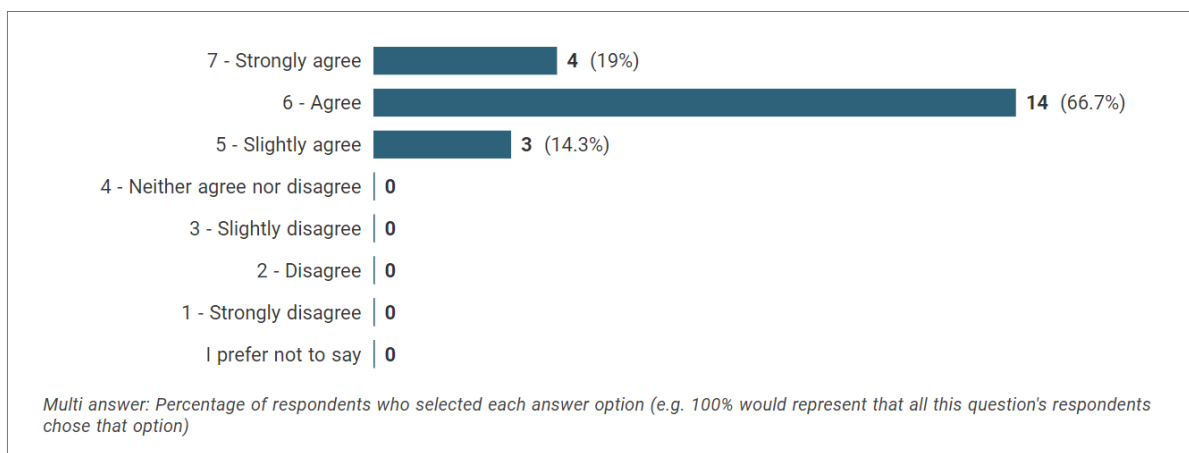
Figure 6.2. The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me'.

Rather than stifling their creativity, the need to produce outputs that would sell and the meeting of briefs required them to be innovative and adaptative and pulled them out of their creative comfort zone. The challenge to make something appealing to the market and make the process as efficient as possible was something that was relished and seen as a positive in the context of the creative process, and the requirements and wants of the clients were found to be something that '*encourages you to*

push yourself and your creativity' (Natasha, interview). In the case of Millie, the need to keep video content interesting and exciting for companies that produced one type of product required her to be inventive and creative. For Mel, her exposure to different briefs and the challenges they posed encouraged her to continue to learn new things, adapt and apply her concept art to different subjects in a way that helped to satisfy that '*spark*' (interview) and maintained her love and interest in her work. Ben reflected that '*the ultimate job satisfaction*' (interview) would come when a few hours of well-paid work would allow him to live comfortably and make the music that he wanted to. However, he also found that the need to make money 'forced' him to learn new skills, such as jazz harmony, to which he would otherwise not apply himself. This was something that was important to him, as he explained that he had always been someone who had enjoyed being out of his '*comfort zone*' (interview).

More than just heightening and expanding the creativity of the participants, the application of their creative practices for a job also heightened the positive experiences associated with it. The need and use of their skills and outputs, delivering for clients and seeing the value of their work gave their practice '*purpose*' (Natasha, interview), contributed to their own sense of '*self-worth*' (Sammy, interview), and was a great source of '*excitement*' (Steve, interview). The '*enjoyment of photography*' for Natasha came from '*it being seen by other people*' (interview), and as Mel remarked about the use of her concept art in games and film sets, '*it just gets more and more exciting for me because it's like I'm peeling all these layers of how my skills can be used*' (interview). David T, in fact, differentiated between being '*a creative*' and just '*being creative*' (interview). As opposed to just *being creative*, you are *a creative*, he believed, when you have an end effect and an impact with what you do, which was something that was important to him.

Despite literature suggesting that opportunities to be creative for these workers could be undermined by the conditions of their labour (Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hawkins, 2017; Hracs and Leslie, 2014; McRobbie, 1998), and regardless of some evidence to this end, this research found creative work to be predominantly conducive and enriching of the creativity of the practitioners. The ability to dedicate time and resources to the pursuit of their craft, the challenges of meeting the needs and wants of clients and customers, and the use and demand for their skills enabled the participants in the study to more greatly satisfy the innate 'creative spark' that Layard (2005) refers to and be competent and capable in an activity that was important to them.

Self-fulfilment and self-actualisation

With the creative practices of the participants being largely uninhibited by their business context, the self-fulfilment they attained through doing what they loved and were passionate about for a job and the self-actualisation of committing themselves to what they felt they were destined to do was a powerful source of purpose and meaning for these creative workers. In this way, they demonstrated the realisation of individualised work as a 'vehicle' for self-fulfilment (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Moreover, these findings substantiate the narrative of careers in the creative industries as being a means of attaining the personal fulfilment and pursuing the intrinsic passions associated with creative endeavours rather than simply being just a motivational factor and a romanticised and largely unobtainable prospect (e.g., Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hawkins, 2017; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Taylor and Littleton, 2016; Turrini and Chicchi, 2014). With participants explaining the significant contribution it made to their sense of purpose and meaning in life and with the experience of positive emotions, engagement and optimism being apparent too, it also further strengthens the argument that their experiences of their creative work were a significant factor in the high levels of wellbeing observed amongst these workers (cf. Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013).

Inferring a strong sense of engagement and interest in a prominent daily activity of theirs and as such consistent with the questionnaire results (see **Figure 6.3**), the majority of participants attested that their creative work was what they loved doing, what they were passionate about, and what made them 'tick'. As well as conceivably contributing to the participants' general sense of being engaged and interested in what they did day-to-day as captured by the FS measure, the prominence of these narratives within the interviews and video diaries also aligns with the positive emotions that they regularly experienced as captured by the PANAS measure, in particular feelings of being interested, determined and enthusiastic, which were the most common (see **Table 5.3**). In doing so, they embodied the 'Do What You Love' maxim which is known to reverberate amongst the creative industries (Duffy, 2016). Participants explained that work did not feel like work, and they remarked how they were being paid for something that they would do in their spare time. '*It's important to do what you love*' stressed Dennis (interview), before acknowledging that he was fortunate to be able to do so. '*I remind myself that I'm quite lucky to do what I do',* he said; *'there's lots of people that would love to do what I do'* (interview).
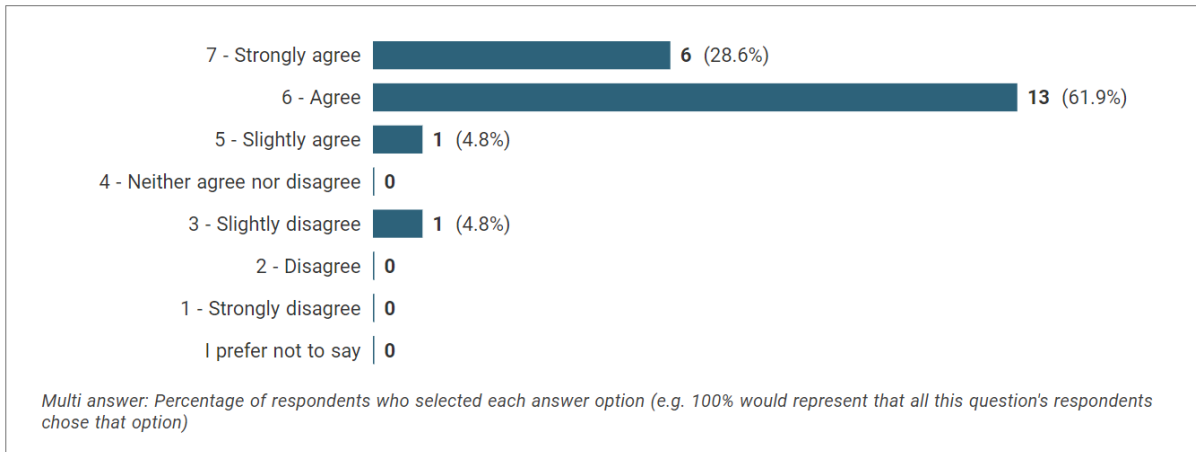
Figure 6.3. *The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I am engaged and interested in my daily activities'.*

This love, passion and interest in their creative practice and the discovery of their ability and talent in it can be traced back to the childhood and early teenage years of the participants. Six participants had identified it as being what they wanted to do as a job at a very early age. Everything David T did throughout his education was geared towards a career in graphic design and Elizabeth had been selling the bears and dolls that she made ever since she was '*tiny*' (interview). Echoing a sense of destiny and inevitability shared by others, both Alison and Ben said how their respective practices had '*always been there*' (Alison, interview; Ben, interview). '*My mum says that I've permanently had a pair of scissors in my hand*' (interview) Alison remarked, and, having played the drums since he was two years old, music for Ben was '*like another sense'* (interview). However, being inspired, encouraged and taught by family members was important to both Alison and Ben, as well as others. Ben for instance was brought up in an environment of music and his Dad, who did it as a job too, got him gigging as young as nine. In her interview, Mel reminisced about how her mum would always have her and her sisters '*doing a lot of creative activities*' in the form of baking, craft days, dancing and museum trips, and how in it had '*rippled'* throughout her life and '*nurtured*' the artist within her. Reflecting on where her passion for photography came from, Emily attributed it to her dad having always taken photos and films, and the way it captured their time together:

> '*That, for me is such an important thing. And I'm so grateful that we've got all of those memories in photo albums and stuff like that. So I find it so important that I can do that for other people. So yeah, there's just not really anything else that I feel would fulfil me the same, in the same way, at all'* (Emily, interview).

Having established viable creative businesses and careers in line with their long-standing hopes, ambitions and passions, strong senses of self-fulfilment were shared by many participants. They had achieved a '*life goal*' (David T, interview) of making a living out of their creative practice, doing the thing that they loved and enjoyed the most every day, and mastering their craft. Acting was what Daniel '*really want[ed] to be doing*' (video diary), being a vegan content creator meant Millie was able to do what she '*wanted to do*' (interview), and being able to be a wedding photographer full-time was the career that Emily '*just wanted to have*' (interview). In fact, their relationship to their work was often more akin to self-actualisation. Being about the realisation of talent, potential, and who they are and what they were destined to do, the narratives presented by the participants suggested something deeper than the fulfilment of simply doing something they loved and wanted to do. It was for instance a '*calling*' (David T, interview), a '*reflection*' of their '*personality*' (Stephen, interview), and a '*gift*' (Mel, interview) that they had to fulfil. Again expressing the same strong sentiment, both Alison and Ben felt inseparable from their creative practice, as if they would not exist without it. '*I don't think there's an [Alison] without this world… I don't know what she would be like'* Alison (interview) contemplated, and Ben similarly felt that his music had been his '*being forever and ever*' and was '*so deeply rooted'* (interview) in who he was. '*There's not even any point in imagining what my life would be without it'* he said poignantly '*it's sort of like imagining what my life would be without, I don't know, my nose*' (interview). Further reinforcing the idea of creativity as being central to human fulfilment, others spoke about how they felt '*compelled*' to '*make things*' (Rachel, interview) and that they '*run on creativity*' (Natasha, interview), need that outlet to create, and '*can't not*' (Lucy, interview) work in the creative industries. Being a creative was, according to both Elizabeth and David S, '*who I am*' (Elizabeth, interview) and '*what I am*' (David S, interview). Rather than seeking out work that "reflected and bolstered the self" (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski*,* 2019, p. 152) to compensate for the absence of the identity provided by an organisation, the desire to pursue their creative endeavour as an imperative for self-realisation was the driving force that directed the career ambitions of the participants and that ultimately saw them establish their own business.

When defining a sense of purpose as "goals, intentions, and a sense of direction … which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful" (Ryff, 1989, p. 1071), it becomes clear how the self-fulfilment and self-actualisation that is so central to the ambitions of the participants and their experiences of their creative work contributed to the strong sense of purpose and meaning in life that nearly all of them reported (see **Figure 6.4**). This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the majority of participants explicitly said that their work and their creative practice was very important to their sense of purpose and meaning as captured by the questionnaires. '*It is my sense of purpose*' (Megan, interview), '*the meaning of life for me*' (Ben, interview) and it '*defines me*' (Lucy, interview) they reflected. '*I think it's*

one of the main ways in which I derive meaning from my entire existence' (interview) said David S, whose sense of groundedness came from his work rather than through a connection to place. '*I'm not one of those people without roots by any means … But I think the work that I do, that's why I sort of feel grounded… it's like, in my head, rather than in my sort of physical location*' (David S, interview). Furthermore, participants directly linked their experiences of self-actualisation with the sense of purpose and meaning that they derived from their work. Using their gift, enjoying the creativity of their work and doing what they liked and what felt they were meant to fulfilled and gave them a purpose. When asked how much her work contributed to her sense of purpose and meaning in life, Valerie for instance said:

> *'I've always believed quite strongly that if I didn't believe in what I did, or didn't feel a connection to what I did, I wouldn't be doing it… it definitely is wrapped up in I suppose who I am as a person, and what I want to be doing'* (Valerie, interview).

Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)
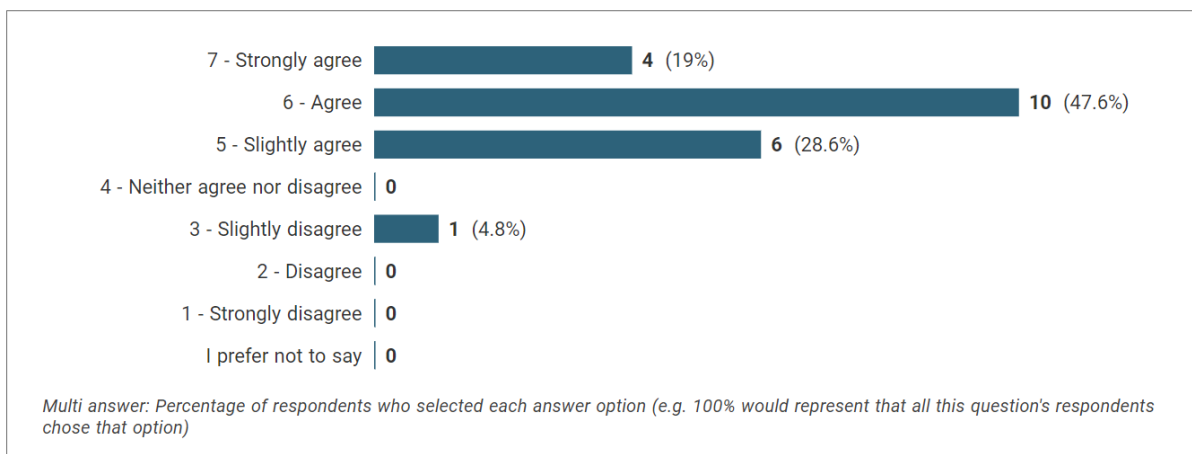
Figure 6.4. *The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I lead a purposeful and meaningful life'.*

In addition to being key to their purpose and meaning in life, doing what they loved, what they wanted to do and what they felt they were destined to do also contributed to the participants' job satisfaction and their sense of optimism. Being lucky enough to do what they loved and enjoyed, achieving what they wanted in their work, and doing something that reflected their personality and fulfilled their identity as a creative was, as four participants explained, a key reason behind their satisfaction with their jobs. This finding further bolsters the connection between the experiences of their creative practices and the positive job satisfaction of the sample (see **Figure 6.1**). Similarly, four participants also stated that the establishment of a business and the way it allowed them to dedicate themselves to what they loved was behind the positive sense of optimism that they, along with all other participants in the sample, revealed in the questionnaire (see **Figure 6.5**).

7 - Strongly agree	**6** (28.6%)
6 - Agree	**10** (47.6%)
5 - Slightly agree	**5** (23.8%)
4 - Neither agree nor disagree	**0**
3 - Slightly disagree	**0**
2 - Disagree	**0**
1 - Strongly disagree	**0**
I prefer not to say	**0**

Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)
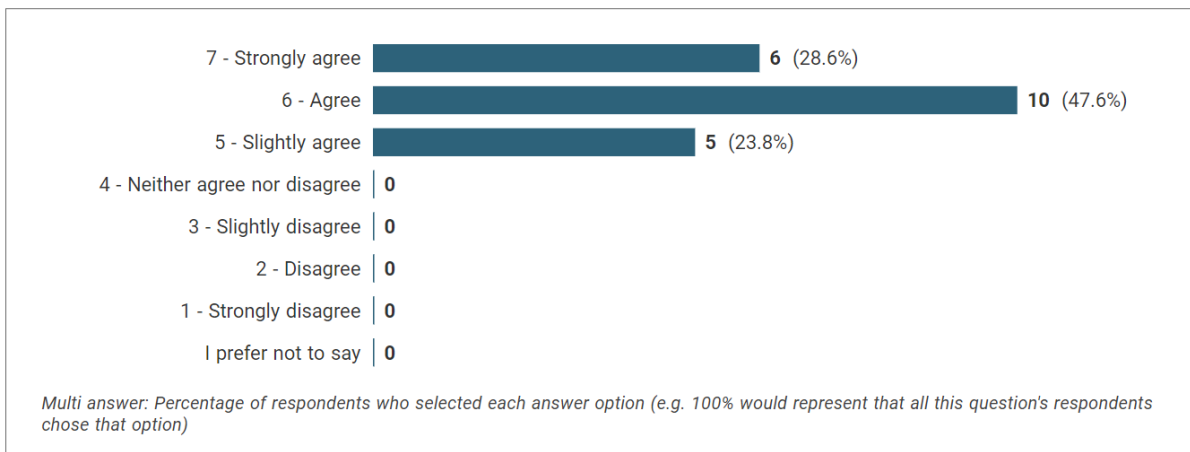
Figure 6.5. *The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I am optimistic about my future'.*

The significance of being able to pursue a career that was aligned with their passion and potential and the consequences it had for their wellbeing is made even more apparent by their accounts of how they felt before they had established their creative business. As contended by Csikszentmihalyi (2013, p. 74), "perhaps the most difficult thing for a creative individual to bear is the sense of loss and emptiness experienced when, for some reason or another, he or she cannot work". In their old jobs, Lucy and Millie were '*deeply unhappy*' (Lucy, interview) and were '*getting more and more miserable*' (Millie, interview) because they were not doing what they wanted to do, with the ability to be creative being a part of that. '*I was just getting to a point in my job life where I was just really miserable, really unhappy, really unfulfilled and I wasn't doing anything that I actually was passionate about*', Millie told in one of her video diaries; '*I … didn't feel like I was going anywhere and so I decided to … take the leap and do something that I absolutely love.*' When Elizabeth was unable to run her business and be creative, the reason why it turned her '*stir crazy*' (interview) was because being a creative was who she was. To emphasise the importance of doing something that is personally fulfilling, Elizabeth compared herself to a friend who at the age of 50 did not know what she wanted to do and, despite having a huge salary, was '*bored to depression*' (interview). '*Can you imagine going through life … not knowing why you're here or what you meant to do and nothing fulfils you?*' (interview) she asked rhetorically. Even though her friend could buy anything she wanted, Elizabeth believed herself to be the lucky one because it was she who was fulfilled by what she did.

A few participants also provided evidence that their sense of purpose, job satisfaction and optimism could be negatively affected by the feeling of not fully realising the potential of their business and by extension, themselves. For many years as she sought to establish herself, Emily did her wedding photography part-time and worked other jobs on the side. Wanting to do her passion full-time, she

'*resented*' it, '*felt quite lost*', and felt that something was '*missing*', because it was, in her words, '*what makes me who I am*' (interview). During this period she found herself relying on making connections with people for fulfilment, which was something that her career now provided. Facing this problem at the time of the research was Daniel who, unable to take his acting work full-time, experienced a loss of purpose. The thing that stopped four participants from feeling 'completely satisfied' with their job and also limited their sense of optimism was the feeling that their business ideas and consequentially their potential remained '*unfulfilled*' (Duncan, interview), that they were not where they wanted to be, and that there was '*a lot of potential to do … a lot more'* (Sammy, interview). Rather than being as a result of an oversaturated market and a dearth of work though, the occurrence of these feelings were because these participants had only just started their businesses, or because they had multiple business ideas that they were pursuing at one time. Nevertheless, as signified in particular by the example of Mel, the placing of such emphasis on work for one's purpose and fulfilment can be problematic. Mel had come to understand her purpose as being the more general embracing of her creativity as a '*gift*' (interview). However, she described herself as having previously fallen into the '*danger zone*' (interview) of thinking of her work specifically as being her purpose. At a time when she had not had the massive break in her career that she had wanted, this over-identification with work brought on a period of depression.

Doing what they loved and what was central to their sense of self was not only a motivational factor behind the participants pursuing careers in the creative industries and establishing their own businesses, but through their work these passions and potentialities materialised into profound experiences of self-fulfilment and self-actualisation. In doing so it evidences these qualities of individualised work (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and supports the narrative of creative labour as intimately connected with personal expression and realisation (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Hawkins, 2017; Ring, 2020; Taylor and Littleton, 2016). However, the observable contribution it makes to their engagement and interest in daily activities, the regular experience of positive emotions, their sense of purpose and meaning in life, their job satisfaction and their optimism further demonstrates the overwhelming significance of their creative labour to their subjective wellbeing across a range of dimensions that have remained unrecognised in previous studies (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013). In this respect these findings support the imbrication of work and pleasure, of the alignment of work with "the subject's own range of interest" so that it is not only done in the service of others and for the purposes of earning a living, but in favour of their own 'subjective urges' on the grounds of wellbeing (Adorno, 1994, p. 99).

The benefits of autonomy

A prominent characteristic of individualised work, autonomy has been understood to explain the higher job satisfaction and wellbeing of the self-employed in contrast to the employed (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; Hundley, 2001; Lange, 2012; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020), and by extension the traditional art sectors of the creative industries due to the prevalence of self-employment amongst its workforce (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013). As reported by the participants of this study, freedom over time and freedom from the rule and gaze of management were positive benefits and attributes of being self-employed. However, as explained by the five participants that said that autonomy contributed to their job satisfaction, it was predominantly the control they had over the type of work that they did and the clients that they worked with, which itself was bound up with the sense of purpose and meaning that they derived from their job. These findings support the positive effect that autonomy is widely accepted to have on job satisfaction and shed light on the mechanisms through which this occurs (Binder and Blankenberg, 2021), but they also suggest that it is supportive of, and perhaps no greater in significance than, the experiences of creative labour in this respect. Substantiating the influence of creative labour in comparison to autonomy in this way, these findings further challenge the emphasis that has previously been placed on autonomy in studies of creative professionals and their subjective wellbeing (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013).

Although the extent of their autonomy could be impacted at times by periods of low job opportunities and income, the demands and expectations of clients, customers and audiences, and the constraints of working with suppliers, collaborators or organisations, the majority of participants spoke of the autonomy that came with being self-employed and its benefits in the context of their work. Freedom and control over their work time, diary and schedule was one way in which this autonomy materialised, being described as '*one of the great benefits of being self-employed*' (Alison, video diary), a main positive of their work, and a source of enjoyment. Often compared with experiences in previous employed roles, it was about being able to work at their own timings, being in control of their workload and being able to take up tasks as and when they wanted. It was also about working in line with the ebb and flow of their creativity, productivity and mood, which is thought to be important to those that are creative (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). They did not like and could not see themselves working for others again, and described how they struggled doing their work the way others wanted them to do as they were '*confident*' in themselves and their '*way of doing things*' (Ben, interview). The freedom from supervision and restriction was the thing that they valued '*more than anything else*' (Lucy, interview), and being rid from the gaze, judgement and control of management for Millie felt '*quite adult*' (interview). In a similar manner Megan believed that working for somebody else would

exacerbate issues of imposter syndrome because of the greater need to prove yourself, and when discussing why he felt more satisfied with his work now that he no longer worked for a company, David T told of the '*big shadow*' (interview) that used to be cast over him and the constant questions and criticism he used to get.

However, it was the ability to select and choose things they wanted to work towards, jobs that they wanted to do, and clients they wanted to work for that had a greater influence on the wellbeing of the participants. As five participants explained, the control they had over the work that they did was the reason behind their positive responses to the question of how satisfied they were with their job. The value of this autonomy over work though, and perhaps its significance to job satisfaction too, appeared to be connected to its support and enablement of the enjoyment, fulfilment and purposefulness that they derived from their creative labour. As well as helping to keep '*stress levels down*' (Elizabeth, interview), participants described how it sustained their love and passion for what they did and how it helped to maintain a variety in work that was important to their enthusiasm and excitement. Evident too amongst these explanations was the way in which this manifestation of autonomy aided them in their positioning of work as personally purposeful and meaningful, and enhanced the self-fulfilment they gained from their occupations. The ability to '*influence absolutely everything*' (interview), which was the main reason why Valerie was 'mostly satisfied' with her job, was largely about being able to set her own parameters and priorities. Moving on from the bureaucracy, politics and limits of the organisation she once worked for, setting up her own business allowed her to '*weave in all of the things*' that were '*really important*' to her and allowed her to continue to '*develop as a person*' (interview). The high sense of job satisfaction of others too came from the freedom they had to pursue specific jobs and roles that were important to their sense of purpose and meaning and drop those that did not 'serve' or 'align' with them fully. The satisfaction of being '*in control of your own destiny*' (David T, interview) was also about having a choice over who to do work for. Only working for and thus helping '*nice people*' (interview) saw Megan not only derive a sense of satisfaction from her work, but also a sense of purpose.

Irrespective of job satisfaction, this experience of autonomy as helping to enable the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling work was echoed elsewhere. Sammy for instance had come up against '*brick walls in terms of … salary and responsibility*' when she was an employee, but had found that '*as a freelancer, the sky is sort of the limit'* (interview) as it gave her the space and the freedom to do all the things she wanted to do and explore her potential. Both Alison and David S expressed a similar sentiment, feeling they had freedom and control over their creativity. '*I have the freedom … to be creative in the way that I want to be*', Alison (interview) had said, while David S explained that work was his primary source of meaning because it was the thing that he felt he had most control over.

Despite contributing to the already large body of evidence that positions autonomy as an important factor underpinning the positive job satisfaction of self-employed workers (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; Hundley, 2001; Lange, 2012; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020), the findings of this research suggest that it is no more significant than the experience of creative labour when considering emotional wellbeing, job satisfaction and social-psychological functioning (cf. Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013). In investigating the processes underpinning the relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction, the significance of being able to choose work and clients that they wanted came to the fore, and by consequently supporting the pursuit of purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling work, demonstrates the interconnection of these dimensions of their working experience and associated wellbeing outcomes. Autonomy, by enabling the personalisation of work in this way, thus reinforces the idea of freedom and control as being important to the experience of work as enriching and fulfilling rather than alienating (Fromm, 2004; Horgan, 2021).

Making enough

With precariousness being the cost of these freedoms of individualised work (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), the self-employed are understood to typically earn less, be at greater risk of lower pay and be significantly less satisfied with their income in comparison to the employed (Hamilton, 2000; Horemans and Marx, 2017; Kalleberg, Reskin and Hudson, 2000; Sorgner, Fritsch and Kritikos, 2017; van der Zwan and Hessels, 2019). Poor pay is also understood to be a systemic issue in the creative industries because of an oversaturated market and an innate desire for such work, with cases of under-employment and income being below the poverty line (e.g., Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Butler and Russell, 2018; Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hawkins, 2017; Miège, 1989; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). In light of this literature, income was expected to be a prominent problem, with repercussions for the wellbeing of these workers. However, this issue did not materialise to the extent that was anticipated. Although five participants were 'somewhat dissatisfied' with their household income, participants were on average 'somewhat satisfied' with this life domain (see **Figure 6.6**), and the desire for a higher level of income was reported to only moderately limit the high job satisfaction scores of a few participants.
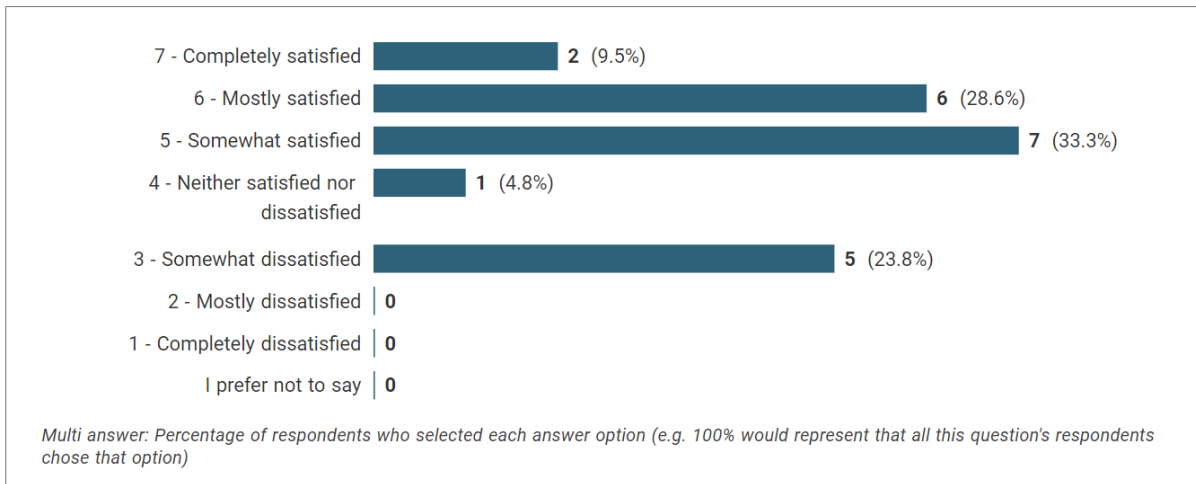
Figure 6.6. *The answers participants gave when asked how dissatisfied or satisfied they were with the income of their household.*

Looking at their annual income (see **Figure 6.7**), just over half fell within the modest bracket of between £20,001 and £40,000 per annum. Four participants reported incomes of between £10,001 and £20,000 and only Natasha earned below £10,000, although as a content creator and influencer, a large proportion of remuneration came in the form of gifted products which she said saved her a lot of money. Those that said that they were 'somewhat dissatisfied' with their household income all earned under £30,000 per annum but differently accounted for the share of their respective household income, with two being the main earners, two not being the main earners, and one accounting for an equal share of the household earnings. Corresponding with this dissatisfaction were the stresses of '*just not knowing what you're going to get'* (Rachel, interview) each month and the frustration of not being able to offer a regular income to a partner who was worried about their financial situation. More predominantly though it coincided with a discontentment with the amount they were paid for the work that they did.
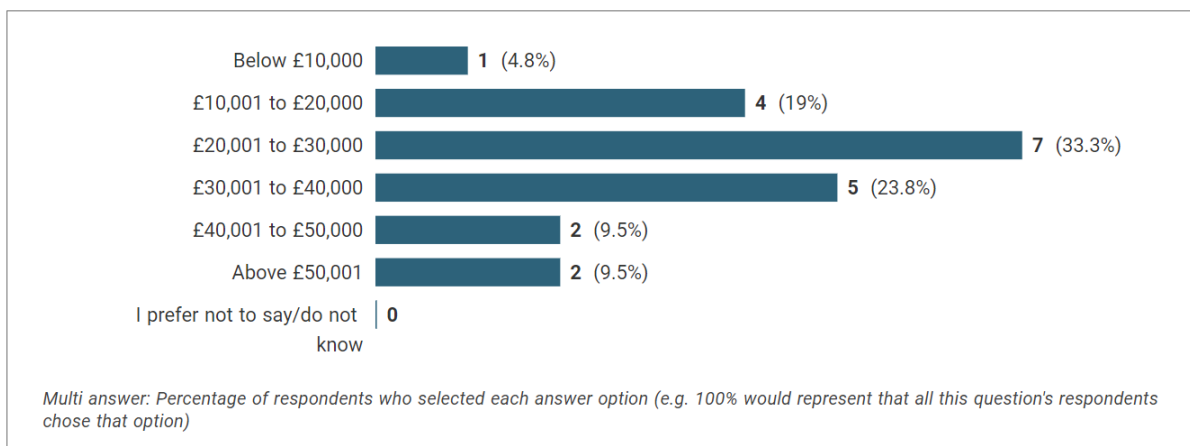
Figure 6.7. The answers participants gave when asked what personal income bracket they fell into.

While it is understood that a reliance on supplementary work or other forms of financial help is often necessary when working in the arts (e.g., Abbing, 2002), there was only one example where a participant relied on income from other non-creative jobs due to both low pay and infrequent employment. Alongside his acting work, Daniel relied on nannying work to keep him '*afloat*' (video diary) financially. At the time he was also renovating his house to sell on and had applied for an invigilator job to help him with income worries. He felt frustrated by the fact that he was constantly having to juggle so many jobs that were not really paying him enough money and he wished that he was able to buy and do nice things for himself without having '*to worry about money all the time*' (interview). The financial pressures tarnished his enjoyment of his creative work and not doing his acting full-time was the reason why he was only 'somewhat satisfied' with his job. As his partner with whom he lived also had a restricted income, it was clear why he was 'somewhat dissatisfied' with his household income too.

Five participants, including some of those who were dissatisfied with their household income, said that their job satisfaction was negatively impacted by the level of their pay and their desire for a '*slightly greater level of financial freedom*' (David S, interview), and in all but one case it was only the difference between being 'mostly satisfied' and 'completely satisfied' (see **Figure 6.1**). Along with some suggestions that they might have tolerated it because they enjoyed their work (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018), this moderately dissatisfactory income was attributed by the participants to the fact that there was '*not enough money circulating in the creative industries*' (Lucy, interview), rather than because of an oversupply of workers (McRobbie, 1998; Miège, 1989). For Lucy, the insufficiency of pay was felt to be due in part to the intangibility of their output's benefit – joy – and the reality that you can '*get it*

from such a variety of ways' (interview) in everyday life. It was also suggested that this financial insecurity had worsened in recent years with spending in the arts having been cut and pay having failed to rise with inflation. '*I used to feel like I was quite well off*,' said Joanne; '*I don't feel like that anymore*' (interview). The kind of income that is possible within the creative industries could not provide the standard of living that the salaries in the corporate world could (see Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999), and, as David S reported, the financial limits of such work was an issue for even for the most high profile of professionals in his industry.

There were however two participants that were just content in the knowledge that their business was financially viable and that it provided them with enough income to pay their bills. Although having taken a pay cut after leaving her old organisation to set up her own business, Valerie and her co-founder felt that '*as long as we can cover the bills, and we're not panicking about money and where it's coming from then, you know, we're happy with that*' (interview). And while it was expressed that having conviction and confidence in their financial worth could be a challenge and that the justification of what they charge could be difficult especially when having just started a business, there were those that remarked that that being self-employed was in fact financially advantageous. Four participants mentioned being paid more now per job that they were before they were self-employed, with Sammy stating that she liked the '*high risk, high reward*' (interview) nature of it. Having been presented with the opportunity of working with an organisation long-term on either an employed or freelance basis, Joanne opted for being self-employed because it worked out '*much better … financially*' (interview) for her as a result of being taxed on her profit rather than her income. '*We're talking like 40% of an income difference jump*' (interview) she said, describing the financial benefit as '*massive*' (interview).

Rather than finding low pay and under-employment to be prominent issues facing these self-employed creative workers as alluded to elsewhere (e.g., Gill and Pratt, 2008; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018; van der Zwan and Hessels, 2019), the extent and severity of financial issues and their consequence for household income and job satisfaction was found to be more moderate. While their enjoyment and desire for such work did perhaps see them accept the suboptimal income offered by work in the creative industries, problematically low pay and underemployment was largely scarce.

The burden of responsibility

Beyond this dissatisfaction with income though was the added burden of their personal responsibility for bringing in this income and sustaining their business. Bearing the risk of business (Kalleberg, 2018), the precariousness of having to fund their income through the revenue they generate, manage their own resources, pensions and taxes, cover the equivalent of sick pay, holiday pay and maternity pay and manage the workload of self-employment were burdens that affected their emotional wellbeing.

Apparent in video diary entries and the interviews of many participants, their sole responsibility for income and its direct dependency on labour created a sense of vulnerability and was a source of anxiety. Without the assurance of a set wage provided by an employer, both Megan and Dennis spoke explicitly of the feeling of working to '*survive*' (Megan, video diary; Dennis, interview) and the '*pressure*' they encountered '*to pull in the right amount of money … to pay for your house, or food or experiences*' (Dennis, interview). As Sammy remarked, '*you're … totally captain of your own ship … it's your own f**king fault if you haven't got any money, basically*' (interview). Others too spoke of the pressure created by the fact that their income was completely determined by the amount of revenue-generating work they completed or the number of products that they sold. As participants explained, the reality of being self-employed was knowing that '*if I don't work, I don't earn*' (Natasha, video diary), with the '*need to earn my living*' (David S, interview) constantly being in the back of the mind. '*There wasn't that immediate pressure to … fund my salary*' (interview) Valerie said, thinking back to when she was employed and comparing it to her experience now. This was echoed by Rachel who found it '*so stressful having to find the money*' (interview) to fund her art all the time, describing it as being '*like having to beg for your salary each and every month*' (interview). Taking its '*toll*' (interview), she told how it negatively impacted her job satisfaction and that it was the reason why she was 'somewhat dissatisfied' with her income. Emerging from video diary reflections was the way they found themselves '*feeling very anxious about money*' (Dennis, video diary) when they were doing work that was not directly earning them income, and how there was '*always a worry*' (Daniel, video diary) when there was not work coming in because of the fact that it meant they were not earning. The receipt of a big and unexpected bill could also create a '*panic*', leaving David S thinking '*'oh s**t', you know, 'what have I got to do today to make sure that all of that is covered*'' (video diary).

In addition to making enough money to provide themselves with an income each month, they were also responsible for funding their own business resources. Those in photography and content creation specifically found themselves shouldering additional expenses just to deliver work and investing as much as they could afford to do '*as well as they can*' (David S, interview) in a way that affected their financial security and satisfaction. An inability to afford the equipment and the space for a mini-studio

on the other hand was what held Millie back from making her best content, limiting her sense of optimism, fulfilment and creativity. As well as the stress of having to manage their own taxes and the pressure of having to financially plan for the future, there was the added vulnerability of having no holiday pay, sick pay or maternity pay. Not being paid if they were sick and not having paid holiday was '*really stressful*' (Joanne, interview) and meant that there was '*really no cutoff point with work*' (Faye, interview). While holidays could be financially planned, the unpredictability of sickness saw two participants during the video diary period work despite being ill and caused others to worry about their future financial security. A particularly prominent issue for Rachel was the compatibility of self-employment with having a baby. '*In the next sort of five years, if I want to have a baby … I just don't know how that would work'* she said, telling of the '*major doubts*' (interview) she had about this form of employment and how this issue limited her sense of optimism about the future.

The burden of responsibility that came with being self-employed also manifested in the handling and maintaining of multiple jobs and various dimensions of the business. While there were a few that liked the '*variety*' (David T, interview) and necessity of it, the need to manage the '*business side of things*' (Mel, interview) and juggle strategic work, self-promotion, and finances as well as do their creative work was something that could be difficult, '*exhausting*' (Megan, video diary) and a source of stress for a number of participants. The same occurred with the handling of multiple jobs and work commitments and the compounding of deadlines which was seen as a feature of freelance work, contributing to the stress of life and the feeling that it was just '*go go go*' (Natasha, video diary).

Over two-thirds of participants worked typically average working hours of between 21 and 40 hours a week (see **Figure 6.8**), suggesting that long working hours were not as prevalent to the extent that was anticipated. There was however some evidence that the responsibilities and pressures of self-employed work could coincide or result in longer working hours that could in turn have negative repercussions for wellbeing (see also Hyytinen and Ruuskanen, 2007; Jurik, 1998). As acknowledged in chapter four, experiences of high workloads and consequentially long working hours may be underrepresented in this sample due to a few individuals declining to be involved in the study on the grounds of being too busy. Nevertheless, Megan and Faye, despite reporting normal working hours, did remark that the absence of holiday pay and sick pay meant '*working all hours*' (Faye, interview) and spoke of having to '*work all the hours there are to bring in enough money to survive*' (Megan, video diary). In Mel's case, the combined workload of running a freelance business and doing creative work was behind the 50-hour week that she reported, which was not only exhausting but also the reason that she felt 'mostly satisfied' with her job, rather than 'completely satisfied'. There was also the example of David S who at the time was working 10–12-hour days because of a '*dearth of work*' (video diary) in the creative industries and the subsequent need to always '*keep things moving*' (video

diary). '*I'm absolutely exhausted every single day*' (interview) he admitted and described it as feeling like being on a '*hamster wheel*' (video diary). For a few other participants, seasonally busy periods and the limited resources of the arts could, they explained, result in the kind of working hours that potentially lead to exhaustion, stress and the '*risk of burnout*' (Joanne, interview) and limit job satisfaction. There was, however, with the exception of two participants, minimal evidence of the attachment, fulfilment and enjoyment of creative work leading to this form of self-exploitation (e.g., Berardi, 2009; Turrini and Chicchi, 2014). Elizabeth's desire to bring to life her ideas did often see her work longer hours out of choice, while Emily's sense of responsibility and self-imposed pressure to do her best and deliver a unique product saw her at one point work 10-14-hour days with repercussions for her personal life and passion for her work, although this was eventually addressed.
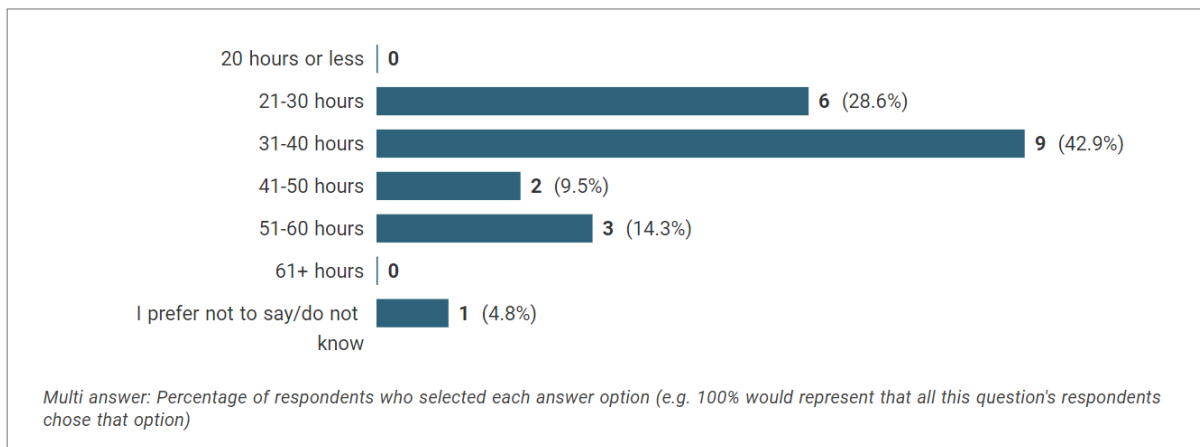
Figure 6.8. *The answers participants gave when asked how many hours they worked a week on average.*

Drawing attention to the precariousness of self-employment and the effect it can have on wellbeing in this context (Conen and Schippers, 2019), the pressure of income's direct dependency on labour, the vulnerability of having no sick pay or holiday pay and the management and maintenance of multiple dimensions of business was found to be psychologically and emotionally demanding. As such, these characteristics of work plausibly contribute to the frequency of those negative emotions that the PANAS measure found to be experienced more frequently than others, such as feelings of being distressed, nervous and jittery (see **Table 5.4**).

The uncertainty of work

Compounding these effects of the participants' personal responsibility for the business and their income was the insecurity of continuous work. A common dimension of precarious working conditions (Conen and Schippers 2019; Rodgers, 1989), this was a key source of stress and worry for these workers and can be considered to further explain the relatively higher frequency of distress, nervousness and jitteriness as captured by the PANAS measure amongst the sample (see **Table 5.4**). Employment insecurity and the loss of work are understood to be chronic experiences and stressors for the self-employed (e.g., Lechat and Torres, 2016; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski*,* 2019), with those in the creative industries being no exception (e.g., Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). However, given the limited experiences of poor and irregular income amongst this sample, the way in which the uncertainty of future employment and the experience of fluctuations in work continued to weigh on their minds to the extent it did draws attention to the reality that this precariousness does not need to materialise into financial issues to have an influence on wellbeing.

Backdropped by the sense of 'working to survive', the uncertainty of where work would come from and concerns about finding the next contract, client or business were clearly a psychological burden for a large number of participants. Interestingly, two participants said that this unpredictability had its upsides, explaining how the thrill of not knowing what was coming next was exciting and motivating, and telling of the '*high endorphin buzz'* that they got '*when things do happen*' (Alison, interview). Nevertheless, the stress and anxiety of not knowing what was happening next and where the income was going to be coming from in the future was by and large a '*challenge of working for yourself*' (Duncan, interview). *'I find that sometimes it can be very challenging with my mental health as it causes anxiety and can also lead to depression, which is something I experienced*' said Mel in one of her video diaries, reflecting on how difficult it was not knowing where her next work was going to come from as a freelancer. Signifying how the experience of financial problems is not a prerequisite for these insecurities to cause distress, Daniel, despite never having really had any trouble paying his mortgage or having enough money to pay for food and other things, found job uncertainty and financial insecurity to be, in his words, '*one of the biggest stressors in my life*' (interview). The uncertainty of income was '*stressful and annoying*' (Sammy, interview) even for those who had put in place measures to help psychologically manage the stress of uncertainty, who had become used to funding rejections, and who were inclined towards the high-risk high-reward nature of freelancing. Unsurprisingly, the securing of work was a big positive and provided a '*confidence boost*' (Rachel, interview). As Daniel remarked, '*getting an acting job is always a fantastic day'* because of the way that it confirmed that '*there's work out there*' (video diary).

Worries about losing work or being dropped by clients contributed to these stresses regarding future work and income. '*I do stress quite a lot about money*' Millie revealed, '*people can just drop me... I feel quite vulnerable*' (interview). Others too referred to worrying about never hearing from clients again, the slight fear of cancellations, and the dependency of repeat work on insecure client relationships. These worries were not necessarily unfounded either. As revealed by the video diaries, a week full of cancelled work was '*tough*' for Daniel, last minute cancelled work was frustrating and '*annoying*' for David S, and a client's decision to reduce her weekly hours was '*disheartening*' for Millie. This vulnerability was a problem they attributed to self-employment, with David S feeling like an '*easier target*' for such cancellations and feeling like people could '*take advantage at times*' because he worked for himself (video diary). Adding further to the significant influence they could have over the work and income of these workers was the way that these clients and customers could delay payments that they needed, which was something they found to be '*distressing and upsetting*' (Megan, video diary).

Insecurities about the prospect of continuous work and future business also transpired. While the jobs of a few participants fortunately involved advanced bookings that provided an assurance about future work, fluctuations in work appeared to be common for many participants, causing worry and raising doubt in their minds about the viability of their work. Three participants explained how their job satisfaction would oscillate with it. Declining during the '*really low moments*' (Alison, interview) and when there was not any work on the horizon, this fluctuation in their job satisfaction suggests a greater variability than may be presupposed in the design of quantitative cross-sectional studies. In one of her video diaries, Megan recounted a meme that she had seen all over the work-based Facebook groups she was part of. The point it made, she expressed, was how the life of a freelancer is comprised of cycles of '*Oh my God Oh my God how am I going to get this all done? Oh my God Oh my God*' and then, *no one's ever gonna employ you again 'I've got no work now what do I do?*'' As she reflected, '*it was interesting to see how many people were empathising with that post'*, and something that she clearly experienced herself. During the video diary period, her own accounts mirrored this meme. Having '*been really nervous*' at the beginning of the first week thinking '*my God where have all the clients gone, it's all gone a bit quiet*', she later '*all of a sudden*' got '*four new bookings of pieces of work*'.

Megan was not the only one amongst the participants of the study to feel this way, with others too experiencing the '*constant worry*' of knowing that '*you can be really busy one day, and then you can have nothing for weeks*' (Faye, interview). '*It's insane*' Daniel remarked, '*I'll go through a month of getting two voiceover jobs in a film and be like, 'this is the best time in my life right now'. And ... literally, within two weeks of finishing all of that work I'm like, 'who the f**k am I? Why am I doing this? Where's the next job coming from?*'' (interview). These ebb and flows on the whole appeared to be inevitable

irregularities that came with being self-employed, but sometimes it was due to the seasonality of their work, or because of specific economic events or circumstances such as Brexit, the pandemic, the shift towards hybrid work, nationwide economic hardship, issues in the industry, and even, in the past, 9/11. In the more extreme cases, these downturns led some to contemplate taking up part-time jobs and a few decades prior even contributed to Elizabeth temporarily closing her business.

Even though the work of many of these participants was deeply tied to their self-fulfilment, there were only two cases where their personal connection, love and passion for their work exacerbated the psychological impact caused by these downturns, and where the self-realisation gained from such work was itself in turn affected (e.g., Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). '*This is affecting the thing that I care about most*' Ben (interview) explained, being one of those impacted in this way. '*If it's not working, you're going 'am I bad at this? Should this not be what I'm doing? Should I be instead just doing this as a hobby and doing something, you know, stacking shelves somewhere?''* (interview). Moreover, despite the self-employed typically experiencing a level of variability in their income (van Praag and Versloot, 2007), only a few participants referred to irregular incomes as being a problem. The lack of a consistent income was only mentioned by Natasha and Daniel as a source of frustration and by Megan as the factor that prevented her from being 'completely satisfied' with her job, suggesting that these variations in work did not necessarily translate widely into financial issues. To the contrary, Lucy even remarked that, for her, '*work isn't scarce, there's an abundance of work to be done. The scarcity is in my head, not in the real world*' (interview).

Despite limited experiences of poor or irregular income and problematic downturns in business, the lingering uncertainty of continuous employment and the seemingly inevitable fluctuations of work remained a psychological burden and a source of worry and self-doubt, and in some cases a factor that affected their job satisfaction. Contributing to our understanding of how the precarious work of self-employment is experienced (Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Conen and Schippers, 2019; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Lechat and Torres, 2016; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019), it suggests that the persistent possibility of an unsustainable loss of work with no assurances of income, irrespective of their deep personal connection to their work, can still continue to have a discernible influence on their wellbeing. In other words, financial difficulties do not need to materialise for the precariousness they face to be problematic, as the chance that it *could* cause financial difficulties alone weighs on the mind.

Minimising insecurities

Helping to manage and mitigate the uncertainty and fluctuation of work and the stress and anxiety that it caused were a range of measures, strategies and perspectives that were enacted and adopted by the participants to provide greater security and help them to cope with the psychological burden of risk. Characteristic of individualised work, these examples demonstrate the responsibility placed on these workers to address these issues.

A number of participants diversified their income streams in an endeavour to reduce the financial vulnerability and insecurity of self-employment (see also Blanchflower, 2000). With all but one having been self-employed in the creative industries for over eleven years, this strategy appeared to be something that was developed or learned over time, perhaps as the business matured, or as opportunities, ideas and the parameters of the market emerged. This supposed temporality and the significant difference that income diversification could make was supported by the comments of Stephen. '*It's stressful and rather wearing, you know, worrying about money'* Stephen (interview) had said, reflecting on his experiences earlier on in his career. Having since established '*a few different income streams*' to '*insure*' him against the uncertainties of being self-employed though, he explained that he no longer had to '*worry about money anymore*' (interview). To help provide greater stability and security in income, others had likewise deliberately diversified, but in a variety of ways. Within the same area of work, more passive types of income in the form of pre-recorded classes broke the direct dependency of income on labour, while the development of subscription models generated a more consistent form of income to support the infrequency of larger contracts. There were also examples of diversification across different jobs as a way of providing greater security against the ebb and flow of singular workstreams. How ever it was done, these strategies that helped address the financial insecurities of self-employment were heralded as essential by these participants. '*Most people who work in digital marketing like me will be doing the same*' Megan said, '*you end up having to have a lot of fingers in a lot of pies*' (interview). '*You've got to have diversity of income when you work for yourself, because you can't rely on one or two sort of key streams*' Duncan likewise stated; '*industries change, clients change, things drop away overnight*' (interview).

Another measure implemented to help address financial insecurity amongst those who had been working independently for over a decade was the creation of a 'financial reserve' through the accumulation of savings (Conen and Schippers, 2019). Alongside two younger workers who mentioned having family on hand for financial support if necessary and one participant who had a corporate pension that '*takes care of bills*' (Steve, interview), there were those who had savings and pensions to protect them against the uncertainty and fluctuation of work and provide them with security in the

future. *'Having a financial cushion is important when you're self-employed'* David T (interview) said, explaining how long-term savings combined with an element of fiscal responsibility prevented them from worrying too much about money:

> *'… from day one, I've tried to have a bit of a cushion there because you never know when a job is going to go wrong, when somebody's going to default. We've had a couple of clients go bust on us and owed us a lot of money, and we've still, we've survived that because we've been kind of semi prepared for something happening'* (David T, interview).

Despite the apparent oversaturation of the market and competition from non-professional creative workers as well as the observed innate desire for such work that could increase the risk of self-exploitation (Turrini and Chicchi, 2014), several participants demonstrated a steadfastness in financial worth and pay. Again, this appeared to be something that emerged over time. When starting out they had sold themselves lower to try and win every job, accepted lower prices and even at times worked for free, but after becoming more established and recognising the detriment of this approach, they now took a firm stance on their price even during periods when there was less work. The new agent that represented Daniel took this position on his behalf, but for the others it required a bravery, a confidence, a strong sense of self-worth and the conviction that *'if it's not paying well … it's a waste of time'* (David S, interview) which came with experience. *'You have to be brave with what you're charging … And … know your worth'* Dennis said, having only really established a confidence in the value of his work in the last few years; *'that's a big thing in our industry … Don't underestimate yourself'* (interview). Exhibiting control over what they charged, they decided when they would consider lowering their prices or doing a deal, whether it was for something they were interested in, for a small business or social justice organisation, or for a large piece of prospective work that had a fixed budget.

The 'empowering toolkit' (Marín-Sanchiz, Carvajal and González-Esteban, 2023) they used included a number of strategies that helped them to retain further control of their income and reduce their financial vulnerability. A particularly unique and interesting case was that of David S, who positioned his work in a way that emphasised his job as a skilled practitioner to help 'protect' himself against the reality that prospective customers may opt for free options rather than a professional product. Although he did a range of different photography work, he had decided to first and foremost be a portrait photographer, using the equipment and the studio facilities to exude professionalism and limiting his advertising to this line of work to represent himself as a specialist; two qualities that he felt prospective customers wanted when paying for photography work. Attending to the issue of delayed payments, David S also required payment from customers or clients before he would give them the

work, something that Megan similarly did with the websites she built by requesting 75% of the fee upfront before she started. Sammy on the other hand did not shy away from demanding payment. '*I do like all the stuff that comes with like running a business, like chasing people for money*' she said; '*I have a strong... righteous anger within me (laughs) that will shut down organisations for cash*' (interview). And finally, for greater stability, both Valerie and Joanne created their own organisations as an alternative to freelancing, using the structure it offered to pay themselves a wage and provide '*a little bit more financial security and control in the long term*' (Joanne, video diary).

They dealt with the insecurity of self-employment by means of perspective and the use of coping strategies as well as through practical measures. Looking at her income over a three-month period rather than monthly helped Elizabeth to reduce the stress of fluctuations and its impact on her job satisfaction, while having a daughter had reconfigured David T's priorities and outlook on life, seeing him take a more measured approach to his business, focusing only on those things he was able to control. During quiet and difficult periods others trusted that good days were just around the corner and that another job would come along, and responded to job rejections with the belief that it was because they were not right for the part rather than because they were not good enough. Coping strategies were evident in the benefits they experienced when talking with others about the questions and worries they had about getting work. Mel however more explicitly spoke about her use of '*mental health and wellbeing strategies*' (interview) which helped her be more grounded and attentive to what she could do in the moment and stopped her from worrying too far ahead about what work she was going to be doing in the future. Her faith was also very important to her in this regard. Rather than overthinking and overplanning, she found optimism, confidence and security in the knowledge that what was best for her was in God's hands.

Further evidencing their personal responsibility for their work and wellbeing, participants displayed agency and initiative in dealing with the insecurities and uncertainties of their work. From diverse income streams, financial reserves, upfront payments and organisational structures to the positive outlooks, perspectives and the use of coping strategies, participants utilised a range of measures to help cope with the uncertainty and fluctuations of their work and reduce the stress and anxiety that it caused. Frequently appearing to be developed or adopted over time after establishing their businesses, it can be inferred that their adoption was experience-based and a part of a learning process, meaning that those who have been self-employed for longer and who are further along in their career are perhaps more likely to be better equipped to deal with these insecurities.

Resolute optimism and confidence

The insecurity and fluctuations of work may have been stressful, dissatisfactory and unsettling, but the large majority of these self-employed creative workers expressed a seemingly contradictory-yet-enduring confidence and sense of optimism about what was to come, about the continuity of work and the viability of what they did and their ability to this end, and even about their prospects in the scenario of having to shut down their business. Given the nature of the research - and the fact that this confidence and optimism for a number of them was tied to experience - it cannot be deduced that these individuals were attracted or suited to self-employment by virtue of an innate optimism (e.g., Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Cassar, 2010; Dawson *et al.,* 2014; Puri and Robinson, 2013). As it only positively contributed to the job satisfaction of two participants, it also did not notably benefit this dimension of their wellbeing (Luthans, Luthans and Luthans, 2004). Nevertheless, it supports the arguable necessity of resolute optimism and confidence in these conditions, and the persistence of such positive outlooks amongst creative workers too despite the precariousness of their work and findings to the contrary (Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). Combined with practical and other psychological measures that helped to deal with experience of insecurity, it was perhaps a necessary attribute in rendering the psychological burden of uncertainty bearable, whether learnt or not.

While there were a few references to the cyclical surfacing of imposter syndrome, the vast majority of participants evidenced a resolute confidence and optimism about work in the face of precariousness, with ten participants directly connecting it to the positive sense of optimism about the future that all participants to some extent reported in the questionnaire (see **Figure 6.5**). Various assertions did point towards their optimism and their sense of self-belief as potentially being inherent traits. This was particularly true for Elizabeth who said '*I've always had that belief that I'll be fine*' (interview), David S who proclaimed '*I'm a naturally optimistic person*' (interview), and Alison when she mentioned '*always kind of knowing deep down that it's probably going to be alright*' (interview). It was also suggested in the accounts of Ben and Sammy when they discussed their high senses of optimism. '*I do have a good belief in myself'* Ben (interview) had remarked, having conviction in his ability to achieve what he wanted and deal with whatever came at him, while Sammy, who had only recently begun freelancing full-time, said '*I just know that I can do more… there's no reason I can't not do that'* (interview).

For the most part, the confidence and optimism about work that participants expressed appeared to be connected to encouraging experiences of work, positive feelings about where they were in their career, and the longevity and long-term success of their business. Behind their positive outlook was the upward trajectory they were on in terms of the quality of work they were getting, the projects they

had lined up, the '*green shoots*' (David T, interview) of opportunities that were appearing, the feeling that '*things are going right*' (Lucy, interview), and the fact they worked in a thriving industry. '*I now feel stable in the amount of bookings that I'm getting coming through'* Emily had explained when asked why she felt very optimistic; '*so I now feel confident that I will continue to get a good amount of work coming through… So, in that sense, I feel very optimistic*' (interview). As discussed by others, it was about the feeling of being in their '*prime*' (Dennis, interview) and being '*on the right path*' (Emily interview) and the exciting possibilities they felt lay ahead of them, but also about the career they had thus far, with those who had successfully run their business for many years gaining confidence and optimism from the experience this provided and the viability that it signalled. The years they had spent accumulating contacts, building networks, adapting to challenges, establishing their niche, discovering their value and honing their skills bolstered their conviction about their ability to tackle anything that came their way and maintain their business. After '*years of successfully being freelance*' (Joanne, interview), the pressure to be profitable and the uncertainty of work also eased as they had always made enough money and found enough work doing what they did, and the '*imposter syndrome*' (Stephen, interview) and doubts about work dissipated as they became more established. As David T recounted:

> '… *when we first started the business, I put a lot of pressure on myself to try and be profitable. And I really concentrated on the timesheets and the budgets. Now, I'm more relaxed about it, because I know that I've done it for ten years. And I know that if I keep on going with the same approach, I know that at the end of the year, we're not going to be bust. You know, and then … hopefully I'll keep some sanity'*
> (David T, interview).

Even in a hypothetical scenario of having to shut down their business, participants spoke optimistically about finding other work. They were '*not scared of going back*' (Millie, interview) to what they did before and were confident that they would be able to pick up anything, whether it be a job, for instance, as a waitress or as an arts teacher. Lucy felt that there was '*always something*' even if it meant '*working in Lidl*' (interview). '*I'm pretty smart'* she had said, demonstrating self-assurance, '*I can figure it out*' (interview). Faye too had stated that she would be happy to do '*anything*' if she needed to and that it did not bother her '*in the slightest*' (interview). '*I just know... we'll be all right'* she asserted positively and pragmatically; '*if we have to sell the house and move somewhere smaller, that's what we have to do'* (interview).

Optimism, which is considered here in its own right to be a dimension of wellbeing (Diener *et al.,* 2010), was prevalent amongst these self-employed creative workers in regard to their work and in turn

contributed to their overall sense of optimism about the future. In doing so, these findings contribute to an understanding of the persistence of this psychological quality amongst those that are self-employed and work in the creative industries, despite the prevalence of precarious working conditions (e.g., Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Cassar, 2010; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). Rather than deriving "feelings of security from the idea that their future is in their own hands" (Hundley, 2001, p. 312), it was the optimism and confidence that many of them obtained from encouraging experiences of work and their successful running of their business that conceivably helped ease the worries and stresses that came with the insecurities of their work.

Conclusion

Despite the distress caused by the uncertainty and vulnerability of their work, the burdens of responsibility and to a lesser extent the instances of financial dissatisfaction, the personally enriching, satisfactory and self-fulfilling qualities of creative work under the conditions of autonomy had a significantly positive influence on the subjective wellbeing of the participants of this study. These findings suggest that such qualities of individualised work, overall, positively shape subjective wellbeing, and that the notion of the satisfied creative worker is more of a reality than a myth (Hawkins, 2017). As a vocation and as a means of creativity, the labour of these creative workers significantly contributed to their sense of purpose and meaning, induced a range of positive emotions such as love, passion, enjoyment and excitement, satisfied an innate need to be creative, and provided them with the space to be competent and capable in something that was important to them and in which they were strongly engaged and interested. Their autonomy over their work helped in enabling these outcomes, and together with their creative labour primarily accounted for the positive job satisfaction reported amongst these participants. Moderately inhibiting job satisfaction though were the experiences of longer working hours, the variability of work and also desires for greater pay, which also coincided with minor dissatisfaction with household income. Their responsibility for their income and for the business however, along with the uncertainty and fluctuation of work, was a prominent source of stress, although measures, strategies and perspectives were enacted and adopted to mitigate the impact of their insecurity, and a strong sense of confidence and optimism was maintained.

The findings of this study further validate the positive effect that autonomy is widely understood to have on job satisfaction (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; Hundley, 2001; Lange, 2012; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020), and identified the freedom they had to select and choose the work they wanted to do as the aspect of autonomy that had this effect (Binder and Blankenberg, 2021). However, in contrast to previous work that attributed the markedly positive wellbeing of creative workers to the autonomy, control and freedom of their self-employment (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner

and Schneider, 2013), it was the creativity of their labour and the self-fulfilment and self-actualisation of pursuing their practice that appeared to have more of an influence on high levels of wellbeing of this sample, across the range of dimensions investigated here. By means of facilitating the personalisation of work, autonomy enabled the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling work, demonstrating their interconnection and reinforcing the notion of freedom and control over labour as being of importance to the experience of work as unalienating (Fromm, 2004; Horgan, 2021).

In line with beliefs of creativity as being innately and intensely enjoyable, pleasurable and satisfactory, the inherent inclination to be creative and its life-affirming qualities was felt to be universal and appeared to be tied to the utilisation of human faculties and our predisposition towards playfulness (Berardi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Hawkins, 2017; Layard, 2005; Sennett, 2009). Instead of being undermined by the encroachment of repetitive, unfulfilling and administrative work (see Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hawkins, 2017; Hracs and Leslie, 2014; McRobbie, 1998), their dedication to their creative practice and the challenges and applications of its professionalisation by and large enhanced and supported their creativity and thus these positive experiences. By means of doing what they loved and doing what they felt they were destined to do, it too resulted in personal fulfilment and self-realisation, and in doing so corroborates such narratives surrounding both the motivations and the day-to-day experiences of careers in the creative industries (e.g., Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hawkins, 2017; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Taylor and Littleton, 2016; Turrini and Chicchi, 2014).

Turning to the precariousness of their work (Conen and Schippers, 2019), poor pay, irregular income, under-employment and long hours were issues that were not as prevalent nor problematic as may have been expected, given the dominant discourse on the subject within the literature (e.g., Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hamilton, 2000; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Horemans and Marx, 2017; Jurik, 1998; Lechat and Torres, 2016; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018; Turrini and Chicchi, 2014; van Praag and Versloot, 2007). Demonstrating the impact that precarious work can have beyond material repercussions though, it was the vulnerability and pressure of being solely responsible for their income, financial security and business as well as the uncertainty of continuous employment and fluctuations in their work that had notable consequences for their wellbeing, primarily as a source of stress and anxiety. With the sense of working to survive with no assurances, the reality of not knowing what was around the corner and common experiences of instability, the possibility of an unsustainable loss of work and income was a psychological burden irrespective of any materialisation of financial difficulties. Nevertheless, by still exhibiting resolute confidence and optimism about their work, they further maintain the well-documented occurrence of these qualities amongst the self-employed and their less well-documented endurance amongst creative workers in the face of precarious conditions (e.g., Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Cassar, 2010; Shorter, O'Neill

and McElherron, 2018). Combined with the implementation of measures to help address and minimise this insecurity, this persistent conviction and positivity, although both to a notable extent being shaped through experience, evidences an agency and a resistance on behalf of these workers.

Chapter Seven
Experiences of isolation and connection

Attending to the second research question of the thesis, this chapter engages with the question of how the socialities of homeworking, self-employment and creative labour shape the social wellbeing of these workers. It responds directly to calls for greater attention to be given to the wellbeing repercussions of this 'atomised' work due to concerns regarding the likelihood of social and professional isolation but also the possible establishment of a substantially alternative social life in response to these conditions (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Hislop *et al.,* 2015; Reuschke, 2019). While the various dimensions of social experience discussed in this chapter have been touched upon in diffuse areas of the literature, this chapter's novel contribution is its marshalling of these multiple aspects under one holistic investigation and its connection of these experiences to subjective wellbeing outcomes.

Encompassing the dimensions of subjective wellbeing that fall under the notion of 'social functioning' (Diener *et al.,* 2010), the chapter concerns itself with the quality of social relationships, contributions to the happiness and wellbeing of others and the sense of being respected. As outlined in chapter five, the participants of the study scored particularly highly with regard to these dimensions of subjective wellbeing, and in doing so challenge the association between the social atomisation of individualised work and acute experiences of social and professional isolation. In presenting the participants' narratives about the socialities of their work, this chapter discusses the alternative spaces and networks of supportive and rewarding relationships and the socialities of independent creative work to explain this positive sense of social wellbeing. However, demonstrating nuance and outlining the factors that likely detract from these scores, it also foregrounds their limited-though-continued susceptibility to isolation and the negative effect that the social integration of the work-home can have for relationships with others at home.

The chapter begins first by considering the participants' experiences of working on their own at home, juxtaposing their *susceptibility to isolation* with *the solitude of working alone.* It then turns to consider the home as an important social space, conceptualising *the integrative space of the work-home* and the *flexibility and proximity for children* afforded by self-employed homeworking to highlight the social benefits of combining work and home life, before outlining *the erosion of home relationships* that can occur under these conditions. From here, the chapter moves on to critically consider sources of supportive and rewarding social relationships beyond the home, contrasting *the draw of co-working*

spaces with *the limits of virtual spaces,* presenting the *networks of socialisation and support*, and foregrounding *the agency of the lone homeworker*. To finish, the chapter discusses how *the social value of creative work* enabled them to contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others beyond the home, and how *the recognition of work* afforded by the feedback of clients, customers and audiences in turn was important to their sense of being respected and their self-esteem, given the absence of organisational relations.

Susceptibility to isolation

While the questionnaire results showed their social wellbeing to be altogether positive, these home-based independent workers appeared to still be susceptible to minor feelings of isolation. Although these experiences were predominantly non-severe and fragmented rather than continuous, all participants with the exception of two mentioned feeling isolated or lonely at least once or spoke of desires to be around and work with others more throughout both their video diaries and interviews. With working from home alone and the absence of a fixed and regular group of co-workers and social office space being at the root of these experiences, it reinforces the conclusions made elsewhere that these characteristics of independent homeworking are conducive to feelings of isolation and bolsters the evidence base to this end (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Hislop *et al.,* 2015; Reuschke, 2019). At the same time though, their limited intensity and frequency and the high scores of social functioning across the sample suggest that these feelings of isolation did not have a problematic bearing on their social wellbeing. Moreover, while Hislop *et al.* (2015) found forms of professional isolation to be of issue for these workers, social isolation was the primary issue, with participants mostly experiencing a lack of company and social interaction irrespective of work purposes (Cooper and Kurland, 2002; Lam and Lau, 2012).

Working from home left them vulnerable to these experiences of social isolation when it meant working or spending the day alone. Participants mentioned how they would feel isolated and lonely on those occasions when those that they lived with went out for the day particularly when they were without a car and rendered less mobile, as well as when they did not have any conversations with the collaborators and colleagues that they would sometimes work with. Others spoke of the insularity of working in front of a screen at home. Stephen in particular found that too much time spent working from home alone was '*not conducive to happiness*' (interview) because of the loss of social stimulation and human contact, pointing towards the impact that long periods working from home can have on the emergence of social isolation as suggested elsewhere (e.g., Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Golden, Veiga and Dino, 2008). Reinforcing the depiction of the work-home as a space disposed towards these experiences, getting out of the house was seen as a means of counteracting such

isolation and loneliness and was associated on a number of occasions with the '*invigoration*' (Stephen, video diary), '*fun*' (Daniel, video diary), '*company*' (Elizabeth, interview), '*enthusiasm*' (David T, video diary) and atmosphere of being around people and interacting with others. Mel found such feelings of loneliness to be particularly prominent when having to do 'less demanding' work, while Emily had found herself extremely isolated during a period of high workload.

References and comparisons made with the sociality of old employed jobs that they had before they started their own businesses evidences the significance of their absence from a social office space and a stable group of workplace colleagues. Reconnecting with old workmates from previous employment for Sammy was about making sure to not get '*too lonely in freelance land*' (video diary), while others remarked of the social void left and the strong bonds lost now that they no longer had a permanent and regular social group of colleagues, friends and like-minded people to work with. Duncan, who was one of the few participants that 'slightly disagreed' with the statement that his social relationships were supportive and rewarding, explained that he felt this way because of the loss of the '*human connection*', '*social life*' and the '*fun*' of '*going in and just spending a bit of time with people*' (interview) that working in a firm and in an office provided. Even for Steve, who had made an effort to address the social void that was left after leaving the world of commercial property investment, something was still missing. Aware of the potential impact of losing this social sphere and the regular company of colleagues, he had embedded himself within a range of non-work social groups to compensate for it. '*But of course … it's a far cry from, you know, actually [being] shoulder to shoulder with people in a corporate property type environment*' he accepted, when reflecting on the limited interaction he gets through his line of work; '*So yes, I miss it... But the extent to which I miss it is quite limited, because of the steps I put in place to address it*' (interview).

Issues of professional isolation, as well as social isolation, also featured amongst some of these accounts. In addition to stories that highlighted challenges in employing assistants to help with workloads and the anticipation of losing their business partner and one and only '*partner in crime*' (David T, interview), a few participants felt that they would benefit from having others to bounce ideas off and being a part of a community for support and help with industry-specific issues. Being secluded from others in this way also caused difficulties with motivation and was of detriment during periods of doubt and uncertainty regarding work, particularly for Mel:

'… when you don't have anyone on that same wavelength as you, it can be a little bit challenging and isolating as well… I guess maybe that is part of the reason why … I started to experience depression … I didn't have any work. I had one commission towards the end of the year. And it was just so incredibly challenging, because there was that isolation' (Mel, interview).

Answering concerns about the prevalence of social and professional isolation amongst self-employed homeworkers (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Reuschke, 2019), experiences of isolation were clearly evident amongst the sample, but were not as pervasive or severe as may have been expected. With working at home alone, the lack of regular social connections and interactions with co-workers and their absence from a social workplace being of significance in this context, it indicates that the social atomisation of self-employed homeworking renders them susceptible to these experiences which, in contrast to Hislop *et al.* (2015), were predominantly in the form of social isolation. Nevertheless, in light of their positive sense of self-assessed social functioning as well as the networks of valuable social spaces and connections that will be discussed in the rest of this chapter, it still demonstrates that the social wellbeing of those engaged in individualised home-based work is not defined by social and professional isolation.

The solitude of working alone

Working from home alone did not necessarily equate to feelings of isolation and loneliness, with 15 of the 21 participants in the study revealing in their video diary entries and their interviews that they also positively experienced the solitude and time to oneself that it afforded. Rather than just being something that they were '*OK with*' (Valerie, video diary), it was something that they really enjoyed, liked, valued and were '*very happy*' with (Daniel, interview), and that allowed them time to '*relax*' (Ben, video diary). Parallel to literature that has similarly identified the ways in which the seclusion of homeworking can be enjoyed and desired, it also uncovers the apparent co-existence of both negative feelings of isolation and positive experiences of solitude (Ahrentzen, 1997; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Christensen, 1988; Fonner and Roloff, 2010; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009). In doing so, it helps to frame the social atomisation of individualised, home-based work as not being inherently problematic, and outlines the conditions that are conducive to the positive experience of this seclusion; namely, the temperament of the individual and the balance of time alone with times of socialisation.

Mirroring understandings propounded elsewhere (Heilmann, 1988; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007), some tied their contentment and inclination towards spending time alone to personality traits of being

introverted and '*a hermit*' (Natasha, interview) or to their experiences of being an only child and the ways in which this made them used to their own company. The moderation of being by themselves when working from home was evidently of importance too, with positive experiences being conditional on the balance or contrast of working alone with being around and working with others, rather than solely being about the amount of time spent working from home. It was the '*love*' (Natasha, video diary) of the silence and the enjoyment of not having to talk to anyone on those days when the children were at school and they had the house to themselves, or the relishing of time spent at home alone '*in your own mind*' (Dennis, video diary) after a weeklong tour of shows with a team of other performers and entertainers. Key was still seeing others now and again or simply having the option of being sociable and seeing others if desired, and loved were those days where there was a mixture of working alone and working with others. Working at home compared to working elsewhere and working when family and housemates were out during the day were valued and enjoyed for the freedom it gave the participants to do their own thing, but also for the benefit it had for their work. Although it has been suggested elsewhere that time to oneself, as well as socialisation, can be beneficial to creative thinking (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018), only Rachel referred to the freedom it provided her with regards to her creativity, describing how, away from the judgement of others, she enjoyed being creative at home in a way that she would have otherwise felt silly doing in a co-working space. In line with other work that has found the privacy of working from home to minimise distractions (Jeyasingham, 2019; Leonardi, Treem and Jackson, 2010), there were also acknowledgements of the concentration and focus that came with the removal of social distractions and interruptions and the environmental control and calmness that lone homeworking offered. In comparison to '*a competitive and busy working office environment*' (Valerie, video diary), the '*relaxed … low-pressure environment*' (Ben, video diary) of the home, especially when others were out, was something that was valued.

Providing evidence that supports the notion of office spaces as offering sub-optimal social conditions and relationships as a result of the cultures, pressures and demands of organisational work are the comparisons that were made with time that had been spent previously in such spaces (Horgan, 2021). Reflecting on the benefits of working from home, participants spoke of the satisfaction of not having to meet expectations with regard to how to look nor attend those '*awkward*' team meetings on a Monday morning that '*everyone hates*' when you have to '*justify your existence*' (Valerie, interview), as well as be subject to office politics and '*waste time chattering at the watercooler*' (Megan, interview). Others too were just quite happy to be '*standalone*' (Stephen, interview) in their work, and did not miss working with people as part of an organisation or the responsibility of having a team underneath them to worry about. Reflecting on how she found it '*hard to make friends in professional*

settings because they are so different', Sammy (interview) felt she was able to be a lot more like herself since being freelance and working for herself from home. This was a sentiment that was echoed by Lucy who similarly felt that she did not have to put on as much of a 'show' compared to when she used to be in the office in her old job.

As revealed by these reflections and consistent with the observations of other academic studies (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1997; Christensen, 1988; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018), the act of working from home, even when it does mean working alone, can equate to positive experiences of solitude as well as negative experiences of isolation and loneliness. Attributed to personality traits and appearing to be largely dependent on being balanced with time spent around others, working alone at home was enjoyed and valued for the way it provided time for oneself as well as the freedom from the social structures and pressures of co-working spaces and offices.

The integrative space of the work-home

Rather than just being a space that could provide solitude or cause feelings of isolation, the home was also an important source of supportive and rewarding relationships for 16 of the 21 participants. As such, it can be interpreted as contributing to the predominantly positive assessment of this dimension of subjective wellbeing that they reported (see **Figure 7.1**). Socio-spatial relations are central to the meaning and experience of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), and the family, like work, is a key source of sociality for many (Weeks, 2011). Those at home can help to relieve and prevent the isolation that can accompany homeworking (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009). Family members and partners that the participants lived with helped to tackle or minimise these feelings of isolation and loneliness by providing conversation and company, and many participants mentioned being able to spend more time with them outside of work. Beyond just social interaction though, nearly all participants who lived with others – which encompassed the majority of the sample – involved, relied on or connected with someone that they lived with through their work, and in doing so demonstrates the potential for both work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment that the conflation of work and home life can facilitate (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; cf. McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2016). In this regard, the work-home can be theorised here as an integrative space in a dualistic sense, both as an 'integrative space' of rich social associations as conceptualised by Fleuret and Atkinson (2007) in their spaces of wellbeing framework, and as an example of the social integration of the domains of work and home as formulated within the work-home boundaries literature (e.g., Nippert-Eng, 2003).
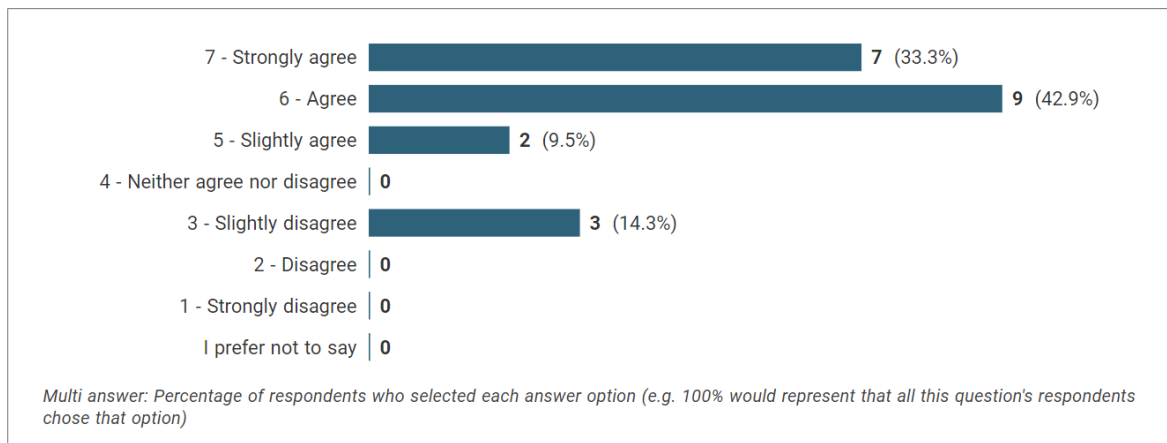
Figure 7.1. *The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'My social relationships are supportive and rewarding'.*

Firstly, participants clearly benefitted from the support and help that home-others could provide (Baines, 2002; Baines and Gelder, 2003; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). In addition to many references of general support, there were a number of examples of professional support. The partners of the two performers in the sample helped by playing roles in and giving their opinion on their self-tapes for auditions, while the partners of both photographers assisted as models, assistants, editors or as photographers themselves. Similarly, Ben benefitted from the conversations, inspiration, mentorship, support and wider work connections that came with living with others in the same profession. In a few cases participants even worked directly with those at home, the most prominent example being that of Faye and David T who were both involved in the study and who ran a graphic design business together. Working and living with each other, they admitted, had negatively impacted their personal relationship, but since learning how to work to each other's strengths they had become a great team in the world of work and had bonded through a strong sense of trust.

Secondly, work provided opportunities for the participants to spend quality time together with those that they lived with, evidencing the greater engagement and enrichment of family life that its integration with work can facilitate (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Evidencing the role that home-based creative practices can play in the making of home (Hawkins, 2017), the craft at the centre of their business or the '*creative pursuits*' (David S, interview) that overlapped with work were enjoyed with children and were seen as a really positive thing for them to do together. The involvement of Natasha's husband and children in her photography and content creation work for instance saw them spend some '*really great time as a family*' where they had fun together doing '*so many amazing things*' (interview) that they would not have done otherwise, both at home and elsewhere. Already helping her to edit her photographs, Emily had also started training her partner to assist at weddings and was

planning on turning her work at '*really cool*' wedding locations abroad into mini trips and holidays for them both, allowing them to spend more time together '*doing something that's fun, enjoyable and going to new places*' (interview).

Third and finally, the work-home's enrichment of these relationships also included the opportunity for family members at home to better understand and engage with the work of the participants and the way they navigated their working lives. It was good, they felt, for their families to see them being creative and doing things that they enjoyed and for them to have greater access, understanding and appreciation for what they did. Valerie's family regularly asked about what was happening with the projects she was working on and how things were going with the business. But from their close proximity to and consequent awareness of her work came admiration for what she did, being '*quite taken*' by the idea that, if you are not happy with the way you work and you are made redundant, you can '*just make this happen*' (interview) and start up your own business, just like she had.

The story of Alison in particular stood out by means of its encapsulation of all these dynamics that point to the conceptualisation of the work-home as an integrative space, and the significance of the creativity of work in this regard (Hawkins, 2017). Blurring her roles as a mother and as an artist harmoniously, she in many ways resembled the integration of work and home at the heart of Ekinsmyth's (2011; 2014) notion of the 'mumpreneur'. With her husband being an artist like herself and with their two children regularly engaged with their creative practices too, it was clear how her work and her family relationships were deeply entwined. Alison would often involve her children in her '*research days*' (video diary) and their family trips out would be art-focused, but most significant was the '*making space*' (video diary), as her children had named it, that they had in their house. In what would have otherwise been a dining room, the family decision to dedicate this space for this purpose was, in Alison's opinion, '*a huge benefit to family life*' (interview). The making space was as much a space for the children as it was for her and her husband and while there were times when frustrations emerged from having to share the space and the materials within it, the opportunities to make together that it offered were incredibly important and special to her.

More than just spending time together, Alison stressed how happy it made her that she could pass on and instill in her children this strong understanding and interest in being creative that her and her husband shared. As well as using the making space to create things for themselves, do school art projects and have a go at making the same things as she was, she also hoped that this exposure to her work allowed them to gain an understanding of what she did and the reasons behind her choice to take that particular career path. As a mother of two boys, she felt '*really strongly*' (video diary) about getting them to see her working for herself, witness the independence that she had, and appreciate

her responsibility for her work, the enjoyment she got from it, and the value of her practice. It was important that they appreciated the flexibility it gifted her and the capacity to spend so much time with them that it enabled, and it was important too that they saw '*the harder bits*' (video diary) when she felt vulnerable, lonely and worried and found things difficult.

This relationship that she had with her children through her work even manifested in the form of support, as they directly informed and influenced the work she was doing particularly when it came to the educational and interactive work that she did. '*I often use them as sort of … test beds*' (interview) she said, as she would get them to try out materials that she had created. Allowing their comments and the ways in which they engaged with these materials to influence the development of her ideas and her work was, in her words, '*refreshing and helpful*' (interview). Together with her husband, the whole family contributed and helped her with her work. By being in the same profession and understanding what each other did, they were able to be '*brilliantly supportive*' (interview) of each other, talking through each other's projects and work issues and making '*each other feel better*' (interview) during those periods when they were not sure where the next job was coming from. At times, they even collaborated and worked together.

Epitomised by the example of Alison, the work-home of these self-employed creatives can be conceptualised as an integrative social space; namely, a space of rich social relations that have been enhanced by the integration of these two domains (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Nippert-Eng, 2003). Evidencing both work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment (cf. McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015), home-others provided conversation and company, and their involvement and proximity to the work of these individuals facilitated the provision of support, the spending of quality time together, and the opportunity for them to understand and engage with what they did (see also Baines, 2002; Baines and Gelder, 2003; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). In light of these accounts, it is contended here that these experiences of the work-home as an integrative social space contributes to the sense amongst the large majority of participants that they had supportive and rewarding relationships.

Flexibility and proximity for children

In addition to the social benefits of integrating work and home life, the flexibility and the proximity to home-others that self-employed homeworking afforded also enabled participants to positively contribute to the wellbeing of those that they lived with (McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015). Being around to help and support others at home was a benefit of working independently from home, and this was particularly true for those with children, with seven of the nine participants who had children at home stating that they felt this way. As well as suggesting that home-based independent work is conducive to this provision of support and care and providing further evidence that the integration of work and home had positive social repercussions, it also helps to explain why all participants felt that they contributed to the happiness and wellbeing of others, which was an important metric of social functioning (see **Figure 7.2**).
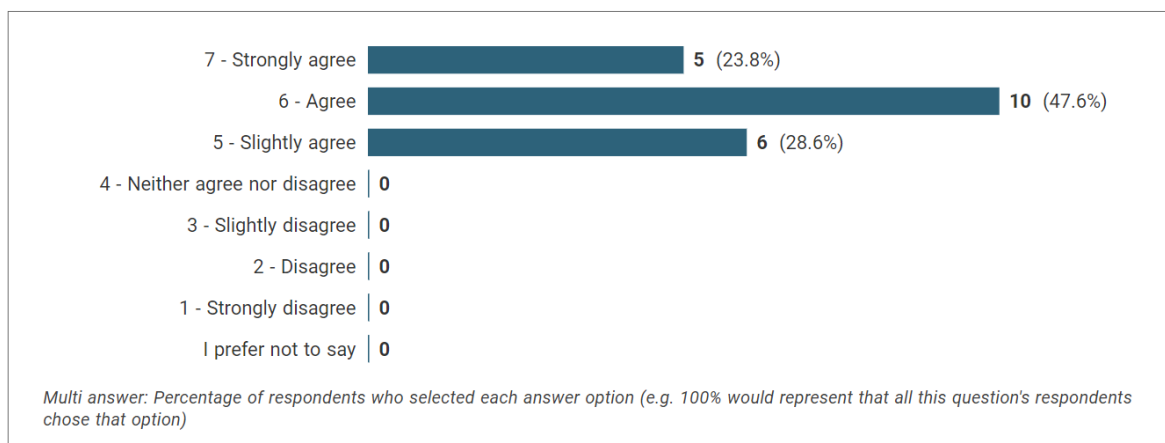
Figure 7.2. The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others'.

Reflecting their greater likelihood to use the flexibility of self-employed homeworking to juggle work and family commitments in comparison with fathers, some mothers in the study emphasised the way that it helped them to care, support and be there for their children whilst still fulfilling work commitments (e.g., Bell and la Valle, 2003; Gray and Hughes, 2005; Haddock *et al.,* 2006). Alison had made a conscious choice to freelance from home because she wanted to be '*a parent that was around*' (interview), and how it made sense, given how expensive childcare was, that she was able to juggle parenting and work. However, she loved it and was happy to be able to do it. '*I value it and appreciate it and, I'm joyful of the fact that I can choose to spend more time with my kids*' (video diary), she said. Being a lone parent, this juggling of parenting and work was a lot harder and more exhausting for Joanne, but freelancing offered '*the best of both worlds*' (interview) and enabled her to care for her

children and build stronger relationships with them too. Back when she had to work two days a week in Brighton, her son had been struggling with a mental health issue that she felt was because he needed more quality time with her. Since working remotely though, she too had been able to walk both of her children to school every day, pick them up, and be around for them when they needed her which, while exhausting for her, was good for both of her children.

Although fathers in the study did not place the same emphasis on these notions of balancing parenting and work, they did reiterate the way in which the proximity and flexibility with home life afforded by self-employed homeworking allowed them to be around for their children (Baines, Wheelock and Gelder, 2003). While this may suggest the persistence of the unequal gender division of domestic responsibilities and childcare, both mothers and fathers spoke about the benefits of being available and accessible when their children came back from school, and about being able to see more of them and do things with them and for them. Being at home during the day when their children were of a pre-school age was something that was appreciated and '*enjoyable*' (Duncan, interview) for two Dads, Duncan and Stephen, who were able to spend more time with their children and be much more present in their early years than they would have been if they had typical nine-to-five jobs. '*I've definitely seen a lot more of my daughter than I did of my son of a similar age*' (interview) said Duncan, having not had his own business nor worked from home during his son's early years; '*I've been so immersed in her first six months, because I've been here all the time, and that's great*' (interview). Having only made the leap to self-employment and homeworking during the pandemic, Valerie, who had two teenage children, wished she had '*known sooner*' about this '*really lovely combination of working from home and being there to support my children at a younger age*' (interview).

A further example of work-to-family enrichment (McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015), the flexibility and proximity with home life that is offered by self-employed homeworking allowed participants to help and support others at home, particularly children. While being experienced by both mothers and fathers, the narrative of juggling work and family life that emerged only in the accounts of mothers suggests a divergence in experience along lines of gender that has been observed elsewhere (e.g., Bell and la Valle, 2003; Gray and Hughes, 2005; Haddock *et al.,* 2006). More immersed and involved in their lives and available and accessible for them than they might otherwise be, it is contended here that this flexibility for children at home helps to some extent to explain the sense amongst the participants that they were able to contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of others.

The erosion of home relationships

Although the socio-spatial conflation of work and home life by and large appeared to enhance the social wellbeing of the participants, it did not always have positive repercussions for relations at home. Of the 17 participants that experienced the positive integration and proximity of work and home life, seven also provided examples of how this dynamic could detract from these relationships and the quality of the time that they spent together with home-others. Caused by the weak spatial and temporal boundaries of self-employed homeworking and exacerbated in some isolated instances by prolonged working hours, the participation of family and partners in their work also had an adverse effect in this regard when it undermined their time spent together away from work. As such, these examples demonstrate work's potential 'colonisation' of home life as alluded to by Mould (2018) and as observed in the case study of the lifestyle blogger presented by Mikats (2021).

The longer hours, larger workloads and weaker boundaries associated with self-employment and homeworking have been noted to counteract the benefits of flexibility, cause work-family conflict and have a negative impact on relationships at home (e.g., Bell and la Valle, 2003; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Jurik, 1998; Russell, O'Connell and McGinnity, 2009). Regarding the absence of typical spatial and temporal boundaries associated with work and home life, accounts presented by the participants showed how these conditions could diminish and erode time spent with others at home. For Daniel, the realities of spending '*literally 24 hours a day together*' (interview) when co-working at home with his partner had significant repercussions for their excitement to be with one another and their impulse to make the most of their downtime together. Without physical separation and well-defined start and end times, other participants found it difficult to be mentally and physically present for others and to make time for them, with work encroaching on time that would otherwise be spent together. Two participants also told how the long hours born from the responsibility, uncertainty and demands of their work compounded this issue of work's encroachment on relationships with their partners in the context of homeworking. Partly responsible for many of the ups and downs of David S' marriage were his wife's concerns that he worked too many hours, as well as her apprehensions that some clients tried to take advantage. Emily's partner had also previously had to have a '*firm word*' with her about her '*unhealthy*' (interview) prioritisation of work over their relationship as well as her family and personal life.

While the involvement, contribution and engagement of home-others with the work of the participants was on the whole enriching, there were two examples where their integration into work saw it define and erode the time they spent together. Although having a good and valuable working relationship, David T and Faye experienced this particularly intensely as they were husband and wife

as well as business partners. Both of them acknowledged that spending that many hours living and working together had been tough and unhealthy for their relationship. Sharing the stresses and pressures of work life in its entirety saw the concerns, disagreements, frustrations and arguments of the business permeate their home life and their time together to the extent that it '*absolutely changed*' (David T, interview) their relationship to be one dominated by work. This profound degree to which their relationship was central to their working lives could be interpreted as the reason why their experience was so starkly different to the rewarding and fulfilling involvement of Alison's family as outlined above, as they were predominantly only contributory to her work. Even after having learnt to work to each other's strengths and having established separate clients to better navigate and minimise the stresses and strains of working and living together, work's colonisation of their relationship persisted. At the time, Faye was training to be a nutritionist to pursue a new career away from their graphic design business, and this was one of the key reasons why. In agreement that this was the right thing to do, the pursuit of a different career was already providing them with more of their own space and different conversations at the end of the day. The importance of this change for their relationship was undoubtable:

> '*You know, it's been tough to stay together because we only have work in common…*
> *if we want our marriage to carry on for another ten years, something's got to*
> *change. Because we're just work associates otherwise, that function with a child!*'
> (Faye, interview).

The social issues that could be caused by the work-home integration and weak boundaries of self-employed homeworking were felt particularly acutely by Natasha. One of the participants who 'slightly disagreed' with the statement that her social relationships were supportive and rewarding, she experienced the downsides of having home-others involved in work and the encroachment of working hours on non-work social time. As already outlined, Natasha's work as a lifestyle content creator and photographer provided opportunities for her to do amazing things together with her family, but there were some occasions when their required involvement in her work had unwanted consequences. She felt bad when the children had to be in photos when they did not want to be, and she had more specific concerns about the repercussions of her daughter's participation as a model, worrying that the photoshoots were encouraging her to pose and that the gifts that she got from the brands were making her ungrateful. With her children often being the subject of the content she created and with her husband frequently acting as the photographer for those shoots that she had to be in, their regular participation in her work did have repercussions for the quality of time that they spent together. As well as causing him added stress, having to leave photoshoots for the weekend so that her husband

was available to help got in the way of them spending time together away from the pressures of such work.

The demands and long hours that she had to dedicate to work, its inescapable omnipresence and the absence of a set home-time and nine-to-five working day structure saw her job as a photographer and content creator further clash with her role as a mother and a housewife. '*I'm not doing my work well*' she conceded, '*but also I'm not being a great mum*' (video diary). Constantly thinking about, planning and doing work, having to take calls and answer emails and at times having to concede more time to work resulted in her feeling a sense of guilt at not being 100% present for her family and feeling like she was letting them down. Natasha, in fact, was the only participant who reported feeling guilty 'extremely' frequently (5/5). '*I really don't know how to address it*' (video diary), she admitted. Believing that her role and identity as a mother was more important than her role and identity as a creative, she sometimes thought about packing it all in to be a full-time mum and housewife so that she could '*make sure the children are happy*' and provide them with '*lovely homecooked meals*' (interview) and a safe, peaceful, and tidy home. Yet equally she needed to earn money, provide clothes for the kids through the brand deals, and use her brain too. Criticisms of the ways in which her work impacted her family were voiced by her own parents. Echoing previous 'lectures' about how '*everyone has to make sacrifices*' for her work '*because it involves everyone*' (video diary), she recalled the comments they made on a family trip to a garden when Natasha had forgotten to take her camera's memory card:

> '*My mum said how wonderful it was that I wasn't working because when I have my camera it's quite stressful for everyone else and the fact that I'm always taking photos is stressful for everyone else. So a little bit of guilt there... and then my dad said how nice it would be for me to stop working and just look after the kids. Uhm, yeah, I think... It's, it is hard for other people when you are always working*' (Natasha, video diary).

Demonstrated by the story of Natasha, the weak spatial and temporal boundaries of self-employed homeworking and the demands of running a creative business could see the erosion of time spent with home-others, and in doing so further demonstrate that these characteristics of individualised work can have negative consequences for relationships at home (e.g., Bell and la Valle, 2003; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Jurik, 1998; Russell, O'Connell and McGinnity, 2009). However, the involvement of home-others in work could also be of detriment to these relationships when it was at the expense of them spending time together away from the demands and pressures of work. As well as potentially influencing the extent to which these relationships were able to be rewarding, it too

appears to potentially undermine one's ability to support the happiness and wellbeing of children. While the breakdown of boundaries between work and home life can be clearly beneficial for social wellbeing, the safeguarding of non-work time for these relationships remains important.

The draw of co-working spaces

Moving on from a focus on the relations of home, the chapter now turns to consider social connections, networks and spaces beyond the home and their influence on the social wellbeing of the participants, and attends first to the significance of physical social spaces. Some of those participants who mentioned that they wanted to be around and work with others more said that they desired or missed co-working spaces and client offices. Although limited to only three cases, there were also those who benefitted from these spaces and their provision of socialisation and support that these others sought. Together, both these desires and these experiences highlight the value of such integrative spaces of work-based social connections and contacts and their ability to help further counter the social and professional isolation and the informality and precariousness of individualised work (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Lazzarato, 2009; Merkel, 2015; 2019; Spinuzzi, 2012). Moreover, they draw attention to the value of working alongside and being physically proximate to others that are more directly involved in and understanding of one's work. As well as underscoring the comparative limit of the work-home in this regard, it also emphasises the social richness of such colocation with those in similar lines of work and the unimpeded interaction, access to support and socio-cultural atmospheres that it enables (e.g., Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Daft and Lengel, 1986; Lal, Dwivedi and Haag, 2021; Olson *et al.,* 2002).

The prospect of finding a co-working space to join was particularly attractive for Duncan who missed the fun, connection and working atmosphere of the office environment, and Emily too hoped to one day set up her own co-working space to create a permanent and regular social group for work. Not knowing anyone who lived nearby that worked in the same sector, her idea at the time was to have one specifically for wedding industry professionals to provide a sense of community, an immediacy of support and opportunities to discuss and get help on industry-specific issues. These benefits of socialisation and support materialised for the three participants that were part of co-working spaces, and thus can be inferred as contributing to the supportive and rewarding relationships that they each felt they had. The interactions, conversations and banter with others that they provided were a '*big bonus*' (Sammy, interview), but the value of these inherent social spaces was that they were available on their terms rather than being dictated by the requirements and the social and cultural pressures that can come when working in an office for an organisation. Appreciated was the freedom to come and go as they wanted without any obligation and without anyone else caring. '*It's often really nice to*

be around other people working, and just to have little chats and interactions with people throughout the day' said Rachel, but as she subtly remarked, it is only nice '*as long as you're in the right mood for it*' (video diary). Comments made by participants demonstrated the importance of these work-based spaces of socialisation and belonging in the context of the more solitary working environment of the home. When working from home instead of their respective co-working space or long-term client office, participants missed the '*banter*' (Mel, video diary) and community that they offered, and the opportunities they presented to '*contextualise*' (Rachel, interview) work, feel part of a wider work community and society, and to share things, '*nerd out*' (Mel, interview) and have deep conversations about their work with others that would understand.

Being a part of a co-working space with others in the creative industries who were generous with their time, knowledge, equipment and advice also facilitated opportunities to learn and share information. Given the precarity and detachment that can be part and parcel of much self-employed creative work, this was a valuable means of support (Merkel, 2015, citing Merkel and Oppen, 2013; see also Merkel, 2019). For Rachel, it was particularly important as a place where tips and tricks for funding bids and techniques were swapped, helping with the '*money trouble*' (interview) of being freelance which for her was the main factor that negatively affected her job satisfaction. Demonstrating the significance of this community to her social wellbeing, Rachel explained that these co-workers were one of the reasons that she 'strongly agreed' with the statement that her relationships were supportive and rewarding. Having only recently just joined a co-working space, Sammy had been told in her induction that they would look out for and match her up with collaborators and funding opportunities which she thought was '*pretty sick*' (interview). But already in that first week she had heard in the studio what she described as '*the most amazing business call*' (interview), where a fellow co-worker had tamed a difficult conversation with a big organisation. '*I would never have [had] the example of someone doing that if I'd stayed at home*' she said, highlighting the vulnerability of professional isolation when homeworking and the advantages that the co-working space presented therein; '*Maybe I will [do that] one day*' (interview).

Another reason cited for wanting to join a co-working space was for the socio-creative atmosphere and environment that it could provide. Living on her own, the opportunity to '*bounce ideas off*' (interview) others was something that Megan felt she could really benefit from. The chance to encounter and develop ideas through the conversations and experiences offered by these social and collaborative spaces and the value it can have for their creative work was exemplified by a video diary entry from Rachel on a day that she went into the co-working space that she belonged to. On that day, a free workshop with a tech-based artist was being held, and she decided to spontaneously join as she too was a creative technologist. When explaining how it '*was really great*' (video diary) and inspiring,

her description of how nice it was to hear the artist '*in real time*' talk about their work and '*be physically among people*' (video diary) while they discussed the possibilities of the technology's use suggested a particular salience of the in-person interaction. As stated by Csikszentmihalyi (2013), seeing and hearing about others and their work, exchanging and bouncing ideas around, can be important to the creative process.

This association between creativity and the physical co-presence of colleagues and others in the same industry – and homeworking's impediment to this – was clear in the accounts of others. Not having the social space to exchange and explore ideas with other creatives was one of the reasons why Faye had fallen out of love with graphic design and appeared to doubt her capacity to take up a creative challenge. Since the arts charity that Joanne worked for as a freelance consultant had shifted to remote working, the '*creative conversations and the ideas that come from people*' (interview), she reflected, had not been the same. Similarly, the thing that stopped Mel from feeling 'completely satisfied' with her job was '*the drawback of… isolation*' (interview) when homeworking, particularly in the creative sense. While she worked from the studio of her long-term client at the time for around two-weeks per month, she often felt lonely during the days at home as she missed the '*creative atmosphere*' (interview):

> '*… it's having that ability to bounce ideas off [others], or just like [have] random conversations, which you really can't have by yourself. And so I think that's one of the big drawbacks, because it can inhibit your creativity as well, because you're not able to just walk up to somebody's desk and see what they're doing and have a discussion about it, and then get back on with your work and then see it from a different perspective'* (Mel, interview).

From these accounts, a draw of co-working spaces emerges from their promise and provision of social interaction, professional support and a creatively inspiring environment. For those few that participated in co-working spaces and long-term client offices at the time, their experiences suggest that the co-presence of others in a similar line of work and the salient social connection and engagement that these physical spaces offer was a significant benefit in the fostering of supportive and rewarding work relationships that they reported to have (see **Figure 7.1**; see also Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Daft and Lengel, 1986; Lal, Dwivedi and Haag, 2021; Olson *et al.,* 2002). As well as further substantiating the role of co-working spaces in helping to remedy the isolation and precariousness associated with such individualised working practices (Lazzarato, 2009; Merkel, 2015; 2019; Spinuzzi, 2012), these narratives also draw attention to the comparative limits of the work-home in this regard, particularly concerning the provision of a socio-creative atmosphere of work.

The limits of virtual spaces

Emblematic of the key role that ICTs play in the creation and sustainment of social networks today (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002; Wellman, 2001), descriptions of virtual communities and online forms of communication indicated their capacity to also nurture and maintain supportive and rewarding work relationships when working from home independently (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1997; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009). However, comments made by the participants pointed towards a social limitation of technology-mediated interaction when compared to the perceived richer feeling of connection and the greater satisfaction of social needs that physical colocation and face-to-face interaction enabled (Bancou and Gabriagues, 2023; Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Lal, Dwivedi and Haag, 2021; Olson *et al.,* 2002; Short, Williams and Christie, 1976).

Video calls as well as communication via instant messaging, email and social media platforms were evidently still a means of positively connecting with others for many participants. Valerie in particular, who worked with her Co-Director over Zoom almost daily, felt that they were still able to recreate the feeling of being across the stand from each other just like it was when they were in the office at their old organisation. '*When you're on Zoom, [it feels like] you're just across the desk… I don't feel like it's completely disconnected*' (interview) she said, drawing attention to the stronger sense of social presence that such synchronous forms of online communication are understood as being able to provide (Lal and Dwivedi, 2009). Video conferencing was a prominent form of communication at the heart of online communities which, like co-working spaces, were able to provide a sense of community and be an important source of help, support and guidance for those that were a part of them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was '*a really good sense of camaraderie*' (interview) amongst Megan's online class of business clients. They supported each other during the difficult period, and the group kept her '*going*' and kept her '*sane*' (interview). Throughout lockdown Stephen was also part of a '*self-help*' (interview) Zoom group with others on the lecture circuit where they helped each other adjust to moving their profession online. Unconfined to the pandemic, Zoom meetings with others in the same profession helped with motivation and encouragement, and Facebook groups with professionals in the same industry, although asynchronous, were '*amazingly supportive*' and worth their '*weight in gold*' (Megan, interview), and were on hand to help with issues and problems. Feeling cut off and isolated from others in her industry after she had left a co-working space, an online leadership and development programme attended by fellow arts producers provided Lucy with a sense of community with other creatives that she had lost. '*These are my people*', she said, as she described them as '*generous … friendly and nice*' (interview)*.*

Providing a detailed and considered account of the online community that he was a part of was Duncan. The community now felt '*meaningful*' (interview), he explained, after a year and a half of getting to know the '*friendly … great fun, and … nice people'* (interview) that made up the online group, and it was clear from the account he gave how valuable it was for the support it provided him and his portfolio career, which it had been set up to do. On offer through the community was a course to help with business development and branding which were two things that were a '*slight unknown*' (video diary) for him, and the weekly Zoom catch ups where members could chat through things and ask for advice and feedback from each other was something that he found '*psychologically*' (video diary) beneficial. There was even a book club which he found '*positive*' and '*inspiring*' (video diary). Of particular significance though was the guidance and help that one individual from the community provided at a time when he had put his new home office architectural business on the backburner. Taking him under his wing, he reassured him that he had a really good idea and provided him with the means to help test the business hypothesis and the market for the service. Previously without any traction, Duncan's home office business then started to move forward.

Despite these benefits, there was an evident social inadequacy to online communication and communities that only in-person co-working and interaction could satisfy. Echoed by a number of participants including Duncan was the feeling that online social interaction is not '*the same*' (Stephen, interview; Joanne, interview; Mel, interview) as in-person social interaction; that it is not as '*direct*' (Alison, interview) and that '*there are bits missing*' (Duncan, interview). Even after working days filled with online meetings, workshops and tutorials, Joanne, David S, Alison and Valerie still felt isolated and in need of social interaction. In the context of virtual interaction and online communities there remained a longing for the sense of belonging that it enabled and the ability to emotionally connect with others. There is '*something unique about meeting people in person*' (interview), argued Mel, as '*meaningful conversations*' (interview) are harder to replicate via a computer screen and camera. In considering why, she reflected on the impact it has on communication via body language and the way video call delays can hinder the flow of conversation. As coined by Bancou and Gabiragues (2023) in their study of embodied co-presence in the context of hybrid working, the difference in experience could be at least in part attributed to the 'minimal co-presence' of technology-mediated communication and the 'focal co-presence' of physical co-working. While the spatial and temporal co-existence of physical co-working facilitates an emotional connection by means of "language, facial expressions, gestures, and discrete sensations of the phenomenal body" (Bancou and Gabriagues, 2023, p. 8), technology-mediated communication, on the other hand, only allows individuals to share the same temporality, thus inhibiting their ability to connect emotionally.

The favourability of in-person over virtual co-working was also about unrestricted interaction and communication, and the consequences this had for their access to information and people. Emily described the Facebook groups for photographers and those working in the wedding industry that she was a part of as '*so amazing*' (interview). '*If someone's got a problem, you know, a couple have like a really difficult request, or someone's struggling with a contract, there's always someone that has an answer'* (interview)*,* she explained. Nevertheless, Emily still wanted to start her own co-working space, citing the personal and practical benefits of being able '*to just talk with people in person*' (interview) and the greater immediacy of help and the serendipity of discussions and interactions that it enables. In the context of online meetings, Mel too spoke of the inability to 'work around a room' and meet new people. As already touched on above, Joanne reflected on the socio-creative limits of remote working. Since the arts charity that she did freelance work for had moved away from office working, she had found that the time limit, minimal space for 'chat' and the agenda of online meetings meant that you '*miss what's going on with the rest of the team'* and fail to '*get a sense of knowing how people are in themselves* (video diary)*.* The creative conversations and the development of ideas had not been the same too. '*It's something about the human condition*' she declared, '*you can't discount the [importance of] physical interaction … and ... being in the world*' (interview). During the video diary period, the planning meeting she had in a café with the Co-Directors of her own organisation further demonstrated for her '*how much we miss when we take everything online*' (video diary). Not only did she feel '*so much more lifted and happier*' in the company of '*awesome*' and '*lovely*' (video diary) people, but they felt they '*got so much more done*' (video diary) as ideas were freer flowing, and more connections were made between the different things they were working on. Having realised what they had been missing, Joanne told in the interview a month later how they had made an effort to hold five or six more of those meetings in-person since, something which she had found to have been '*really positive*' (interview).

Like physical co-working spaces, online communities and spaces of interaction provided these home-based, self-employed creative workers with the means to connect to those that they worked with as well as others in similar lines of work beyond the confines of their home, and as such can be considered to further contribute to the supportive and rewarding relationships that the sample reported (see **Figure 7.1**). It allowed them to collaborate, receive support, build a sense of community and be inspired in their working lives, and thus can themselves be considered 'virtual' integrative spaces in this regard (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; see also Ahrentzen, 1997; Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Lal and Dwivedi, 2009). Yet in spite of these benefits they had for social wellbeing, they were not equal to the socialisation and support that physical co-working spaces facilitated, reinforcing the particular value of participating in physical co-working spaces for these

workers. Supporting the notion that being in-person provides the richest form of interaction (Daft and Lengel, 1986), these virtual spaces and forms of communication were unable to facilitate emotional and social connection, replicate meaningful, serendipitous and creative conversations, and provide the sense of belonging and the immediacy of help in the same way that physical co-presence and face-to-face communication could (Bancou and Gabriagues, 2023; Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Lal, Dwivedi and Haag, 2021; Olson *et al.,* 2002; Short, Williams and Christie, 1976).

Networks of socialisation and support

Characteristic of "the rise of networked individualism" (Wellman, 2002, p. 2; see also Larsen *et al.,* 2016), participants had, along with co-working spaces and online communities, more distributed connections and associations comprised of family, friends, local communities, clients, co-workers and mentors that appeared to also underpin their social wellbeing. These personalised and individualised networks of socialisation and support further demonstrate a reliance on personal relationships and the establishment of additional work-based connections to help minimise the social and professional isolation that can accompany such individualised work. Moreover, they evidence the existence, and significance, of relations that continue to be a part of independent working life, despite their apparent 'atomisation'.

Seeing and speaking to friends as well as partners and family members that they did not live with was something they enjoyed and loved. As has been found to be the case for other homeworkers (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1997; Crosbie and Moore, 2004), these relationships and community links helped to relieve feelings of isolation and address desires for company, with Sammy for instance attesting how her friendships made it '*less important … to be super sociable at work*' (interview). Besides companionship, family and friends were also a source of mutual support and help. On the one hand, friends played a key role with regard to non-work support, with some pointing towards the importance of having a '*good*' (Elizabeth, interview), '*close*' (Emily, interview) and '*really strong*' (Sammy, interview) group that supported each other and that they could reach out to and trust. On the other, family members and partners beyond the home offered work-specific financial support, encouragement, advice and mentorship, blurring the social boundaries between personal and business domains in a similar way to that identified in the context of the work-home (see also Ekinsmyth, 2011).

In addition to the co-working and online social spaces already discussed are non-work communities and other groups affiliated with their work. On a personal level but nevertheless important were the socialities of clubs, charities, church, college, classes and the local neighbourhood. Examples of social infrastructure (Latham and Layton, 2022), they helped to address susceptibility to isolation

experienced by the participants (see also Ammons and Markham, 2004). The opportunity to meet and interact with others through a part time degree was particularly beneficial for Mel during a difficult stage of her career. Feeling isolated and suffering from depression during an incredibly challenging period without much work, the way the course allowed her to meet others '*who were like minded*' and with whom she '*could have conversations*' (interview) made a huge difference to her and helped to alleviate some of the isolation she was experiencing. Similarly, work communities in the form of fellowships, boards of trustees and meet-up groups were social and provided opportunities to meet people and be a part of a community, further evidencing the significance of such groups for these individualised workers (see also Ahrentzen, 1997; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018). In the same way as co-working spaces and online communities, these groups also provided advice and support, the chance to discuss things of mutual interest, encounter new perspectives, ideas and subjects, bounce ideas off others, and get a consensus on a particular issue or project. Ben, for example, joined a jazz scene for this very reason. In addition to diversifying his portfolio of music, being a part of the group exercised him to his '*near or full potential*' (interview) and was a way for him to create connections, share music, and receive compliments and affirmation from other serious musicians which he found to be important to his job satisfaction, personal satisfaction, and confidence.

Illustrating the role they can play in minimising social isolation (Felstead and Jewson, 2000; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007), interactions with clients and customers both in-person and online could also be positive and enjoyable, feed into the enjoyment of and satisfaction with work, and help with the day-to-day reality of working alone. Participants described the congeniality of meeting interesting and amazing clients and customers and talking with them about subjects of mutual interest, with some even providing support and becoming friends. As '*a very, very social, sort of being*' (video diary), the socialisation and friendship groups that came with the choirs that Ben led for instance were particularly important to him. Not only was it the place where he met his girlfriend, but hanging out with the group, particularly in the pub after practices where they drank, chatted, and continued to sing, was something that he loved and that always made him feel better. '*What I get with choir is work, and a friend group, both together*' (interview) he explained. Similarly, the main reason Megan felt 'somewhat satisfied' with her job was the positives of working, supporting and interacting with her clients who, she was proud to say, all become friends. However, relationships and interactions with clients and customers did not always improve social wellbeing. There were clients that were difficult, unappreciative and '*insensitive*' (Faye, video diary), and working with them could be unenjoyable, hard and '*emotionally exhausting*' (Megan, video diary). Poor communication, negative comments and the politics could be frustrating, stressful, anxiety inducing and '*disheartening*' (Millie, interview).

A plethora of professional relationships and connections with whom they worked with directly were evident across the sample. These included collaborators, colleagues and co-workers, assistants, mentors, agents and co-directors, and even larger organisational teams that they worked with on a long-term freelance basis. Along with the existence and the value of client interactions, these connections challenge the characterisation of these workers as being inherently 'atomised' and disconnected from work relations (Reuschke, 2019). Negative experiences were sometimes associated with these relationships as a result of communication issues, politics, and anxieties that can come with working with others. Nevertheless, these relationships were, on the whole, rewarding. Working and being creative with others was evidently energising and key to job satisfaction for some, and they valued the social aspect that these relationships and interactions provided with some being as much friendships as they were professional relationships. This was particularly true for Dennis, whose work as a performer and entertainer was his social life. '*That line between co-worker and friend is really blurred*' (interview) he said. He told of friends who had become co-workers and co-workers who had become friends, and how the '*nicheness of the industry*' meant '*everybody's on the same wavelength*' (interview) with the same sense of humour and interests. Nearly always working and travelling with the same people meant that he felt he was part of a permanent community, and knowing and being friends with others that he would regularly end up working with gave Dennis a sense of reassurance when it came to jumping from job to job, both professionally but also socially, as he knew that he was going to be able to have a good time.

More expectedly, these professional relationships provided valuable forms of support that helped to minimise the practical and psychological burdens of independent work (e.g., Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019). Collaborators and co-workers helped with the juggling of multiple responsibilities and jobs, and Co-Directors shared the burden of the day-to-day running of the business. Mentors were on hand to provide advice on craft techniques and issues, guide them through the transition to different industries, and foster self-assurance and understanding. Helping to ease the vulnerabilities and uncertainties of project-based creative work, Daniel's agent secured him good auditions and pushed back against attempts to reduce his fees by making pay a non-negotiable on his behalf, but also nurtured his optimism and confidence in a way that positively contributed to his sense of job satisfaction. A handful of participants likewise found colleagues and collaborators to be a source of motivation, encouragement and confidence. It was for instance about mutual reassurance during the creation of a project when doubts and existential questions started to creep in, and about coming away from a planning meeting feeling more positive, proactive, grounded, and less lonely in the face of the uncertainty that can come with self-employment. Whilst also helping and being there for those that she had responsibility for in her freelance role at the arts charity, Joanne

had '*made a pact*' with the Co-Directors of her own business to '*emotionally support each other*' (interview).

Valerie's relationship with her Co-Director was emblematic of the significant personal support that such relationships can afford, and indicates the potential benefits of establishing a business in partnership with someone else. Day-to-day they worked very closely together, bouncing ideas off each other, collaborating on documents, developing fundraising applications, and planning the workshops that they hold, but more significantly they also looked out for each other. In this respect, it was evident just how important having a colleague was for Valerie, and the benefits that co-running a business can have. '*I don't think I'd be working freelance if we weren't doing it together*' (video diary) she stated, imagining the isolation of working alone every day, the burden of '*dealing with your own thoughts*' (interview), and the difficulties of working out whether you had made the right decisions on your own. Neutralising the pressure of having sole responsibility for a business, they had created what she referred to as a '*security blanket*' (interview) and '*safety net*' (video diary), as they would often check up on each other, help each other and 'pick up the flak' for each other if either of them had to take time off. This was particularly evident during the October half-term when Valerie and her family had to isolate because they had tested positive for COVID-19. Having to juggle work and family support more than usual, Valerie had to dip in and out of tasks, but her colleague was supportive and understanding and encouraged her to prioritise her wellbeing and even take a day off to look after herself while she kept hold of the reins of the business.

While their disconnection from the social spaces and connections of organisational structures might render them more susceptible to social and professional isolation, important relations and forms of sociality remained a part of the participants' work, and they established, maintained and relied on further connections and relationships to keep them from being lonely and to help them in their working lives. Formed of familial and personal ties, non-work communities and affiliate work groups, clients and customers, and co-workers and mentors, the importance of these individualised and unique networks as outlined here draws attention to the notable role that other spaces and connections play in the social wellbeing of self-employed homeworkers. As well as evidencing the independent engineering of social ties inherent to 'networked individualism' and challenging the notion of these workers as being inherently 'disconnected' (Reuschke, 2019; Wellman, 2001; 2002), it builds upon previous studies by observing these socalities of independent homeworkers and considering their influence on subjective wellbeing (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1997; Ammons and Markham, 2004; Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007). These networks of personal and work-based connections and spaces, it is contended, further help to explain the positive sense of having supportive and rewarding relationships amongst the participants of the study (see **Figure 7.1**).

The agency of the lone homeworker

From the social dynamics of the work-home through co-working and online communities to personal and professional contacts and connections, it becomes clear how these home-based independent creatives were embedded within a variety of supportive and rewarding social spaces and networks. Crucial to understanding the social lives of these workers though is an acknowledgement of the centrality of their agency in getting involved in these social spaces, establishing connections with others and strengthening these relationships, creating a fulfilling social world to overcome and reduce the disconnection that could come with working for yourself from home (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015).

Examples of such agency are embedded within the discussions of co-working spaces, online communication and communities, and their networks of socialisation and support. To address or minimise the potentiality of social and professional isolation, participants explained how they purposefully sought out mentors, co-founded their businesses, reconnected with old workmates, made a greater effort to meet co-workers and collaborators in person and joined personal and professional communities and groups. Providing further evidence of intentionality, those who still felt in need of greater sociality and support also spoke of how they were planning on seeking out mentors and finding or establishing co-working spaces, work-based support groups or local organisations to be a part of. Faye told of how she was retraining for a whole new career partly to get more opportunities to mix with others, and Joanne, as a single mother struggling to juggle work and family responsibilities, was planning to uproot and move hundreds of miles across the country to be closer to family and friends for childcare support. However, the significance of individual agency was especially evident in the cases of three participants – Elizabeth, Steve and Megan – who lived alone and who, given the conclusions already reached, would likely be more acutely vulnerable to disconnection and loneliness. In the absence of the socialities of home as well as of the workplace, they actively and effectively sought out and established social spaces and networks to meet their needs, with all three either 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' with the statement that their relationships were supportive and rewarding.

'*He said to me, 'Oh, you're living on your own – you'll become insular, working and living on your own*' recalled Elizabeth in her interview, telling of a conversation she had with someone once; somebody that she did not know that well. '*No, you're talking twaddle. I don't think I'm insular, even though I work on my own*' she retaliated retrospectively, as she asserted that she did not feel isolated. A commitment to a strong and valuable network of '*really good friends*' (interview) was the reason why. Her craft as a teddy bear artist had connected her to people all over the world who had then become

good friends, but she also had a strong local group of friends that she made sure she saw regularly. Every Sunday '*unless there's horizontal rain*' (interview) she went out walking with them to have a day at the end of each week spent in the company of others. Elizabeth was hugely invested in her friendships, with this devotion being reciprocated. When they were in trouble or in need she was there for them, and when she was in trouble or in need they were there for her. At the time of the interview, a year had passed since she had lost her partner. She told me how one of her friends had been there for her during this difficult period, but how recently she too had lost her husband. '*Work got put back because she was [a] priority… she helped me out, and suddenly she's going through it. And I'm helping her out. Because that's what she needs.*' After leaving the world of commercial property investment, Steve the furniture designer and maker had counteracted the loss of the social sphere and regular company of colleagues that it provided by embedding himself and establishing groups of friends across a gliding club and tennis club, a woodworking fellowship, his work with a healthcare charity, and his local village community too. As well as living alone, he spent the majority of his working hours in his workshop in the garden. He enjoyed interacting with clients and talking to people at trade fairs and exhibitions, but with such opportunities only being occasional, he had pursued what could be characterised as a 'socio-spatial strategy' (de Certeau, 1984; Roca, 2020), participating and engaging in these forms of social infrastructure and community spaces to establish meaningful, permanent, and regular interaction with others. '*I've sort of identified the fact that if I don't make efforts in order to address my need to be with people, then inertia would, I think, carry quite a heavy price because I don't have to do anything that involves me to, to engage with people*' (interview), he explained.

A perhaps more major example of a socio-spatial strategy was Megan's move to a town where she used to live, on the other side of the country, to help her to establish a '*new rhythm*' (video diary) in her life and become part of a community. The '*very insular*' and '*tiny*' (interview) rural village where she lived before was so isolating particularly during the pandemic that she felt she '*had to come back to somewhere where there was a bit more life … the minute I walk out of the door*' (video diary). Illustrating the connection between socially vibrant and active places and positive feelings (Ettema and Smajic, 2015; Sandstrom *et al.,* 2017), she proclaimed how she was much happier being where she was now:

> '*I'm in a bustling market town, the sort of place where everybody says hello to you whether they know you or not, and they stop to talk to the dog. It's that old fashioned vibe that everybody thinks they want to live with. And there's a cinema and a theatre here and there's a castle and it's beautiful and there's a river and it's beautiful. I actually haven't left … for four months - I left once - because everything*

you want is here. So it's a much happier place to live. A much more positive place to live… it really, it really brings home to you how important it is to be part of a community, even more so now we're working at home. Even more so probably when you're self-employed … My stepmother still lives here … My children went to school just outside this town, so lots of their parents I was friends with but I haven't seen them for 11 years. But they're the sorts of friends I don't need to see for 11 years. And then we go for coffee and it was like it's last week. … there are people you could call on in an emergency, everybody's friendly, and there are people I've known [for years] - it's home, it's coming home' (Megan, interview).

While agency in pursuing and maintaining social networks and spaces is evident across the sample to supplement or substitute for the socialities of work and home, the stories of these three participants who lived alone were emblematic of such agency and its importance in sustaining their social wellbeing, given the absence of home-based relationships. Epitomising Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) conceptualisation of individualisation, Elizabeth, Steve and Megan are the 'builders' of their own social links and networks. Despite the potential benefits of being able to orchestrate and determine relationships and connections in line with personal preference rather than having to assimilate into a pre-determined organisational community, there remains an element of social precariousness in having to establish and nurture your own network of connections in the face of social and professional isolation. Moreover, these dynamics of individualised work, if they are to become more prevalent, place greater importance on the existence of strong and accessible social infrastructure. Non-work communities and clubs as well as co-working spaces and work-based networks and groups are essential in supporting these workers to come together, connect and support each other; to counter the social atomisation of home-based, individualised work (Latham and Layton, 2022).

The social value of creative work

These communities and groups that the participants were a part of and their relationships with family, friends and colleagues were forms of mutual support, and as such could be considered a means through which they contributed to the happiness and wellbeing of others beyond the home. However, it was the outputs and outcomes of their creative labour that appeared to be particularly significant in this respect, and as such can be considered contributory to this important metric of social functioning that the sample scored highly on (see **Figure 7.2**). As discussed in chapter six, the performance of their creative practices was an important source of enjoyment and central to their sense of self-fulfilment and purpose, but these positive experiences were also enhanced by the joy, self-actualisation and

support that their creative outputs and activities could bring to others (e.g., Ateca-Amestoy *et al.*, 2016; Wilson and Sharpe, 2017).

A sense of purpose and feelings of joy and satisfaction came from the way they could solve problems and address an issue through the service they could provide, whether by means of creating and enhancing domestic environments as an architect, improving the online presence of small businesses as a digital marketer, or by producing useful ideas and designs for companies and clients. '*I don't mind being defined by my work, because the work I do is good and helps people'* Megan (interview) said, although this was specific to her work as a digital marketer as she stressed that she did not ever want to be defined by her work back when she was a tax planner. Faye also alluded to a similar sense of purpose in the context of her work as a graphic designer:

> '*There's nothing better than doing lots of creative [work] and doing a presentation and the client going 'Ahhh, that's the one, that's really good!' And then actually buying into your ideas … I guess that's why I've always done it… that's the buzz that you get from it, and that's what makes it worthwhile'* (Faye, interview).

The 'consumption' of the art forms that they created also offered positive emotional experiences for clients, customers and audiences in the form of enjoyment, escapism and pleasure. This was the case for a number of participants and included a variety of work 'outputs' ranging from performances, acts, shows and talks to photography, music, art, bears, and furniture. As Gauntlett (2011, p. 225, citing Illich, 1973) has emphasised and as evident in the data, the act of creating is often about, and proceeded by, the act of sharing, and offers a means for individuals to connect with others and "invest the world with meaning". These positive experiences that participants were able to provide for others enhanced both the enjoyment and the purpose they derived from their work. Purpose, meaning, fulfilment and joy came from the sharing of their outputs for others to enjoy, the capturing of memories for people to have '*for the rest of their lives*' (Emily, interview) through their photography, the entertainment provided by their performances, and their ability to connect with others through their art. Lucy derived a huge sense of purpose and meaning from '*giving people joy*' (interview) through her work, and her account of the reception she would get from the outdoor art performances that she created illustrated the palpable emotional effect that this contribution to the happiness of others could have. '*[It] makes my heart sing*' she said sentimentally, describing her reaction to a drawing that a child did for them as a thank you for a socially distanced carnival she helped put on; '*it just makes me - ahh God, that's the, it's the feeling in here'* she said, gesturing to her heart, *'that's why I do it'* (interview). Speaking of the bears that she made, Elizabeth similarly alluded to the importance of how they make others feel:

'I think the fact that I enjoy creating them and then I send them off and people then enjoy collecting them… That is the satisfaction. It's the fact somebody gets enjoyment out of them… the fact that other people enjoy them - it gives me a sense of purpose, because someone else is enjoying what I'm enjoying' (Elizabeth, interview).

In addition to the consumption of their creative work, participants also found joy and purpose in enabling, supporting and encouraging people to be creative and to benefit from the positive effect it could have on their wellbeing (e.g., Ateca-Amestoy *et al.,* 2016; Wilson and Sharpe, 2017). Sometimes the introduction of others to the benefits of creativity occurred alongside or in addition to their typical day-to-day work, such as through contributing to or supporting those in educational settings. Dennis' promotion of drama in schools through workshops was about building confidence and helping children to '*go further in life*' and to '*work out who you are*' (Dennis, interview). Similarly, Mel's mentoring and lecturing on concept art that she did on the side was to help '*people realise who they are … and to empower, educate, and inspire the next generation of artists and individuals*' (Mel, interview), particularly for those from underrepresented backgrounds like herself. This was an important way for her to use what she believed to be her '*gift*' (interview) and impact the lives of others, which was fundamental to her sense of purpose.

For those participants who worked in the spheres of arts education and community work, this was much more central to what they did day-to-day. Their work was '*always about helping other people*' (Valerie, interview), encouraging adults to (re)discover their creativity and the benefit it can have for their wellbeing, providing art therapy for those in need, and supporting young people to explore their creativity, amplify their voice and develop their careers. Encapsulating the way that this was often about helping those that require support was the work of Joanne (Alacovska, 2020). As an arts education consultant, she told of the work she was doing at the time with a teenager who had recently been released from a mental health unit and had missed school, and how she was securing funding to help her develop her love for photography, gain accreditation and help her with her recovery. As a single mother of two, Joanne explained how her work provided her with an opportunity to contribute to others beyond her children that she had to devote so much of her time to. '*I love my job*' she said, because '*the work that I do has made a difference to people, a difference to people's lives*' (interview).

The enabling of others to find a creative outlet as a positive force in their lives was also at the heart of Ben's work as a musician. '*My being is music*', he said, '*but my passion is community music*' (interview). Running choirs was a big part of what he did and were, as he explained, as much about wellbeing as they were music. On the one hand, it was about bringing people together and creating community

through '*the power of music*' (Ben, interview) and creativity (Gauntlett, 2011). '*In a world that's really rather divided*' (interview), the shared experience of music was able to connect and bring people into conversation from different walks of life, transcending disagreements, politics and demographic differences and providing the foundation for respect and friendship. On the other hand, singing as part of a choir was also a means for individuals to find their creative spark, have a sense of achievement, and find emotional release. Reflecting on how far one of his choirs had come with many having never sung before they started, Ben reflected in one video diary how '*super proud*' he was now that they were able to sing beautifully in harmony, and the benefit it had for all of them:

> *'I've made some peoples days here and they've made my day as well because - a few months ago they couldn't do that and now they can, so I left there feeling very very happy. Very proud. Warm and fuzzy inside'* (Ben, video diary).

By bringing joy to others through their art forms, enabling others to discover the personal benefits of being creative and supporting and helping others through their work (Alacovska, 2020; Ateca-Amestoy *et al.,* 2016; Gauntlett, 2011; Wilson and Sharpe, 2017), these creative workers were able to contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of others. In turn, this enhanced their own enjoyment of their work as well as the sense of purpose that they derived from it, denoting the way that service to others can be an important dimension of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma and Wright, 2012; Lips-Wiersma, Wright and Dik, 2016). Whether through addressing problems or issues, offering art forms to be experienced, or by means of supporting and enabling creativity in others, making a positive difference to the wellbeing of those that used, consumed or engaged with their creative practice was a significant dimension of the creative labour of these workers. Although self-actualisation and fulfilment through pursuing a passion and achieving their potential was a fundamental characteristic of their work, the consideration of the wellbeing and happiness of others as evidenced here challenges the notion of this work as 'individualised', in the sense of self-centrism (Alacovska and Bissonnette, 2021; Alacovska, 2020; Banks, 2006; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009; Scharff, 2016).

The recognition of work

Positive feedback, praise and recognition from clients, customers and audiences, which disproportionately outweighed negative reactions and responses, was also observably important to their sense of being respected by others, which was the third and final dimension of social functioning analysed by this study, and one which again participants on the whole scored positively against (see **Figure 7.3**). Work is considered by Horgan (2021, p. 76) to be "the primary route through which we can gain recognition from others", but without the feedback of managers and peers and in the context of the unconventionality of their work, their self-belief was evidently vulnerable. Nevertheless, conveying an appreciation and acknowledgment of their ability and value in the domain of work, the 'appraisal respect' provided by those that engaged with their work played an important role in fostering self-esteem amongst these home-based, independent creative workers (Darwall, 1977; Grover, 2014; Hodson, 2001; Pierce and Gardner, 2004).
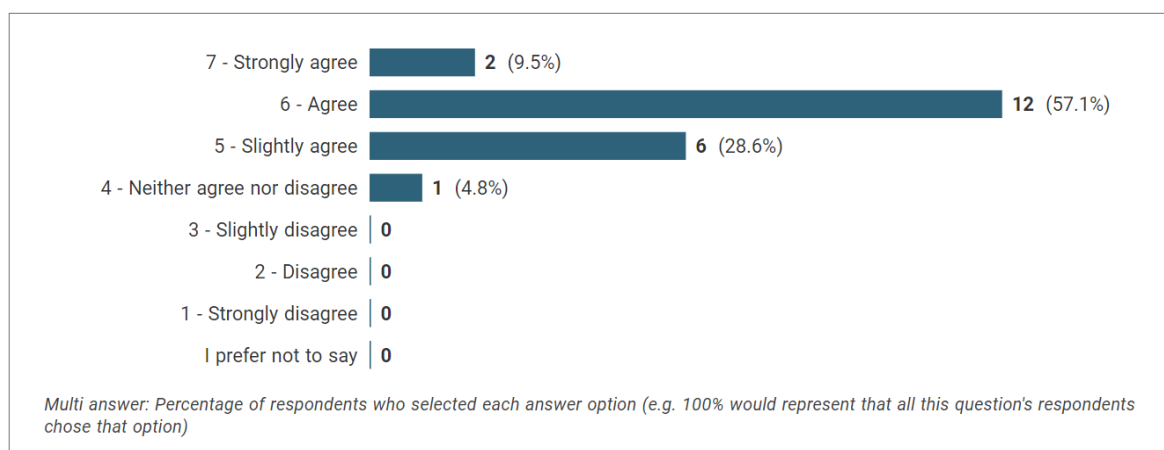
Figure 7.3. *The answers participants gave when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'People respect me'.*

Participants recounted how being told that their creative work was '*genius*' and '*brilliant*' (Dennis, interview) and exactly what was wanted by those that they did work for reinforced their confidence and sense of '*worth*' (Dennis, interview) and was the reason why they did it. '*I do get quite a bit of my self-esteem*' David S revealed, '*from the feedback others give me*' (interview), with the Facebook groups he organised around his photography workshops being a prominent source of this. Others too explained how getting repeat work, being recommended and being told by clients that they wanted to work with them again gave them '*courage and confidence*' (Lucy, interview) and made them '*feel useful*' (Steve, video diary). Their proximity and personal connection to their outputs, something which they felt working in an organisation did not offer, was seen to be a key part of this. Although they felt

respected by others, there was however an element of insecurity around this sense of being valuable and appreciated and suggestions of a reliance on affirmation from clients to this end. In her interview, Megan pointed out a little glass bottle on the end of her mantlepiece where in the past she had stored print outs of nice things people had said to remind herself on a bad day that '*people think you're quite good at this*' (interview). This vulnerability and the significant impact that positive comments from clients and audiences had on self-esteem was particularly acute for Lucy:

> '*… there's times when I'm like, 'oh, my God, everything's terrible. It's all falling apart. I'm, never gonna work again, everybody hates me'… Some days, I do wonder what on earth I'm doing - 'why am I doing this'. But then I get a reminder… Somewhere, somehow, something will drop out of all the things. Getting an email from someone that just says 'thank you very much for coming to our wedding and performing. You did a great job. Five out of five'. Pretty much 90%... 99% of the time, 'you did a good job'. So yeah, there's something about praise in there, as well, and being seen and being recognised*' (Lucy, interview).

An element of dependence on this praise and recognition from clients for their sense of being respected can be interpreted from some comments as being a result of the absence of managerial and peer relations, which can be important sources of appraisal respect (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997; Grover, 2014; Northouse, 2004). Such affirmation was said to be important to their sense of usefulness because of the temporariness of the projects they did, and the impact this had on feedback. In David S' opinion, being a self-employed creative can often leave you asking yourself whether '*anybody give[s] a s**t about what I'm doing*' (video diary) but drew attention to how it is '*contrasted on the other side of the spectrum with when you get amazing feedback or if you do amazing sales or if some amazing job happens*' (video diary). Arguably suggesting the significance of peers in the context of reassurance and acknowledgement, Rachel sought collaborations with other creatives as they helped to keep doubts about work at bay, and Ben joined a Jazz scene, because of its '*serious musicianship*' (interview), to seek out the affirmation he needed from respected musicians to truly feel satisfied with his work. The nature of creative work seemingly heightened this vulnerability, as the ebb and flow of self-doubt and feelings of imposter syndrome were seen as common to people in their '*kind of work*' (David S, interview) and as characteristic of '*artists' mentality*' (Natasha, interview).

Although participants did not explicitly say that it impacted their sense of self-worth, the unconventionality of what they did in comparison to normative understandings of what constitutes 'useful' and 'typical' work also fostered negative perceptions from some outside their world of work. Their work was thought to be underappreciated and underrated as if all they did was '*colour in and …*

charge loads of money for nothing' (David T, interview), and comments suggested that it could sometimes be hard for others to understand what it was that they did, and how doing work for respected organisations was an important form of validation. Although women-owned home-based businesses are understood to be at risk of being mistaken for hobby enterprises (Breen, 2010; Mikats, 2021), two male participants felt like their work was sometimes viewed as '*a bit of a hobby*' (Duncan, interview; Steve, interview) because of the leisure-like qualities of their work, and the fact that they worked for themselves and worked from home. Nevertheless, this was felt particularly strongly by Natasha after the stay of her mother-in-law, who she reflected '*definitely treated my job as a nuisance'* (video diary). When working in media as a freelancer without a studio or without being able to say that you work at a renowned place, your job is '*not respected*' or '*taken seriously*' and is instead seen as a '*bit of a hobby*' (video diary) she explained, highlighting the significance of organisational association as well as the difficulties others can face in recognising homeworking as 'work' (Ahrentzen, 1990; Mustafa and Gold, 2013).

Positive feedback from clients, customers and audiences is appraised here as being considerably important to their sense of recognition and respect in work and, in turn, helps to explain the overall positive feeling of respect from others that is recorded in their wellbeing assessment. However, their sense of being admired and appreciated in the domain of work, and by extension their self-esteem in this context, nevertheless appeared to be relatively vulnerable and reliant on the affirmation of clients. Absent from organisational structures these participants were without the feedback and encouragement of managers and peers (Baruch and Nicholson, 1997; Northouse, 2004), and the unconventionality of home-based, self-employed creative work could evidently foster negative misperceptions from others outside their world of work (Ahrentzen, 1990; Breen, 2010; Mikats, 2021; Mustafa and Gold, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter makes a novel contribution to the literature through its comprehensive investigation of the socialities of home-based individualised labour and its consideration of these experiences in the context of subjective wellbeing outcomes. In doing so, it critically assesses concerns regarding the potential isolation associated with working independently from home (Reuschke, 2019). The possibility of working at home alone and the absence of a fixed and regular group of co-workers and social office space commonly provided by organisational structures did render these self-employed homeworkers susceptible to social and to a lesser extent professional isolation. While strengthening the evidence that these working conditions render them vulnerable to these experiences (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Hislop *et al.,* 2015; Reuschke, 2019), issues of isolation

were fragmentary and minor rather than endemic and severe, were accompanied by positive experiences of working alone at home, and did not appear to adversely shape the social wellbeing of these workers.

Instead, participants widely reported positive social wellbeing across three metrics, and an analysis of the qualitative data appraises the dynamics of their working lives and the way they contribute to these outcomes. Supportive and rewarding relationships that satisfied the need for social interaction and that helped and assisted with work came from the work-home, co-working spaces and online communities, family, friends and local communities, and clients, co-workers and mentors. Achieved through the establishment of 'individualised' and alternative networks of social ties and spaces (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015), these socialities of independent homeworking often blurred the distinction between personal and professional. While mutual support was an attribute of many of these social spaces and connections, their flexibility and proximity to those at home as well as the social value of their creative work appeared to be the primary ways through which their work enabled them to contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others. Working independently from home in particular allowed parents to support, care and be around for their children, and the outputs and outcomes of their labour were a means through which they could contribute to the wellbeing of others beyond home. Providing joy, self-actualisation and support by addressing problems or issues, offering art forms to be experienced, and enabling creativity in others, this application and sharing of their skills enhanced their own enjoyment of their work and the sense of purpose that they derived from it. Finally, without the feedback and encouragement of managers and peers and in the context of the unconventionality of their work, the positive feedback, praise and recognition that they received from clients, customers and audiences was important to their self-esteem in work and in turn helps to explain their strong sense of being respected by others.

By critically considering the social spaces and networks that these workers relied on, sought out and maintained, a number of valuable inferences are made. Firstly, combining Fleuret and Atkinson's (2007) notion of the integrative space of rich social associations with the notion of work and home's social integration from boundary theory (e.g., Nippert-Eng, 2003), the chapter introduces the conceptualisation of the work-home as an integrative social space. It does so to draw attention to the way in which the combination and conflation of work and home life can facilitate the provision of support and care, the spending of quality time with home-others, and the opportunity for them to positively understand and engage with work, and as such both the work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment that it can enable (cf. McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015). However, with evidence that such a breakdown of boundaries between work and home life can see work's 'colonisation' of home life

(Mikats, 2021; Mould, 2018), the safeguarding of non-work time for these relationships nevertheless remains important.

Secondly, it supports the view that physical spaces and in-person interaction are of greater social value than virtual spaces and online communication (Bancou and Gabriagues, 2023; Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Daft and Lengel, 1986), and evidences that this differentiation is of significance with regard to social wellbeing. Promising and providing social interaction, professional support and a creatively inspiring environment, the draw of physical co-working spaces and the experience of those that participated in them highlights the benefits and desirability of working alongside and being physically proximate to others more directly involved in and understanding of one's work. Online communities and spaces of interaction, whilst providing the means to nurture and maintain valuable and beneficial relationships, were unable to entirely satisfy social needs and replicate the meaningfulness, immediacy and creativity of interaction and the embodied co-presence that physical colocation and face-to-face communication affords.

Thirdly, the chapter foregrounds the importance of individual agency in the cultivation of supportive and rewarding relationships and the creation of alternative yet fulfilling social worlds to counter the potential disconnection of individualised work (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015). This was particularly evident amongst 'lone' homeworkers, who had to account for the absence of home-based as well as work-based relationships. Rather than succumbing to the social and professional isolation of working independently from home, participants actively sought out co-working spaces and virtual communities and were determined in their establishment and commitment to individualised and unique networks of personal and professional relations that supported their social wellbeing (Larsen *et al.,* 2016; Wellman, 2001; 2002). While demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of the individual in this context and despite the potential benefits of this personalisation of social life, a precariousness and responsibility for one's own social welfare emerges, as does the necessity for strong and accessible social infrastructure (Latham and Layton, 2022).

Chapter Eight
Experiences of leisure and home

Attending to the third research question of the thesis, this chapter engages with the work-life boundary dynamics of home-based, self-employed creative work and the question of how it shapes the subjective wellbeing of these workers, specifically with regard to their leisure time and the emotional geographies of home. To this end, it presents and analyses data provided by the video diaries and the interviews on the effect of work on the emotional experiences of these 'non-work' domains and examines the answers participants gave in response to the single questionnaire item pertaining to their satisfaction with the amount of leisure time they had. As highlighted in chapter five, participants scored markedly lower on this measure in comparison to their satisfaction with other life domains, and the explanations that participants provided in the interviews are analysed to investigate why. Through these areas of inquiry, the chapter contributes to wider literature and discussions by addressing concerns that have been raised about the apparent integration of work with personal and non-work life as a result of flexible homeworking and the intrinsic satisfaction and mental porosity associated with creative labour, and the wellbeing consequences such integration could have (Mould, 2018; see also de Jager *et al.,* 2016). By explicitly examining the interconnection of emotions with the space of home, it also advances current understandings of the emotional geographies of homeworking and of home-based creative work in particular (Blunt and Dowling, 2022; Hawkins, 2017; Reuschke, 2019).

Turning first to *the psychological pervasiveness of work*, the premise and repercussions of nearly always being 'on' are considered, after which the use of *strategies for switching off* and managing this permeability and pervasiveness of work are presented. A consideration of creative work's possession of leisurely qualities then follows, outlining the existence of *work-as-leisure* and its provision of intrinsic benefits traditionally confined to leisure pursuits, along with a section qualifying *the limits of leisure-like work* that draws attention to the value of time taken away from work and leisure-like work's potential detraction from such disconnected leisure time. This focus on leisure continues in the consideration of the *(impeded) autonomy* that was experienced*.* Discussed here is the significance of having control over temporal segmentation/integration for leisure time satisfaction and how it can be undermined and challenged primarily by the precariousness and pressures of their work which, as discussed in the successive section, can be exacerbated by *the gendered demands of family life*.

The chapter then shifts its focus from leisure to the emotional geographies of home. Appraising concerns regarding flexible, home-based creative labour's disruption of the sanctuary of home, the means of *maintaining home's comforts* through practices of segmentation are analysed and juxtaposed against examples of *the symbiosis of work and home* in this context, which sheds light on the mutual enrichment of these domains as a result of their integration. The remaining subjects of interest then concern the dynamics and outcomes of prolonged periods of time spent at home, specifically the emergent *feelings of entrapment* and corresponding positive experiences of *getting out of the house* which together draw attention to the importance of regular environmental variation. The discussion then finishes by discussing obstacles that obstructed and obfuscated this need for environmental variation, such as the *impediment of home's comforts*.

The psychological pervasiveness of work

The notion of often being always 'on' when it came to flexible, home-based creative labour, as a result of complex negotiations of time and space and the blurring of work and leisure, was supported by the statements of 12 participants (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Florida, 2014; Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018). Only half of these participants though evidenced negative emotional experiences in the context of this apparent psychological 'porosity' and pervasiveness of work, and it did not appear to be exacerbated by the 'liquidity' of their creative work (Gold and Mustafa, 2013). The weak spatial and temporal boundaries of working independently from home were mainly responsible, leading to feelings of being unable to get away and recover from work, feelings of guilt when not working, and the '*constant worry when … dipping between work and home*' (Faye, video diary). The absence of temporal structures had an effect too, with a few stating that they missed the compartmentalisation and structure typically available to employees working a nine-to-five, five days a week job, particularly in the context of the stresses and anxieties of bringing in work and the mental '*burden*' (Natasha, interview) of there always being work that needed to be done. For Ben, the persistence of these worries and the challenge of having to '*learn how to switch off and … give yourself time off*', which he felt to be typical to '*the creative, self-employed condition*' (interview), were heightened further by his personal investment in his creative work:

> '*… all I'm doing is thinking about that at the moment. I'm thinking how am I going to make more money? How am I going to make … ends meet without going into employment? I have to innovate, I have to - and you never switch off really… Again, like I said, we're sensitive people. And when it's not working, we go, 'ah crap, what am I doing wrong?' This is affecting the thing that I care about most*' (Ben, interview).

The materialisation of ideas, questions, reminders, thoughts and opportunities pertinent to their creative work in typically 'non-work' contexts both in and outside of the home contributed to work always 'tigging' around in the mind and the subsequent challenge of switching off from it. As discussed by Mould (2018), coming up with an idea whilst you are praying, playing with your child or even dreaming is just as likely as coming up with an idea while 'at work' for those involved in flexible creative work. The incessance of such thoughts and their repercussions were felt particularly acutely by Natasha. Mirroring the lifestyle blogger studied by Mikats (2021) whose work 'colonised' her everyday life because of its centrality to her content creation, Natasha's work as a photographer and content creator similarly focused on her home and family life in a way that caused an '*unhealthy*' (video diary) inability to switch off and get away from work. '*When you're creating content, you are basically constantly working*' she said, as she told of '*the mental exhaustion that you get from constantly looking for a shot*' (interview), particularly when she was at home:

> *'I'll be sat down trying to rest and I'll be like, 'oh, if I move that there, and if I did that, then that would make a really good photo. So maybe I should try and do that tomorrow. Or I could do that now. The lights quite good. If I wait until three o'clock it's going to be too dark, I'd have to set up with this. If I want to do it with a tripod, then I need to make sure there's space for the tripod'. And it's this kind of constant planning'* (Natasha, interview).

'*Your brain never sleeps. I'm exhausted. I am phenomenally exhausted all the time'* (interview) she revealed when asked what impact this had on her, demonstrating the relationship between work-to-life integration and exhaustion as identified by Wepfer *et al.* (2018). However, the effect of this pervasiveness of creative thought on wellbeing was not widespread. Particularly prevalent amongst those whose occupations centred around art, craft, design and content creation, thoughts and ideas emerged for many other participants too when shopping, visiting museums, galleries and exhibitions, and encountering people and things when out and about as well as when watching television and films, being on social media and spending time with family. Ideas surfaced, problems were solved and connections for work were made in 'non-work time', for instance when showering, cooking, hoovering, relaxing in the living room and even sleeping in bed, but negative emotional repercussions were minimal, being only unwanted and causing of annoyance on occasion. While it might not be possible to claim that the pervasiveness of work in this way is exclusive to those in the creative industries, the '*playful thinking*' (Valerie, interview) that occurs when pre-occupied and away from one's workspace was considered important for the creative process, as has been suggested elsewhere (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Florida, 2002; Mould, 2018). Although conceding that it could be the reality

for anyone who is passionate about what they do, Faye believed that it was part and parcel of being a creative:

> '… if you're a creative, you're never not thinking… your job doesn't stop when you step out of the office, because it's still going around in your mind, especially if you've had a bad day creatively… you don't really ever switch off… And sometimes you need that change of environment to help you … I think when you are creative, it's important to have a bit of a... change. It's all part - it kind of comes with the job, I think (laughs) to be able to think, and be thinking about your work wherever you are' (Faye, interview).

The uniqueness of Natasha's experience could be attributed to the ceaselessness of work-related rumination given her continuous immersion within the spaces that are the content of her work, although others comparably felt that the concept of 'switching off' from work did not apply to their everyday experience. Sammy for instance, who was a writer whose work often had a strong personal element to it, questioned what 'off' meant when your freelance work relates to you the way hers did, but unlike Natasha her experience of always being 'on' in this way did not cause mental exhaustion. Natasha's exception is instead more likely to be born from the pressures placed on the need for such creative thought, particularly from the platform of Instagram which was fundamental to her work as an influencer and content creator. What had made her life very difficult, she explained, was the requirement to label as an advert any Instagram post that contained products she had been asked to promote. Not only did the platform's algorithm pressure her to post every day of the week to stay in the feeds of her followers and prevent them from unfollowing her, but the majority of her followers did not like adverts, which added further pressure on her to outweigh advert content with non-advert content at a ratio of around four-to-one. This demand for what she referred to as editorial work, exacerbated by the need to monetise her account through the posting of adverts, was, as she said, the work '*that just takes up so much space in my brain*' (interview). With limited control over her labour in this way as well as the pressure to make it work financially, the unique precariousness of her work as an influencer and content creator appeared to be a prominent factor in determining the detrimental nature of her experience (Conen and Schippers, 2019).

The notion of often being always 'on' as a result of the spatial conflation of work and home, the absence of temporal structures, the pressures of working for oneself, and the permeation of creative thought and its entanglement with everyday life rang true for a large number of participants. This work-to-life integration did in some cases cause negative emotional experiences, although this was not to the extent that was perhaps anticipated (Mould, 2018). Of particular significance, the ebb and

flow of creative thought that was intractable and unconfined to a specified realm of work was widely evident but did not exacerbate the negative emotional experiences that could accompany this psychological pervasiveness of work. The anomaly of one participant suggests that negative repercussions born from this dynamic would only materialise when compounded by highly intense pressures to create and limited control over the labour process in this regard. However, it is also worth noting how the pervasiveness of creative thinking was not necessarily as widespread and absolute as the literature suggests, given their descriptions of the potential indistinguishability of work and leisure, times and spaces, and all-encompassing lifestyles of creative experience and self-fulfilment (Florida, 2014; Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018). In the context of those critiques of Florida's homogenising of the creative class too (Banks, 2009), these dynamics appear to be primarily experienced by artists, craftspeople, designers and content creators; those who, it could be argued, find a greater amount of inspiration from the everyday life around them.

Strategies for switching off

Aiding the psychological management of work and plausibly limiting the adverse effects on mental and emotional states that always being 'on' appeared to be able to have, a large number of participants utilised an array of tactics and strategies to help them to switch off and take time away from work. As found in other studies investigating the boundary dynamics of self-employed homeworking (e.g., Mustafa and Gold, 2013; Sayah, 2013), they were not passive in their acceptance of the porosity of work, home and leisure, instead engaging in 'boundary work' to facilitate a degree of desired order and detachment (Nippert-Eng, 2003).

Natasha, who we have already established struggled with the burden of always thinking about work, spoke of her aspiration for a separate studio, which she felt would have helped her to separate work and home life, switch off and feel less mentally exhausted. Although nearly half of the participants who had designated workspaces were women, the impact of caring and domestic responsibilities on the possibility of such permanent segmentation for women, as identified elsewhere (Bain, 2004), was the reason why a designated studio was not feasible for her. However, the importance of the mental separation facilitated by creating designated workspaces was not as pronounced as previous research on homeworking practices might suggest (Ahrentzen, 1990; Mirchandani, 1998; Mustafa and Gold, 2013). Of the 13 participants that had dedicated and physically bounded offices or workspaces where work done at home was primarily 'contained', only four of them mentioned them as being beneficial in this regard.

Of prominence instead were the advantages of habits, activities, routines and rituals, which were evidenced in the video diaries and discussed in the interviews. Perhaps evidencing the impact of homeworking on the home as a 'non-capitalist sanctuary' (Mould, 2018, p. 36), getting out of the house whether to go to the gym, go for a walk, or to litter pick, forage, do photography, explore new places, run or take the dog for a walk, was a means of switching off from work, transitioning in and out of work, digitally disconnecting from work and becoming unreachable. However, getting out of the house was not a prerequisite for such switching off tactics, as they included getting lost in a book, doing housework, and even having a 'uniform' of hoodies that when removed would mark the end of the working day. Even though for some watching films triggered ideas and questions for work, those whose work was more detached from the creative labour behind such media found them to be a great way of switching off and removing them from their '*work mindset … especially when things are so busy*' (Emily, video diary). Writing to-do lists and dedicating time in the diary for specific tasks stopped them from occupying headspace, and work ideas and thoughts that would surface during non-work time would be noted down to be later addressed during work time.

The routines and rituals used to switch off from work were particularly well-developed for one participant. While making model kits was one thing that helped Mel to unwind, what stood out was what she referred to as her '*workday end routine*'; the purpose of which was, as she explained, to '*let my brain know … 'we're winding down now''* (video diary) and, importantly, prevent feelings of guilt when not working. The routine involved checking emails and setting up the next task for the following day, but also putting on a specific jazz playlist that, in contrast to the lo-fi music and movie soundtracks that she would listen to when working, helped to facilitate this transition. Moreover, on those occasions when she would watch a movie in her work room as she sometimes did on a Friday night or at the weekend, not only would she move her work stuff off the desk and out of sight, but she would also use her Philips Hue lights to change the lighting in the room. Just like with the different sonicscapes, she found these different colourscapes to be really helpful as a trigger for her '*to know that this is a different time and this is a different atmosphere*' (interview).

In addition to these transitionary practices, making sure she was efficient with her work time was also important in preventing feelings of guilt when she was not working. Mel achieved this by organising her work tasks around the regular ebb and flow of her creativity; doing her admin, research and learning in the morning so that she could focus on her creative work from mid-afternoon onwards when she felt that part of her brain was more active. She also put in place a number of parameters and strategies to get the most out of every hour worked, which included minimising distractions from emails by only having them open at particular times, practising the Pomodoro Technique, using an app on her computer that makes her take set breaks, and taking time when necessary to evaluate how

things were going, particularly when it came to problem solving. Increasing her productivity in this way meant she found in easier to relax at the end at the end of the day, having had felt that she had done enough work.

It is contended here that the implementation of these strategies by the participants to help them to switch off from work could in part have limited the negative emotional experiences that were associated with the psychological pervasiveness of work (Mould, 2018; Wepfer *et al.,* 2018). Given the weak spatio-temporal boundaries of independent homeworking and the pervasiveness of creative thinking, these examples of 'boundary work' (Nippert-Eng, 2003), which notably did not centre around the creation of spatially separated workspaces (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1990; Mirchandani, 1998; Mustafa and Gold, 2013), were used to retain a degree of segmentation (see also Mustafa and Gold, 2013; Sayah, 2013).

Work-as-leisure

Another reason why the blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work life and its consequences for switching off from work did not have any widespread adverse emotional repercussions could be the experience of work-as-leisure. As discussed in chapter six, the participants' creative practices were personally enriching, fulfilling and pleasurable, and in this way creative work can be interpreted as possessing leisurely qualities. In line with observations already made of the creative and knowledge industries (Banks, 2009; Gill, 2007; Lash, 1994; Lewis, 2003), these instrumental tasks undertaken for the purpose of generating income came to provide levels of satisfaction and intrinsic benefits traditionally confined to leisure pursuits (Adorno, 1994; Smith *et al.,* 2022). In doing so, it could be argued, they did not need to be managed or balanced with 'non-work' time and activities to the same extent.

Arguably reducing the need for and importance of designated leisure time was work's at least partial provision of that 'release' and enjoyment that leisure is often positioned or assumed to fill. Even though some isolated comments suggested work commitments could detract from the leisurely qualities of the activities in question, participants on the whole expressed the intrinsic benefits of their leisure-like work. In addition to those descriptions of work as being fun, playful, satisfying and intimately tied to things that the participants loved to do, there were comments that demonstrated how this experience of work blurred the boundaries between work and leisure. Sammy, who was a writer, enjoyed writing 'her own stuff' and reading in her leisure time, and others too remarked that the things that they often did in their spare time were the same things that he did in their work. Stephen, a musician, considered his evening jazz gig to be an opportunity to switch off from the 'grind'

of his desk work, suggesting a differentiation between admin-as-work and music-as-leisure, which was a distinction made of creative work that was echoed elsewhere in the sample. Even in the face of particularly acute financial and creative pressures and constraints that have been found within other research to inhibit work from feeling leisurely (Falcão, Gomes and Spracklen, 2022; Thompson, Parker and Cox, 2016), Natasha too experienced similar pleasures, particularly because of the embeddedness of her creative practice within typical leisure activities. After a day spent with her family having tractor rides, carving pumpkins, making pumpkin pie and going on a long walk through the woods for a photoshoot, she left the following reflection in her video diary:

> *'Although it has been really full on, and I've just spent the last three hours editing which has been quite tiring, just having an opportunity to be outside like that and to work but not feel like you're working and to be able to have fun with the children. You know, once we have those shots that we need, it's just all about having fun. That's what's so nice about this job'* (Natasha, video diary).

As activities that are unrestrained and chameleonic in their common mobilisation as both jobs and pastimes, the participants acknowledged that what they might call work were things that others might do for leisure and how, if for whatever reason they could not do it for their job, they would do in their own leisure time. Exhibiting a disintegration of distinct cultural constructions regarding work and leisure (Nippert-Eng, 2003), the dichotomy of work and leisure was felt by a few to be inapt in describing and defining their everyday experience and a handful of participants described their work as their hobby. As Duncan put it:

> *'Isn't the best business, the one that is your hobby? You know… 'the best job is the one that doesn't feel like a job''* (Duncan, interview).

Alison, for instance, whose work as an artist was very much indistinguishable from her home, relationships, pastimes and even her sense of self, found this to be an overwhelmingly positive and a nice thing. An example of extreme integration and someone who is "one amorphous self" that experiences everything as multipurpose and part of "one giant category of social existence" (Nippert-Eng, 2003, p. 266), she explained how her 'work', essentially, is '*just one part of my world that I happen to be paid for*' (interview). Arguably an example of a "creative being" as identified by Florida (2002, p. 171) – of the indistinguishable amalgamation of work and leisure under a life of creative experience – there was, undoubtedly, an obvious sense of harmony that came across in the way she recounted the fundamentalism of her creativity to her whole life.

Connecting these discussions of the experience of work-as-leisure to the limited impact of often always being 'on' when it came to work, there was evidence too that this enjoyment of work applied to the creative thinking that occurred during 'non-work' time. By reducing the contrast between the two domains of work and leisure in this way, the greater ease and comfort of the transition into and out of a work mindset, according to the understandings of boundary theory (Clark S.C., 2000; Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000), renders unproblematic the weaker boundaries associated with the pervasiveness of creative thought. The need to '*care about something else and switch off from the day to day*' (interview) of work, to quote David T, is no longer an imperative. As a concept artist who worked in the production of films, Mel loved watching things to see how others solved design problems and would actively try to watch films that she considered '*visually enriching*' (interview) in this regard. '*I love learning*' she explained; '*I will watch something and then I will go on Internet Movie Database and I will read the trivia to try and understand and find out all the cool stuff about how something worked'* (interview)*. Rather than detracting from the pleasure of a customary pastime, this professional interest and opportunity to develop her understanding of her field actually enhanced her enjoyment of TV series and films (cf. Ciolfi and Lockley, 2018). A dynamic that was echoed by others, the more she worked in TV and film the more it opened up her '*understanding*' and '*appreciation*' (interview) of such productions and it amazed and excited her about all the stuff she could work on. Similarly for Rachel, the emergence of creative ideas were often positively received especially during the brainstorming stage of a project, and the ideas that Elizabeth got for the characters of her bears, which came from anywhere and from any objects, fabrics, colours or people, were described by her as being 'inspirational'. An emotion which Elizabeth experienced 'extremely' frequently (5/5), feelings of inspiration were relatively common amongst the participants of the study (see **Table 5.3**).

In keeping with the predictions of Mould (2018) and Hawkins (2017) and in line with Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva's (2019) calls for work-life boundaries research to consider a broader notion of life that encompasses the domain of hobbies, the porosity of work and leisure, while not necessarily indistinguishable, was a notable dynamic of creative work for many participants. Yet rather than being detrimental to their wellbeing, the resultant experience of work-as-leisure can be interpreted as providing some of the intrinsic benefits associated with the domain of leisure and reducing the necessity of 'non-work' time in this regard (see also Banks, 2009; Gill, 2007; Lash, 1994; Lewis, 2003). Moreover, by reducing the contrast between the two domains of work and leisure, it can also be contended that this dynamic minimises the negative repercussions caused by the porosity of work and non-work time (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000), and in doing so helps to further explain the absence of negative emotional experiences associated with the pervasiveness of creative thinking.

The limits of leisure-like work

While work can offer experiences often attributed to leisure, there was evidence that the leisure-like qualities of work could detract from disconnected leisure time which was still of value, and as a result have a negative effect on the satisfaction that participants reported regarding the amount of leisure time they had. Fundamental to the notion of leisure is the allowance of "the individual to psychologically detach from conventional work" (Smith *et al.,* 2022, p. 563), and comments made by participants suggested that non-work time to juxtapose against work was still important, challenging Florida's (2002; 2014) depiction of the work-leisure divide as being absorbed under one singular lifestyle of creativity for those in the creative industries. Now that what was once his hobby was his job, Daniel wished for something other than his work to have as a dedicated pastime, while David S acknowledged the importance of his role as a husband and a father in counterbalancing his hobby-as-work and preventing him from working all the time which, he admitted, would not be '*very good mentally*' (interview) for him. Four participants explained how their positive sense of satisfaction with the amount of leisure time they had was underpinned by the availability of non-work time as a result of a 21-30 hour working week or the absence of a daily commute, while another stated that it was conditional on the juxtaposition of work and leisure (see also Binder, 2018; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020).

This acknowledgement of the necessity of time away from work for some does not necessarily undermine the wellbeing benefits of experiencing work-as-leisure. However, there was evidence that leisure-like work could negatively affect satisfaction with the amount of leisure time. Providing evidence in support of van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld's (2018, p. 84) suggestion that "limited boundaries between work and leisure" could impact leisure satisfaction, the 'draw' created by the pleasure, satisfaction and enjoyment of such work, in some cases compounded by the absence of temporal boundaries, could detract from and impinge upon leisure time that was distinct and disconnected from work. As can be seen in **Figure 8.1**, a significant number of participants said they felt to some extent dissatisfied with their amount of leisure time. Five participants explained that a contributing factor to this was the way that work could be prioritised over things such as exercise, personal life and time off because of getting '*carried away*' (Stephen, interview) and enjoying work, because of its own value for mental health, and because of its importance to their sense of purpose, meaning and worth. As was with the case of Ben, these intrinsic benefits could combine with other factors, such as concerns about making money and a constant self-questioning about how much time to dedicate to innovation, development and growth, to see work encroach on the free time that he valued so much.
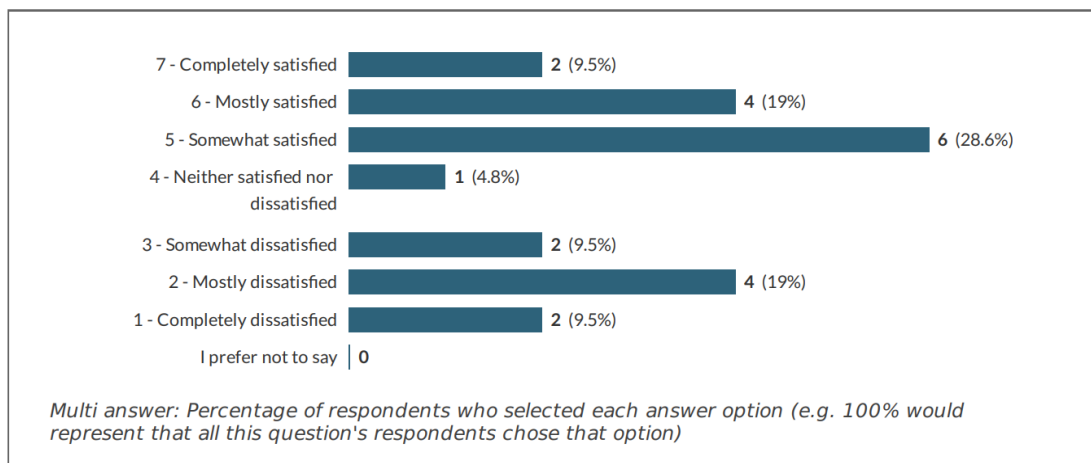
Figure 8.1. *The answers participants gave when asked how dissatisfied or satisfied they were with the amount of leisure time they have.*

Nonetheless, rational decisions based on the wellbeing 'trade-off' between the pleasures of work and the pleasures of taking time off were part of many of these choices. '*Because... I've got ideas going around in my head, and I want to get them down and I want to get them created, that stops me doing more leisure things*' (interview) said Elizabeth, as she told how her seemingly unabating desire to implement and materialise the ideas that came from '*anywhere or anything*' (interview) did have a negative impact for how satisfied she was with the amount of leisure time she had. This, she assured though, was not an example of work-life conflict; the enjoyment of bringing designs to life simply triumphed over any preference to take time off, join her walking group, take her camera into the woods, or to stop for lunch. Even when she had a studio outside in the garden in a previous house, she could not keep herself away from her work, and questioned why she even had a lounge because she was never in there. '*Wherever that fabric is, that's where I am*' (interview), she said, illustrating the affinity she had with her creative practice and the draw that it created.

As mentioned in the literature review of this thesis, the shift towards work as being the primary source of meaning and happiness has been found to correspond with a sequential downturn in the home and the wider non-work domain's provision of these wellbeing-enhancing attributes (Hochschild, 1997). Rather than observing such a displacement of pleasures from one domain to the other, the findings of this research moderate these perceived benefits of work-as-leisure by demonstrating how it can be constrained in its satisfaction of leisure needs. The experience of work-as-leisure can be a valuable source of pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction. Yet rather than seeing a breakdown of a distinction between work and leisure (Florida, 2002; 2014), leisure remains to have value through a detachment from work which, as understood by the effort-recovery model, is key to their recovery from the exertion and effort of work (Meijman and Mulder, 1998; Sonnentag and Fritz, 2007; Sonnentag, 2003).

While the experience of work-as-leisure can help provide some of the intrinsic benefits often subscribed to leisure activities, the draw of these very same leisurely qualities can negatively affect satisfaction with the amount of leisure time participants had as a result of its prioritisation over leisure time spent disconnected from work. In doing so, these findings go some way in substantiating propositions about the negative effect that the absence of boundaries between work and leisure can have for leisure satisfaction (van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018).

(Impeded) autonomy

The autonomy over time and flexibility for personal life that is a key characteristic of self-employment and homeworking was pronounced within the accounts of the study's participants (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; Collins, Cartwright and Hislop, 2013; Hundley, 2001; Joyce *et al.,* 2010). Upon being asked to explain their scores regarding their satisfaction with the amount of leisure time, it also emerged as the most prominent factor behind the positive responses to this measure amongst the sample (see **Figure 8.1**; see also Reuschke, 2019). In addition to the weak work-leisure boundaries of creative labour though, the demands and responsibilities of self-employment also emerged from these accounts as the primary explanation given for the dissatisfaction with this domain that was reported by other participants. Together, these tensions between the autonomy and precariousness of their labour in large part explain the broader spectrum of leisure time satisfaction amongst the sample (see **Figure 8.1**) and the greater dissatisfaction with this life domain in comparison with others, and in doing so supports the propositions of van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld (2018) to this end.

Echoing common discourses on the subject, autonomy over their time was seen as a key '*perk*' (Rachel, video diary) of being self-employed and working from home and helped them to achieve the '*work-life balance*' (Sammy, video diary) that they wanted. As six participants revealed, it was this characteristic of their work that contributed to their positive sense of satisfaction with their amount of leisure time that they reported. Although weak temporal work boundaries did in some cases contribute to issues of switching off and taking time away from work, they stated that this flexibility provided them with the freedom to capitalise on opportunities to do things which were important to them, that they loved, enjoyed and valued, and which put them in a good frame of mind and supported their mental health. This included things like seeing friends and partners, doing exercise, hobbies, classes and other ventures and resting as well as getting housework and shopping done during the day which helped them to strike a healthy balance and free up time in the evening to have off and relax with others. This freedom to prioritise her needs was what Lucy '*valued more than anything else*' (interview).

On the other hand, three participants mentioned that a greater structure and routine regarding the demarcation of work and non-work time positively contributed to their satisfaction with the amount of leisure time that they had. Provided with the autonomy to enact their preference of boundary segmentation rather integration (Allen, Cho and Meier, 2014; Ammons, 2013; Kreiner, 2006), some participants established relatively strong temporal boundaries to define and secure leisure time at weekends and in the evenings during the week too to achieve this satisfaction. For example, a four-day working week helped Valerie to safeguard her time and wellbeing outside of work, work-free and screen-free Saturdays were key to rest and rejuvenation and the sustainability of fresh ideas for Mel, and David T's strong boundaries were about prioritising time spent with his daughter and having a full weekend to '*use or waste as I see fit*' (interview), which was really important to him. Although not specified by them as affecting their satisfaction with their amount of leisure time, Sammy and Rachel found that they benefited from the regularity of their partners' return home from work in reminding them to stop work.

The leisure time benefits of the temporal autonomy offered by self-employed homeworking though did not materialise for everyone, with six participants explaining that the demands, insecurities and socio-structural constraints that were placed on their time by their work were the reason behind their dissatisfaction with their amount of leisure time. Many of the demands that were observed here as having such repercussions for leisure time were also those that are perhaps more acute in the context of self-employment. Increasing their working hours and impacting their autonomy over these hours was the compounding of different deadlines, jobs and businesses, the demands of clients and contracts, a sense of personal responsibility, the pressure to earn, and the need to capitalise on work opportunities due to job uncertainties, precarities and fluctuations. Sole responsibility for work and consequential '*guilt*' (Rachel, interview) got in the way of holidays, and a dependence on family members to help with work required the use of typical leisure times such as weekends and evenings as a result of their own work commitments. The precariousness of their work and their personal responsibility for their business, it seems, could detract from leisure and rest (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018).

Conditions that they considered to be more specific to their creative labour were said to be responsible too. Along with the unpredictability of task lengths associated with creativity, these conditions intersected with the pressures of self-employment, such as the '*dearth of work*' (video diary) in the creative industries that saw David S work particularly long hours at the time due to the uncertainties of continuous employment. Despite the advantages that came with working 'off-peak' in the entertainment industry, regularly having to work when the majority of people take time off as you are the '*one everyone's come to see*' (interview), reinforced by a similar need to capitalise on work

opportunities, meant Dennis missed out on things to do, often with others. The impact of some of these work pressures on dissatisfaction with the amount of leisure time were further exacerbated for a few by the weak spatial and temporal boundaries of self-employed homeworking, further evidencing the effect of weak work-life boundaries to this end (van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). Juxtaposed against those that benefited from the autonomy it offered, the temporal flexibility and the spatial conflation of work and home could result in working late, getting distracted and not taking breaks or relaxing in the evening. Striving to better cope with the compromising pressures of work by creating stronger spatio-temporal boundaries and placing a greater distance between work and home, two participants spoke of their desire for external workspaces, whether in the form of a studio or a co-working space, to help address this problem.

While control over when they worked benefited the leisure time satisfaction of eight participants, the effect of work pressures, demands and conditions primarily associated with self-employment, sometimes worsened by weak spatio-temporal work boundaries born from self-employed homeworking, saw work 'take over' to the detriment of such satisfaction for six participants. In doing so, it demonstrates the tensions between the autonomy and the insecurity of self-employment and the way they affect the relationship between work and life and subsequently leisure time satisfaction (de Jager *et al.,* 2016; Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). Together with repercussions of blurred boundaries between work and leisure and the impact of weak spatio-temporal work boundaries, these findings also to an extent validate Mould's (2018) concern regarding the consequences that these dynamics of home-based, flexible creative labour could have for leisure.

The gendered demands of family life

Combining with the pressures of work to further impinge upon leisure time, cause conflict and become burdensome were responsibilities for children. As a space of domestic unpaid labour, the practice of working from home brings business commitments into close proximity with the demands of the household and of family life, which continue to fall primarily on the shoulders of women (Jupp *et al.* 2020; McMunn *et al.* 2020). Amongst the participants that had children, this effect of family life on satisfaction with the amount of leisure time appeared in the study to be predominantly felt by women.

Self-employed homeworking can allow for the productive combination of paid and unpaid work (Gold and Mustafa, 2013), and women in this study did take advantage of such 'polychronic regimes' to get chores done during the working day to the benefit of leisure time. Two women that still had children living at home though were the only two that said that they were 'completely dissatisfied' with their

amount of leisure time, and the compounding of work and family obligations appeared to be a prominent factor that influenced this outcome. Participating in the study to tell the story of what it is like to be a lone parent who works from home and runs their own business, Joanne told of the way that the absence of a co-parent to support her combined with her '*quite pressurised*' and '*all consuming*' (interview) job to take up the majority of her time, leaving little space left for leisure. For Natasha, the way she described the difficulty of balancing work and family responsibilities that she saw as being an expectation placed on her as a woman can also be interpreted as contributing to her dissatisfaction. Occupying her life to the extent that her role as a content creator and her role as a mother and housewife competed for her time and attention, she was left unable to pursue her love of music and get more involved in the church community, two things which were of great importance to her.

Along with Joanne and Natasha, one father – Duncan – also explained that the constraints of having children negatively affected his satisfaction with the amount of leisure time that he had. Demonstrating a differently gendered relationship to the responsibilities of family life though, it was the unfairness of leaving his wife at home with the children that was the problem, as it meant that he was no longer able to go on cycling trips in Europe with friends nor go out in the evenings. Although limited to only these examples in this research, the ramifications that the labour of both employment and childcare can have on leisure time when homeworking, particularly for women, have been observed elsewhere. Hilbrecht *et al.* (2008, p. 454), for example, ascertained from their study of teleworking mothers that the "different temporal demands of motherhood and employment resulted in little opportunity for personal leisure" and that the time saved from not commuting was "reallocated to caregiving, housework or paid employment rather than to time for their self." More profoundly, it has been remarked how living for and supporting the subjectivity of others, whether it be husbands or children can, in this way, suspend the possibility of self-realisation for women (Horgan, 2021; Young, 1997).

The absence of strong boundaries separating work from home as a consequence of self-employed homeworking saw home life cause distractions and disruptions to work for participants that were both parents and non-parents. Such issues arising from this interplay of work and home life were however more acute for those with children. The challenges of juggling work and family responsibilities are clearly not exclusively experienced by those working for themselves from home, but comments made suggested that such proximity and structurelessness amplified these issues. Duncan spoke of the '*frustrating*' (video diary) disruptions caused by family that had become more frequent since working from home despite the benefits of having a home office in the garden, but the wellbeing consequences were once more primarily experienced by women. For Faye and Joanne, the 'lurching' back and forth

between the roles, headspaces and tasks of both work and family life – which Faye, echoing Natasha, perceived as a responsibility that was placed on her specifically as a woman – were exacerbated by the absence of both spatial and temporal boundaries and led to them feeling frantic, stressful, mentally exhausted and stretched. Without the work domain being to some extent located 'out there' within an affiliated organisational space, they did not experience the "ontological limbo of being neither here nor there" (Tietze and Musson, 2005, p. 1344), but nevertheless endured the psychological exhaustion of continuous unabating transitions between roles.

Natasha, on the other hand, experienced a greater level of conflict between the two. Describing the relationship between her job as a content creator and her job as a mother and housewife as a constant battle that resulted in never feeling content and always feeling guilty and tired, she echoed stories discovered elsewhere of difficulties trying to successfully fulfil both work and home roles (e.g., Mikats, 2021; Tietze and Musson, 2010). Despite choosing a career which she had thought would allow her to balance the two, the lack of capacity she had to give her creativity the selfishness it needed to progress to the level she would like to, because of housework and childcare demands, left her feeling dissatisfied with her work. '*Sometimes I'd like to pack it all in and just be a full time mum*' (video diary) she said, reflecting on the situation of not having enough time to fulfil these two roles in the way she wanted to, '*but kids need clothes, and I need to use my brain*' (video diary). Being a mother was, along with her faith, the most important thing in her life, but the pressure to earn and build a career to support the family financially meant work had to take priority.

While not confined solely to the experiences of women, these stories highlight the wellbeing implications that responsibilities of family life can have for female home-based self-employed workers in particular. Although enabling the effective completion of household chores that benefited some women (see also Gold and Mustafa, 2013), the childcare needs that fell on the shoulders of others, compounded with the demands of work, underpinned the leisure time dissatisfaction that was acutely experienced by some women (see also Hilbrecht *et al.,* 2008; Young, 1997). Furthermore, the challenges of juggling and transitioning between these work and family responsibilities, particularly in the context of weak spatial and temporal boundaries between work and home, also resulted in psychological exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.

Maintaining home's comforts

Central to Mould's (2018, p. 36) reservations about flexible, home-based creative labour's spatial unboundedness, precarity, and entanglement with non-economic life is the way it could see work colonise, erode and dismantle the home as "an important geographical, emotional and psychological space of non-capitalist sanctuary." As asserted by Reuschke (2019), a consideration of the interrelationship between wellbeing and place is significant for research interested in the implications of individualised home-based work, which this thesis now turns its attention to by considering the emotional geographies of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022). Related to this concern regarding the possible impact that work's conflation with home life can have on the home as a space of relaxation, rejuvenation and comfort is the observed reduction in recovery activities and subsequent exhaustion caused by work-to-life integration (Wepfer *et al.,* 2018). The potential undermining of home's emotional geographies though is more directly indicated in the understanding of how unpaid domestic work can undermine the home-as-sanctuary for women who predominantly bear this responsibility (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), as well as studies that have alluded to the effect that homeworking can have on the ability to rest and relax at home (Goodwin *et al.,* 2021; Houweling, Power and Smith, 2022).

This compromising of the haven-like and restorative qualities of the home by the practice of home-based, self-employed creative work, despite the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure and the pervasiveness of creative thought, was not evident. In fact, home was observed for a number of participants in the study to still be a place to relax, unwind and feel grounded. Mirroring the dynamics that have been recognised as underpinning the experience of home as a place of respite and rejuvenation for those whose work is geographically separate from home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), this reality was expressed by some to be dependent on regular opportunities to leave the house for work. Not only did this lead to feelings of contentment with working from home, but it allowed the home to feel like the '*haven*' (Emily, interview), '*base*' (Stephen, interview) and sanctuary that they wanted it to. After days spent out working, the home provided comfort, an escape from their work and the outside world, and a space where they could feel '*refreshed*', '*relaxed*' and be in their '*own mind*' (Dennis, video diary). Further suggesting the significance of these regular work opportunities to leave the house, Daniel's relationship to his home as a sanctuary because of his external acting, voiceover and supplementary nannying work was not so readily shared by his partner with whom he lived, as she nearly always worked from home. This significance of working away from home to the experience of home-as-haven could be interpreted as being about the juxtaposing of home in opposition to work, and the maintenance of the home as a place "to which one withdraws and from which one ventures forth" (Tuan, 1971, p. 189).

The process of resisting the spatial domination that can come with homeworking through the reclamation of home spaces from work, as propounded by Wapshott and Mallett (2012), was also apparent in several examples as participants described the enactment of boundaries and transitions within the home-space to retain the home as a place of relaxation. Rather than being "passive victims of the importation of external capitalist power" (Wapshott and Mallett, 2012, pp. 73-74), the putting of materials and objects of work away at the end of the day, the zoning of the spaces of home and the creation of home offices and designated workspaces where it could be left, and the effective temporal management of work all helped to enable the home to be a place where they could both work and relax. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were suggestions that restrictions in the size of the physical space available could hinder the enactment of boundaries and the achievability of work and home life's separation if desired. Before her and her partner moved into their own place, Rachel lived in a house share where having to fit everything into a bedroom meant it was difficult to ever get away from work in this way. Daniel too, despite relating to his home as a refuge from work, found being confined to two rooms when renovating his home to at times cause frictions that prevented home from being a '*calm space*' (interview).

Particularly illustrative of the importance of having the means to spatially organise and separate work when needed, and in particular the significant role of independence and home-others to this end, was Dennis' account of his contrasting experiences of two different living arrangements. When he lived with his parents, Dennis recollected how, after returning back from tours or performances as an entertainer, there was really no way for him to settle as it was not his place. Turning up at his mum and dad's house with a cluttering array of unicycles, stilts and other props, he was unable to return home and relax after work. But when he was able to move out with his partner, things changed. Now with his '*own space*' (Dennis, video diary) he had the freedom to invest in those things like a nice sofa and a nice TV that made it easier for him to relax, but of equal importance was the fact that his partner was also an entertainer. With the clear 'other-domain awareness' that comes with being in the same industry (Clark S.C., 2000), they were both at ease with the way that work would often spill out into their home as they organised equipment, built and mended props or designed costumes ahead of jobs, and there was a mutual understanding that they would '*eventually get it back to a nice state*' (interview) together. As a result of this harmony, their home, he explained, would transform back and forth between being '*a place we can just plan out ideas*' and '*a calm environment when we need it*' (interview).

In addition to these instances where home retained its comforts through its managed separation from work, there were also two cases where such boundaries were not felt to be necessary nor needed. When Lucy worked as an employee at a recruitment firm and Steve was in property investment, home

played the traditional role of being a place to '*decompress*' (Lucy, interview) after work and be a '*sanctuary*' (Steve, interview) to come back to. Perhaps in line with the prevalence of work-as-leisure as discussed earlier in this chapter, their greater sense of satisfaction and enjoyment of work since starting their own creative businesses, they stated, meant they no longer needed the home to fulfil this role. In other words, this juxtaposition of home against work was no longer an imperative. '*I relax here fine*' Steve told me; '*I don't really need a sanctuary now. I just need a home, which is nicer*' (interview).

To conclude, concerns of negative emotional experiences of home being caused by home-based, flexible creative labour did not materialise (Mould, 2018), with a number of participants in the study still experiencing the home as a therapeutic space where they could relax and rejuvenate and benefit from its provision of comfort and sanctuary (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Gesler, 1992; 2003). This was however due largely to the continued separation of work from the space of the home in some way, either as a result of regular opportunities during the week to leave the house for work purposes and the consequent juxtaposition of the home against work, or through practices of boundary enactment and its prevention of work's complete or permanent colonisation of home (Wapshott and Mallett, 2012). By explicitly considering the emotional geographies of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), these findings challenge this aspect of Mould's (2018) proposition regarding the potential of work-life integration and its wellbeing repercussions for these workers, and the potential for homeworking to undermine the home as a place of rest and respite that has been alluded to in other studies (Goodwin *et al.,* 2021; Houweling, Power and Smith, 2022). However, it continues to reinforce the significance that has been placed within the geographies of home literature on a degree of segmentation between home and work in this regard (Blunt and Dowling, 2022).

The symbiosis of work and home

Positive, wellbeing-enhancing experiences of both work and home however were not solely determined through their separation. Echoing research that has similarly noted the conduciveness of home to feelings of comfort and a reduction in stress in the context of work (Goodwin *et al.,* 2021; Gregg, 2011; Madsen, 2018) and the way in which the home can be an emotionally safe environment (Donovan and Williams, 2016), the comforts of home were supportive of the positive everyday experience of work. However, the meanings and comforts of home were also enhanced by their practice of home-based work, exhibiting the greater enrichment and engagement with non-work domains of life that can accompany such integration (Edwards and Rothbard, 1999; Kreiner, 2006; McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015; Powell and Greenhaus, 2010).

Arguably an example of a 'holding environment' aiding them in the emotional management of their independent work (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019), being in their own space and being surrounded by their own things made participants feel safe, comfortable and relaxed as home was a cosy, calm and positive place to work from and take breaks in, particularly when work was stressful or monotonous. For two participants, the "supportive symbolic ecology" of their homes and the way it reflected their "essential traits and values" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 142), as well as the comfort and privacy that they provided, supported them in their performance and enactment of the emotional labour of their creative practices and the production of expressive and self-defining work (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019). Because of the expressiveness and affectivity inherent to her writing, Sammy said that she found it to be easier and better when done from home, as it was the space of safety and support that she required and it also provided her with the solitude and freedom to rest when she needed it (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). '*If I was … crying, for example, I can cry my f**king eyes out at home, it's not a problem*' (interview) she said, demonstrating how personal and emotively charged her work can be, and why she needed her own personal space in which to express and engage with herself truthfully and honestly.

The way that Sammy's home reminded her who she was also helped her to do her best creative writing, particularly the self-reflective non-fiction work that she was focusing on at the time. '*Like, you would never see … a hot desking studio for artists*' (interview) she suggested, considering the significant connection between creative work and personal space for others, '*because a huge amount of … who you are … transfers on to your work*' (Sammy, interview). One artist involved in the study discovered this for herself. Everyone in Alison's family, including herself, were collectors of things; whether it be their art or the art of other people, objects associated with each of their fascinations, or their obsession with books. '*It's kind of a museum*' (interview) she laughed, of things they had accumulated over their lives, and which supported her in her art through the inspiration they provided. As important to her as a source of inspiration as getting out and seeing the world, not having this personal museum and the meaningful materiality of her home '*on tap*' (interview) when she was moving house and when she had a separate studio, was something she found very frustrating.

In return, there were instances where the meanings and comforts of home were enhanced by the practice of homeworking and the presence of work within the home. Compared to when she used to be based in an office, Valerie found that being able to do household chores during the day when having a break from work resulted in a greater sense of homeliness as both her and her husband were able to relax more in the evenings instead of having to tidy the kitchen and do housework late at night like they used to. Reversing the negative impact that working away from home can have on one's sense of home (Varley and Blasco, 2000), and revealing a sense of home that extended beyond the house to

encompass the wider space of the village (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), Steve felt more 'at home' since starting his home-based business because of the greater sense of belonging and connection to the local area and community that it facilitated. '*I only used to turn up here to go to sleep and then I used to bugger off again*' (interview) Steve said, as he reflected on how things used to be back when he was in the corporate world; '*I didn't actually know anybody in the village, or my neighbours, or anything like that*' (interview). Now spending so much more of his time at home because of his work though, he found himself to be much more embedded within village life and found the meaning and experience of being at home to be positively enhanced as a result.

Pertinent to the question of what role home-based creative practices might play in the making and un-making of home (Hawkins, 2017), the entanglement and presence of creative work within the home of five participants enhanced their sense of comfort and feelings of attachment to the space because of its importance to their sense of self and what they loved. Rather than detracting from the happiness and meaning of home (Hochschild, 1997), the personal value of their creative work heightened the home as an embodiment of them and as the nexus of their 'being' – of the home as a centre of individual significance (Relph, 1976) – through its colocation alongside other things that mattered to them the most. In the case of Natasha, the centrality of her home life to her work as a content creator enabled her to invest both time and money into her home in a way that she had never been able to do before, creating the first home they had lived in where she had '*felt completely at home*' (interview), and one which filled her with a great sense of pride, excitement and joy. Creative spaces and experiences too contributed to feelings of comfort at home. Having swapped '*life in a suit*' for '*being covered with sawdust*' (interview) and being able to look out across his garden from the workshop that he loves, Steve explained how he felt much more comfortable with the lifestyle he now had, doing his passion from home. '*I think that I feel more at home*' (interview), he reflected. This also applied to Alison, whose 'making space' was something she got '*real comfort*' (interview) from. Married to a fellow artist and with children who got involved too, this repurposing of what would commonly be the dining room was key to their love of their new house and was '*almost as important as having a kitchen*' (interview), given how creating was an essential part of all of their lives.

Returning again to concerns raised regarding flexible, home-based creative labour's colonisation and erosion of the home and further advancing understandings of the emotional geographies of homeworking particularly in the context of creative work (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018; Reuschke, 2019), the examples provided here suggest the comforts of home to have greater resilience to, and co-existent harmony with, work. While its separation from work can be seen to facilitate the experience of the home as a space to relax and rejuvenate, these findings demonstrate an ability for these two domains to enhance one another. Home improved the experience of work by providing

comfort, privacy and a reflection of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Madsen, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019), and the presence and practise of work within the home, in turn, contributed to the comforts and meanings of the space by both enhancing the time that was spent there and its personal meaningfulness (Relph, 1976).

Feelings of entrapment

Despite the positive interrelationship of work and home, prolonged or sustained periods of time spent working from home caused a number of participants in the study to feel trapped within the space. In doing so, it points to a major repercussion that the practice of working predominantly from home, which is thought to be common to the circumstances of the self-employed (Reuschke, 2019), could have for emotional geographies of home. While regular opportunities to leave the house for work enabled the home to be a haven and a place to relax, unwind and feel grounded, it can be inferred from the accounts of the participants that the absence of such opportunities led to unpleasant experiences of confinement. Half of those who did nearly all of their working hours (91-100%) at home spoke of how they hated '*sitting in an office all day, every day*' (David T, interview) and how being '*stuck in the house all day*' (Joanne, video diary), particularly with back-to-back Zoom meetings, was '*exhausting*' (Joanne, video diary). They reflected on the monotony of working in one place for such durations and how it drove them '*a little bit mad*' (David S, video diary) and left them feeling like every day was '*Groundhog Day*' (Joanne, video diary) and even like they were '*in prison*' (Faye, interview). Two participants even remarked how they sometimes felt '*shocked*' (Valerie, video diary) or '*startled*' (Rachel, video diary) when leaving the house and connecting with the outside world after long periods of time working from home.

Such feelings of being '*trapped*' (interview) at home materialised for Rachel during the COVID-19 lockdowns when she was no longer able to regularly work from the co-working space that she was a part of. '*When the studio was closed and I had to work from here every day, I definitely got cabin fever*' (video diary) she said, explaining how the impact of these restrictions were exacerbated by the small size of the shared house she was living in at the time and the fact that she had to work primarily from her bedroom. Although Rachel's experiences of confinement only transpired under the unique circumstances of the pandemic, her account still further emphasises the serious impact that working almost permanently from home can have on the emotional geographies of home. Speaking after she had moved out into a house with her partner, she reflected on the long-term implications it had for her emotional experiences and relationships to that place:

> *'I think all of these feelings just got really attached to the old house… it was saturated with feeling trapped. I think I couldn't not feel trapped in there, even when … we could do whatever we wanted. I still just felt like I was being held there'* (Rachel, interview).

For those who did not work almost exclusively from home because of regular external activities such as tours, performances, talks, gigs, trips and events, the sense of being stuck inside still occurred during those occasions when they would find themselves at home for the duration of a typical working week. Much less frequent since the restrictions and remnant practices of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns had eased, the '*preponderance of having too much time at home*' (interview) that Stephen described as being oppressive only occurred, he said, when he worked from home for more than five days in a week in between talks and performances. After having been away on a tour for a few days, returning home was a welcome opportunity to relax for Dennis, but as time passed his video diary entries showed him beginning to feel stuck at home with his thoughts. As the days went by, time spent at home auditioning and preparing for work came to be marked by uneasiness about the amount of time before the next job and before the next paycheque, and apprehensions about whether his new ideas for magic tricks and performances would work took hold. As he recounted:

> *'The more time passes the more... Anxious, I feel the more... Uhm? Just generally worried I think. Thoughts just go round and round. Especially when there's not many tasks that have to be done'* (Dennis, video diary).

Such experiences of entrapment at home and the significance of regular external work activities in preventing these feelings were particularly pronounced throughout the video diary entries and interview discussions of Emily, a wedding photographer. As she explained, it was during those periods of the year when there were not enough weddings to '*chop up the routine*' of being in the house Monday to Friday that she struggled with feeling '*stuck*', '*trapped*' and '*cooped up*' at home and was left feeling '*sick of being indoors*' and '*sick of the same four walls*' (video diary). She did '*love to have the odd day here and there*' (interview) where she enjoyed the comforts of her home and stayed in her pyjamas on the sofa in front of the TV when editing, doing admin and preparing for weddings on her laptop. '*But when it becomes every day*', she reflected, '*I do start to get very … claustrophobic*' (interview). During these periods, Emily's sense of home was hugely affected. Becoming the place to '*escape*' (interview) from rather than the place to escape to, long periods spent inside working fostered an estrangement and aversion to home and led her to seek out a sense of '*home*' (interview) in other places rather than where she lived. Particularly emblematic of this was the way that her relationship to the home she had at her mum's changed after she had moved out:

'… when I was living at mum's, I so often felt like I just needed to get out all the time. But then now that I'm here, going to mum's feels like an escape, and going back there, I'm just like, 'uh, I can breathe' and I feel, like, safe again. And it feels really homely again. But when I was living there, I didn't ever really want to be there. And I think it is similar with here [at my current home]' (Emily, interview).

When faced at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic with the prospect of no weddings and consequentially even more time '*stuck*' (interview) at home, she made the decision to take up a job in a London hospital. With a working space full of '*amazing people*' (interview) and separated from her home by a long commute every day, home was able to become her '*haven*' (interview) again, even though she was still doing her photography work in the evenings. At the time of speaking, when life and work had returned to relative normality, she hoped to one day start her own co-working space as she felt this would help her home to feel more like a home again. Wanting to be in one workplace so she could feel like she was getting enough done, but equally needing it to be somewhere other than home every single day to avoid those feelings of entrapment, she thought a co-working space could be the answer.

Flexible creative work's integration with the non-economic life of the home may not appear responsible for any disruption caused to the positive emotional geographies of home, but the conditions of prolonged or sustained periods of time spent working from home could evidently have a negative effect. In this way, the connection between long durations spent at home and the emergence of these emotional experiences of entrapment and confinement align with Imrie's (2004) research illuminating similar feelings and relationships to home caused by being homebound due to issues of disability, but also the work of Ahrentzen (1997) who also observed the same experiences in their study of homeworkers. While Ahrentzen (1997) found feelings of being 'chained' and 'trapped' at home to be confined to women who lived with at least one other adult but no children, the participants who experienced entrapment at home here were not confined to one such demographic, spanning both men and women, those that lived only with their partners, those that lived only with children, and those that lived with both. Combined with the fact that the creativity of work was not a factor in the emergence of negative experiences of home, this relationship identified between long periods working from home and feelings of entrapment becomes of significance to the experience of homeworking more generally, not necessarily just for those in the creative industries nor those that are self-employed, but any homeworkers who work predominantly from home (Reuschke, 2019). An association between a lack of environmental variety and poor subjective wellbeing begins to emerge within this data, and in doing so aligns with a body of research that has uncovered a connection

between lower locational variance and longer stays at home and the occurrence of negative affect and subjective wellbeing outcomes (Chow *et al.,* 2017; Müller *et al.,* 2020; Servia-Rodríguez *et al.* 2017).

Getting out of the house

Corresponding with the negative emotional repercussions of prolonged and sustained periods spent at home are the positive experiences of getting out of the house that were echoed by nearly all participants of the study. With the exception of references to its social value, the benefits of leaving the house predominantly centred around this common theme of environmental variation and, further mirroring the findings of Ahrentzen (1997), coincided with those feelings of being trapped at home that were encountered by some. As already discussed, regular opportunities to leave the house for work allowed the home to be a haven and a place to relax, but it was made clear from their video diary reflections that going anywhere and doing anything outside of the home during a working day spent inside had a positive effect on how they felt. Whether it was to go and work from other people's homes or cafés, build props in the shed at the bottom of the garden, start the day by going cold water swimming, run around after family and visit the town centre or even just to simply pop out and do a '*slightly random task*' (Rachel, video diary) like buying some shampoo, it made a notable difference to how they perceived their day to be. Whilst small trips out did not necessarily negate feelings of entrapment, getting out of the house was still evidently '*really important for a good day*' (Sammy, video diary) and was a means to '*reset*' (Rachel, video diary). Without it, whole days inside got '*a bit… much*' (Rachel, video diary), led to feeling '*sadder in the evenings*' (Sammy, video diary), and would leave them in a '*slightly weird headspace*' (Rachel, interview).

Descriptions of it helping them to '*switch off*' (Elizabeth, interview) and clear their head could be interpreted as suggesting that getting out of the house was a means of achieving mental relaxation by escaping the worries, concerns and the demands of daily life perhaps due to the concentration of work and home life within that one space (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), although activities to switch off were in no way dependent on leaving the home. A more explicit explanation in these accounts instead was the positive emotional response that came with simply being in a different environment irrespective of a need to mentally disconnect; of being somewhere other than home and escaping the sameness and sedentariness that can come with spending so much time there as a consequence of work and home's integration. Getting out of the house was about seeking out the stimulation of a different environment and allowed them to '*breathe*' (Emily, video diary) after long periods spent working at home, and drastic improvements in perspective, clarity of thought and frame of mind were attributed to a change of scene.

When asked if she was able to find the same level of relaxation and tranquillity at home that she did from being in the countryside or visiting new places at the weekend, Mel's answer revealed the importance of experiencing other places for her and her wellbeing. '*I can do it at home to a degree because I try and have things in place that help me unwind*' (interview) she said, as she talked about the model kits that she would work on when she could not go out at the weekends, '*but I find that … the better refresher and the best rejuvenating does come with getting outside*' (interview). Rather than being about creating *distance* from home, it was about having a *change* from home and the opportunity to come across new places and new things. '*A lot of it is just, for me, getting out of the house, because I spend so long in the house during the week. It's just like a new environment. And I guess it just heightens your senses and stimulates your senses to a different degree*' (interview). After taking up a friend on an offer to stay in their place by the coast in Suffolk with her family, Alison's reflection in her video diary similarly affirmed the positive emotional impact of spending time somewhere other than her own home:

> *'I'm working from home in someone else's home in Suffolk by the sea, which just makes everything feel just nice, really lovely and different - a different spin on everything… there is a huge emotional change, I think, when you come somewhere… different… a bit of difference - a different kind of space and the chance to spend some time on the beach at the end of the day… So yeah, the work things all feel lighter somehow and… the day feels like it's got a different pace. Yeah, that's really, really positive and really good for the mind space'* (Alison, video diary).

In contrast with the confines of home were references to movement and mobility, particularly in the form of walking, in the context of getting out of the house and the benefits therein. There was '*something quite stimulating about rushing around*' (Stephen, interview) they said, and walking, running, swimming and exercising was '*invigorating*' (Stephen, video diary), good for their mental health, and helped them to keep feelings of aggravation at bay. This is undoubtably emblematic of the association between physical activity and the promotion of positive affect (e.g., Ekkekakis *et al.,* 2008; Fox, 1999; Kroencke *et al.,* 2019), but it could also be interpreted as being of significance because of its juxtaposition with the relative stationariness of spending significant amounts of time in one place, and the sensorial variation to home that it offers (Ettema and Smajic, 2015; Middleton, 2009; Wunderlich, 2008). In this regard, the sensation of 'fresh air' was mentioned frequently when discussing the positive experiences of being outside and moving. When spending time outside walking, wandering, litter picking, cold water swimming, and visiting different places, breathing in the fresh air was felt to do '*the world of good*' (Natasha, video diary) and be wonderful, energising, and key to their

mental health. The emphasis on this dimension of their ventures out of the house could again be due to its essentiality to the corporeal experience of being outdoors and, conversely, a key signifier of *not* being at home (Young, McGrath and Adams, 2018).

While it appeared that the stimulation of being in any environment other than home had a welcomed effect on how they felt, going to and engaging with environments that could be characterised as 'natural' such as woods, lakes and the countryside were distinctly transformative in the recuperation they facilitated. As propounded by attention restoration theory (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995), natural settings, through the 'soft fascination' they provide such as in the form of rustling leaves, flowing rivers and fluttering birds, are uniquely placed to facilitate the effortless, involuntary attention required to counteract the mental fatigue that can come with too much direct attention (see also Bratman *et al.,* 2019; Gesler, 2003). A comparison of two experiences of getting out of the house that were captured in the video diary of David S highlights this significance of the natural environment in this way. Although a portrait photographer who mainly worked from his home studio, David S had two external jobs during this period; one photographing a music ensemble and another photographing an away day for a company who had organised for their employees to go clay shooting in the countryside. Both shoots were positive experiences, but while the music ensemble shoot was '*really good fun*' (video diary), it was when he was in the '*lovely … wonderful … valley … with beautiful landscapes*' that he found his mood to be '*significantly lifted*' (video diary) and his day transformed which he attributed to not just the difference in environment, but also the '*healing power of being in nature*' (video diary).

Having discovered the benefits of getting out into and interacting with nature, Mel had embedded it within her weekly routine. Not only did she make sure that her Saturdays were work free and screen free, but she made sure she went, if she could, somewhere where there was a chance to interact with nature. The idea came from a book that she had read which stressed the importance of making sure that days off are days of rest and rejuvenation. '*So for me, on a Saturday, that means going for a walk in … the countryside or somewhere new*' she explained: '*I've taken up foraging because of that*' (interview). Connecting with nature, whether through long hikes or searching for wild food, provided her with the chance to shut down from work, rejuvenate and go back to her desk on Monday feeling more inspired. As argued by Lucy Jones (2020, p. 82) in her book *Losing Eden*, the restoration of attention by natural spaces, as evidenced here, is something that many of us who are "working, juggling tasks, busy and stressed in our modern-day, 24/7, 'always on' culture" – such as those engaged in these forms of individualised work – could really benefit from.

Undoubtably interconnected with the feelings of entrapment born from lengthy periods of time spent at home are these shared positive experiences associated with getting out of the house (see also Ahrentzen, 1997). Rather than being primarily driven by a need to escape the pressures and anxieties of the work-home though, this pattern of behaviour and intent seemed to be underpinned by a need for environmental variation, with the reflections of the participants highlighting the motivation and pleasure of being stimulated by places other than their homes. Given the confines of the work-home and the realities of often being 'always on' as a result of the spatial and psychological integration of work and life, the movement, sensorial variation and restoration of attention that getting out of the house offers are considered to be significant in this regard (Ettema and Smajic, 2015; Jones, 2020; Young, McGrath and Adams, 2018). Along with the conditions that determined the experiences of confinement at home, these findings are in support of an association between regular environmental variation and positive emotional states in a way that underscores the need to ensure consistent opportunities to spend time in other places, particularly when predominantly working from home. While common discourses concerning homeworking tend to focus on the significance of the spatial demarcation of dedicated spaces for work within the home, this conclusion sheds light on the significance of spatial variation beyond the home in the context of wellbeing.

The impediment of home's comforts

Thus far it has been outlined how the comforts of home have been maintained and how they have been enhanced by and have enhanced work. Prolonged periods of time spent at home too have been observed to foster feelings of entrapment, with the act of getting out of the house importantly providing the stimulation of other environments. Given the personal autonomy and freedoms associated with self-employment and homeworking, it is logical to assume the establishment and pursuit of regular opportunities to leave the home, as a clear wellbeing-enhancing activity, to be a simple, unobstructed and positive endeavour. However, it appeared that getting out of the house could be a challenge for the participants. Although varied, the obstacles that appeared to impede this behaviour were linked to the integration of work and home life, and included the allure of home's comforts.

Leaving the house was evidently a struggle for some. It required effort; to '*push*' oneself to '*work out of the house a little bit more*' (Emily, video diary), to '*make sure*' to take '*some time outside*' (Alison, video diary), to '*work on*' (Millie, interview) establishing a routine and a balance and even, in the case of Megan, to rely on walking the dog twice a day to '*make*' (video diary) herself get out. Still struggling with spending so much of her time indoors and at her desk, she had taken up wild swimming and had even moved back to a town where she used to live, on the other side of the country, to help her to

establish a '*new rhythm*' (video diary) in her life. One other participant even considered the fact of having to go to a funeral as being slightly positive as it got them out the house. A handful of them revealed that it was the demands of work and home life that got in the way, but hinderances also included the absence of routine or structure and the draw of wanting to bring to life creative ideas, as well as factors unrelated to work such as the belief that '*the outside world is scary*' (Lucy, interview) and health-related issues. The reflections of others suggested that the comforts of home were the obstruction, with their allure diminishing the impetus to get out of the house. Joanne referred to getting '*way too comfortable*' (video diary) with the isolation of working from home, but Millie's observations were particularly telling of the possibility of feeling *too* comfortable at home and the way it could undermine an awareness of the benefits of leaving and an urge to do so:

> '*I think it's very easy … to sort of... just feel so comfortable with that feeling of being safe and comfortable, that you don't … want to go out? And that's where you're sort of getting into dangerous territory when you're like, 'ooo, I don't want to leave the house, ever'. And then you just don't. So I think you have to remember that it's great to be comfortable and be safe and be warm and everything, but it is also important to leave... (laughs) and get out of your comfort zone a little bit*' (Millie, interview).

Although in no way widespread, the lure of home's comforts was evident in a few other accounts, and concurrent feelings of entrapment created a paradox of wanting to escape home but also wanting to be at home after having left. This was true for Dennis, for instance, who could find himself wanting to be away for work when at home and wanting to be at home when away for work. Emily, who acutely felt a sense of confinement when having spent long periods of time working at home, also found herself wanting to stay inside in her '*comfort zone*' (video diary) when she had to leave, causing her to experience a cycle of ambivalence of nearly always wanting to be where she was not. As she recounted when sitting in the car on the way to a wedding one day:

> '*I'm excited to be back doing an actual wedding and being out of the house and sort of getting to travel a bit, but it's amazing how, even though I get sick of being in the house and not really sort of being around people - as soon as the day comes where I actually am having to do that, I'm then thinking, 'oh - I kind of wish I could just be in the house today and not have to talk to anyone or go outside and I could just stay comfy and cozy in my comfort zone'. So it's amazing how, yeah, I always seem to be craving the opposite to what I'm actually having to do that day*' (Emily, video diary).

Demonstrating an interesting relationship between wellbeing and place in the context of homeworking (Reuschke, 2019), a benefit of the integration of the work-home, of enjoying the comforts of home during the working day, holds the potential to have negative consequences for wellbeing by compromising or obscuring the act of getting out of the house.

Conclusion

Investigating the concerns raised by Mould (2018), the integration of flexible creative labour with leisure and non-economic life within the home did have a notable influence on the subjective wellbeing of home-based, self-employed creative professionals. Negative emotional experiences were at times born from the psychological pervasiveness of work but were almost exclusively attributed to the weak spatial and temporal boundaries of working independently from home rather than the 'liquidity' of creative labour (Gold and Mustafa, 2013; Hawkins, 2017). The habits, routines and activities that they employed to help them to switch off from work however helped them to manage work's permeation into non-work life, and it is contended that these boundary management strategies could have limited the prevalence of these experiences and the negative emotional repercussions and mental exhaustion that could subsequently transpire (Nippert-Eng, 2003; Wepfer *et al.,* 2018). Moreover, the experience of work-as-leisure, providing some of the intrinsic benefits typically associated with the domain of leisure and reducing the contrast between these two domains (Adorno, 1994; Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000), also appeared to the minimise the negative repercussions caused by work-to-life integration.

Contributing to the limited research on the work-life interface of self-employment and its relationship with leisure satisfaction (de Jager *et al.,* 2016; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018), as well as an understanding of the relationship between work and leisure for creative workers, the tensions between autonomy and the individualised qualities of their labour was evident in determining the lower and more varied satisfaction scores recorded for this life domain. Challenging propositions about the breakdown of a work-leisure distinction under the conditions of creative labour (Florida, 2002; 2014), disconnected leisure time remained of value to these workers, and the freedoms provided by self-employment and homeworking to enact the temporal segmentation or integration of work as preferred was the key determinant of positive leisure time satisfaction (van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). However, this autonomy was at times compromised by the draws of the 'leisurely' qualities of work as well as the insecurities, demands and personal responsibility that is so associated with such flexible creative labour (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018). The demands of family life too could evidently further compound this dissatisfaction

caused by work's pressures; demands that were felt most acutely by female home-based self-employed workers with children (Hilbrecht *et al.,* 2008; Young, 1997).

These qualities of creative flexible labour however did not erode and dismantle the home as an important emotional space of sanctuary as anticipated (Mould, 2018). Engaging with these concerns and advancing understandings of the emotional geographies of homeworking particularly in the context of home-based creative work (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018; Reuschke, 2019), the home was observed to remain a place of relaxation and rejuvenation through a degree of separation from work as granted by regular 'external' work or practices of boundary enactment, there was also an element of symbiosis between the domains of work and home. Often bound up with the qualities of their creative labour (Hawkins, 2017), the home improved the experience of work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Madsen, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski*,* 2019), and their work in turn also contributed to the comforts and meanings of home. Instead, negative emotional geographies of home occurred as a result of prolonged or sustained periods of time spent working from home which provoked feelings of entrapment and confinement. Aligning with a body of research that has observed similar emotional responses to lower locational variance and longer stays at home (e.g., Ahrentzen, 1997; Chow *et al.,* 2017; Imrie, 2004; Müller *et al.,* 2020; Servia-Rodríguez *et al.,* 2017), it also corresponded with positive experiences associated with getting out of the house and being stimulated by places other than their homes. Nevertheless, despite the emergent significance of regular environmental variation to subjective wellbeing, the demands and comforts of the work-home, it appeared, could obstruct such efforts.

It can be concluded that the integration of work with non-work life, whether in the experience of work-as-leisure or through the symbiotic dynamics of the work-home, can be wellbeing-enhancing qualities of such individualised work. As demonstrated however by the necessity to switch off, the continued importance of disconnected leisure time, the enactment of boundaries within the work-home, and the potential consequences of working and living in one place, an element of temporal and spatial segmentation remains important.

Chapter Nine
Conclusion

Through studying the effect of home-based, self-employed creative labour on subjective wellbeing, this thesis advances understanding of the wellbeing consequences of the 'precarious freedoms', intrinsic benefits, social atomisation, and work-life integration that are characteristic of such individualised work. This conclusion outlines the answers this study provides for the research questions of the thesis and the subsequent knowledge contributions it makes regarding *the case study* of home-based, self-employed creative professionals, but it also looks at *the broader picture* and what these findings can tell us about creative labour, self-employed homeworking and individualised work more generally. *Looking forward*, it then discusses opportunities for further research concerning the wellbeing repercussions of these individualised working practices and the emotional geographies of homeworking, as well as the utility and development of the mixed-method research design and the video diary method for the study of subjective wellbeing.

The case study

Examining the subjective wellbeing of home-based, self-employed creative professionals, the questionnaire results revealed a positive sense of self-assessed wellbeing amongst the study sample across all three dimensions of social-psychological functioning, emotion and satisfaction. Participants scored particularly highly with regard to their social-psychological functioning, experienced positive emotions more frequently than negative emotions, and were moderately satisfied with their life and life domains, with the exception of leisure time which was noticeably lower. By analysing the qualitative data provided by the video diaries and interviews, the research provides valuable insight into the influence that this individualised work has on these wellbeing outcomes, and subsequently makes a number of contributions to knowledge concerning the effect of home-based, self-employed creative labour on subjective wellbeing.

Answering the first research question regarding the intrinsic benefits and precarious freedoms associated with these individualised working practices and how they shape the subjective wellbeing of these workers, the thesis forms a number of conclusions. As a means of personal enrichment, the creative labour of the participants was a principal factor behind their subjective wellbeing across a range of dimensions, most fundamentally their strong sense of social-psychological functioning. As a love and passion, a vehicle for self-realisation and a means of satisfying an innate human desire and

inclination towards creativity, it contributed to their job satisfaction, fostered a range of positive emotions, and underpinned their strong sense of meaning and purpose as well as their competency, capability, engagement and interest in a personally important activity. Moreover, the opportunities to solve problems, provide joy, and inspire others to discover the intrinsic benefits of creativity further enhanced the enjoyment and purposefulness of their work and was of clear importance to their sense of contributing to the happiness and wellbeing of others. Instead of being impeded by the restrictions, requirements and demands of running a business, the professionalisation of their creative practice enhanced and supported their creativity by enabling the devotion of time and energy to its pursuance and by providing challenges and uses in its application. These findings thus support the notion of creativity as being innately and personally pleasurable, fulfilling and satisfactory (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Layard, 2005), demonstrate that the conditions of work can amplify rather than undermine these experiences (cf. Arvidsson, Malossi and Naro, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Hracs and Leslie, 2014), and reinforce the narrative that careers in the creative industries are driven and characterised by the pursuit and experience of self-realisation and enrichment (e.g., Gill and Pratt, 2008; Hawkins, 2017).

Turning to the precarious freedoms of this individualised work, the study corroborates the positive association between autonomy and subjective wellbeing in the context of self-employed work (e.g., Benz and Frey, 2008a; van der Zwan, Hessels and Burger, 2020). Contributing to limited research on the experiences of self-employment and the mechanisms underpinning the relationship between self-employment and both job and leisure satisfaction in particular (Binder and Blankenberg, 2021; de Jager *et al.,* 2016; van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld, 2018), the autonomy to select and choose work contributed to positive job satisfaction, and the ability to determine work's temporal segmentation or integration was an important factor for those who were satisfied with leisure time. However, this dimension of individualised work is of less significance than may have been expected relative to the personal enrichment and intrinsic benefits of labour, given the emphasis that has been placed on experiences of autonomy, control and freedom in studies of independent creative professionals and their wellbeing (Bille *et al.,* 2013; Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016; Steiner and Schneider, 2013). Along with the importance of the participants' creative labour to their social-psychological functioning and the emergence of positive emotional experiences, the extent to which autonomy positively influenced job satisfaction was no greater than that of engaging in creative work, and the advantages of having the freedom to dictate the work that they did were often bound up with the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling labour. As discovered by Bille *et al.* (2013), Fujiwara and Lawton (2016) and Steiner and Schneider (2013) in their studies of large-scale survey data, autonomy in work did correspond with positive assessments of subjective wellbeing amongst these workers. From an analysis of the accounts

presented by the participants of this study however, it is concluded that the intrinsic benefits of creative labour are of perhaps greater consequence to the subjective wellbeing of independent creative workers than previously acknowledged.

As the price for independence in work, the precariousness of labour did have a notable effect on the subjective wellbeing of these workers. In contrast to the issues widely emphasised in the literature though (e.g., Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018; van der Zwan and Hessels, 2019), irregular income and desires for greater pay were not widespread or severe, had a limited effect on job satisfaction and only coincided with cases of minor dissatisfaction with household income. The responsibility, vulnerability and uncertainty of such independent work did nevertheless continue to be a prominent source of stress and worry, and in doing so demonstrates the persistent psychological burden and negative emotional repercussions that can be caused by precarious working conditions irrespective of any materialisation of financial difficulties. In turn, the burden of these uncertainties and responsibilities, by means of increasing working hours and inhibiting their autonomy over them, could detract from leisure and rest (Hawkins, 2017; Mould, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the effect of these insecurities and vulnerabilities, it can be concluded that the self-fulfilment and precarious freedoms of individualised labour, in the context of this case study, had an overall positive influence on the subjective wellbeing of these workers, and as such substantiates the notion of the satisfied creative worker (Hawkins, 2017).

By examining the second research question focusing on the socialities of this example of individualised work and how it shapes the social wellbeing of these workers, the thesis makes an important contribution to understandings of the social wellbeing amongst those engaged in 'socially atomised' home-based, independent work, particularly with regard to the nature and prevalence of social and professional isolation (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Reuschke, 2019). Despite concerns to the contrary, participants reported an overwhelmingly positive sense of social wellbeing that was underpinned by the relationships of the work-home, personally crafted social connections and networks, and the socialities of independent work and creative labour. Strengthening the evidence that these conditions of work render self-employed homeworkers vulnerable to such experiences (Daniel, Di Domenico and Nunan, 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Hislop *et al.,* 2015), the possibility of working from home alone and the absence of an established group of colleagues and a social workplace did render them susceptible to social and professional isolation. However, as anticipated by Anderson, Kaplan and Vega (2015), these experiences were minimised through alternative forms of work-based social interaction, mutual support and recognition. Provided by family and friends, co-working spaces and online communities, and mentors, professional associates and clients, these relationships and connections blurred a distinction between the personal and the

professional and were often actively established and maintained in the face of this potential isolation. Physical social spaces and in-person interaction in particular were of greater social value in comparison to their virtual and online alternatives, and in doing so demonstrates the importance of immediacy, co-location and face-to-face communication for social wellbeing and the value of co-working spaces for these workers in this regard, particularly in their provision of socio-creative atmospheres of work (Bancou and Gabriagues, 2023; Burgoon *et al.,* 2002; Daft and Lengel, 1986; Lazzarato, 2009; Merkel, 2015; 2019; Spinuzzi, 2012).

Drawing on Fleuret and Atkinson's (2007) spaces of wellbeing framework and work-home boundaries literature (Nippert-Eng, 2003), the conceptualisation of the work-home as an integrative social space for those with co-habitants is advanced by the thesis to emphasise the enrichment of the social relationships that are often at the heart of 'home' as a result of the integration of work and home life. Demonstrating both work-to-family and family-to-work enrichment (cf. McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2016), the work-home facilitated the provision of conversation, company and mutual support and care, and enabled the spending of quality time together with home-others and the opportunity for them to understand and positively engage with work. The breakdown of boundaries between work and home life could erode time spent with home-others away from the demands of work. However, the predominantly positive experience of the work-home's social dynamics not only helps to explain the positive social wellbeing of the sample but challenges the propositions of Mould (2018) by demonstrating that the introduction and integration of flexible creative work into the home largely enriches, rather than disrupts, home life (see also Hawkins, 2017).

Answering the third research question concerning the work-life boundary dynamics and wellbeing repercussions of these individualised working practices with regard to leisure time and the emotional geographies of home specifically, the thesis completes its empirical investigation of the concerns raised by Mould (2018) regarding the work-life integration of home-based, self-employed creative labour. Utilising the analytical lenses provided by boundary theory (e.g., Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Clark S.C., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 2003) and geographical perspectives on home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), questions of the potential for work-life integration and its repercussions for mental health, leisure and the emotional experiences of home were also explored (see also de Jager *et al.,* 2016; Field and Chan, 2018; Kelliher, Richardson and Boiarintseva, 2019). Although alleviated in part by the implementation of boundary management strategies and the experience of work-as-leisure, negative emotional experiences were associated with the psychological pervasiveness of work that was caused primarily as a result of weak spatio-temporal boundaries demarcating work. Rather than being absorbed into a singular lifestyle of creative experience as posited in the accounts of Florida (2002; 2014), designated leisure time that was separate from work remained important, which the autonomy

of home-based self-employment helped to maximise. However, the experience of work-as-leisure, the weak spatio-temporal boundaries of work and the demands of home life, along with the responsibility and precariousness of labour, were observed to undermine and erode designated leisure time to the detriment of this satisfaction. As alluded to by van der Zwan, Hessels and Rietveld (2018), the tensions between autonomy and these characteristics of individualised work in large part influenced the leisure time satisfaction of these workers.

By investigating the effect that these dynamics had for the emotional experiences of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2022), the thesis advances and promotes a broader consideration of the emotional geographies of homeworking. Rather than eroding the home as an important emotional space of sanctuary as anticipated (Mould, 2018), it remained a place of relaxation and rejuvenation through practises of segmentation. However, a symbiotic relationship between the domains of work and home was also evident in a way that mirrored the work-home's conceptualisation as an integrative social space. Being in their own space and being surrounded by their own things made home a positive place to work and the symbolism, comforts and privacy of the space was supportive of their expressive and self-defining work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Madsen, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2019). The meanings and comforts of home too, in turn, were enhanced by the practice of homeworking and the presence of work within the home. With their creative work in particular enriching the home as a personally meaningful space by means of its importance to their sense of self and what they loved, these findings reveal the significant role that such labour can play in the making and un-making of the home (Hawkins, 2017).

Reinforcing the association between negative emotional experiences of home and extended periods spent at home though (Ahrentzen, 1997; Imrie, 2004), feelings of entrapment and confinement were observed to occur as a consequence of prolonged or sustained lengths of time working from home. Corresponding positive experiences associated with getting out of the house further highlight the importance of regular environmental variation beyond the home when homeworking in this regard. However, demonstrating a more complex relationship between wellbeing and place (Reuschke, 2019), the dynamics of the work-home, including the enjoyment of home's comforts, could impede such activity. Given the significant difference in experience that is determined by the amount of time spent homeworking, the use of different and more specific terminology to distinguish between those who work predominantly or exclusively from home and those that more frequently work beyond the home could thus be beneficial (e.g., Mikats, 2021; Wilks and Billsberry, 2007).

The broader picture

Collectively, these findings contribute to our understanding of self-employment, homeworking and creative labour more generally. As already emphasised, creative labour had a profoundly positive influence on subjective wellbeing across both emotional and cognitive dimensions. It was a pronounced source of purpose, meaning, fulfilment and joy and an important means of contributing to the wellbeing of others, but it was also a positive force in the making of home on both an emotional and a social level (Hawkins, 2017). Notably, with the exception of those few that attributed a moderate dissatisfaction with income to the conditions of the creative industries and the evidence that leisure-like work could at times detract from leisure time, creative labour in isolation was overwhelmingly supportive of a positive sense of subjective wellbeing. Contributing to policy debates concerning work in the creative industries, this conclusion is encouraging of the promotion and growth of the creative industries as a means of intrinsically beneficial work (Hawkins, 2017).

Conversely, the findings of this research draw attention to the potential issues and challenges of self-employed homeworking more broadly, beyond the specific experience of creative workers. Despite the positive sense of social wellbeing that was in part underpinned by the socialities of the work-home and of independent work, working from home alone and the absence of a fixed and regular group of co-workers and social office space, which are often the conditions of self-employed homeworking, gave rise to their susceptibility to experiences of isolation. The weak spatial and temporal boundaries of such work, combined with the responsibility and precariousness of self-employment, can also evidently have negative repercussions for home life, cause negative emotional experiences associated with the psychological pervasiveness of work, and erode leisure time to the detriment of satisfaction. Furthermore, feelings of entrapment and confinement at home are a potential issue facing self-employed homeworkers in particular because of their association with prolonged periods of time spent working from home, which are more common amongst the self-employed (Felstead and Reuschke, 2020).

Insights relevant to policy discussions concerning self-employed homeworking subsequently emerge. Facilitated by co-working spaces, work-based groups and networks and local community infrastructure, the value of in-person interaction for the social wellbeing of these workers further stresses the necessity of 'third places' as a source of social interaction, connection, and support particularly for those engaged in individualised labour (Finlay *et al.,* 2019; Laliberte Rudman *et al.,* 2023; Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Oldenburg, 1999). The significance of regular environmental variation too both bolsters the importance of such alternative spaces of work and the provision of outdoor amenities and green spaces in close proximity to residential areas. In turn, these findings

speak to debates about the possibilities and drawbacks of homeworking more broadly, which have gained considerable traction following the widespread adoption of homeworking practices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Islam, 2022). The benefits of frequent opportunities to co-work, work elsewhere other than home and achieve a degree of segmentation, whilst also capitalising on the flexibility, social enrichment and positive emotional experiences of home facilitated by homeworking, suggest that hybrid working could be favourable over more remote forms of homeworking for employees.

Although focused exclusively on the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative professionals, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the nature and personal repercussions of individualised work. Firstly, it demonstrates that the promises and possibilities of self-fulfilment that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) identify as a key characteristic of individualisation can, in the context of work, materialise and have a prominent influence on subjective wellbeing across a number of different dimensions. Upheld by extension is Adorno's (1994; 1951) proclamation that the interweaving of pleasure and work can enable the joys of leisure to be fused with the importance and purposefulness of work in a way that is enhancing of human experience. Secondly, it further affirms the value of autonomy and its contribution to the experience of work as satisfying, fulfilling, and unalienating (Fromm, 2004; Horgan, 2021). When considering the wellbeing consequences of the precarious working conditions under which this autonomy materialises though, emphasised is the importance of looking beyond problems of income and pay to the significant psychological burden and negative emotions that can be caused by these vulnerabilities, uncertainties and insecurities irrespective of financial difficulties. Stressed further in this regard is the need to assist the self-employed with the insecurity of their work, for instance through adequate social safety nets and income protection (Conen and Schippers, 2019).

Thirdly, the socialities of individualised work as presented in the thesis challenge a simple association between the social atomisation of the worker and experiences of social and professional isolation and the notion that they are disconnected from work relations (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Reuschke, 2019). With contributions to the happiness and wellbeing of others being of importance to the enjoyment and purposefulness of work, this study also demonstrates that the self-fulfilment inherent to individualised work is not necessarily at the expense of a consideration and interest in the welfare of others (see Alacovska, 2020; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2009). Fourth, as evidenced in particular by both the socialities and emotional symbiosis of the work-home, the work-life integration that is characteristic of such individualised labour can result in the enrichment of work, family and home (Kreiner, 2006; McNall, Scott and Nicklin, 2015; Powell and Greenhaus, 2010). Although complicated under the conditions of individualised work, time and space away from work nevertheless

continues to be important (Mould, 2018). Disconnected leisure time remains valuable despite the experience of work-as-leisure, time spent with home-others away from the demands of work is essential to these relationships, and a degree of work segmentation is necessary psychologically but also with respect to maintaining the sanctuary of home.

Finally, the agency and resilience required of these workers to mitigate a number of the potential issues and subsequent wellbeing repercussions associated with individualised work reveals the significant personal responsibility placed on the individual for their own welfare under these conditions (Beck and Beck-Gersheim, 2002; Fenwick, 2003). The alleviation and management of the insecurity of work and the stress and anxiety that it can cause requires initiative to diversify income streams, create 'financial cushions', be steadfast in financial worth, implement strategies to better protect and control income, and adopt coping strategies and perspectives. Despite the uncertainty and fluctuations of work, the resolute confidence and optimism about the continuity and viability of work that was exhibited points to the seeming necessity of this psychological capital in the context of such precarious working conditions (e.g., Arabsheibani *et al.,* 2000; Batt, Christopherson and Rightor, 1999; Cassar, 2010; Shorter, O'Neill and McElherron, 2018). In the absence of organisational structures, the segmentation and management of work's boundaries was again in large part by virtue of individual action, whether through the creation of designated workspaces, the use of recreational activities, or the enactment of 'rituals', transitions and environmental changes to mark the end of the working day.

This personal responsibility for wellbeing and the importance of initiative to this end was particularly evident in the engineering and construction of individualised social links and networks to maintain positive social functioning (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega, 2015; Beck and Beck-Gersheim, 2002; Wellman, 2001; 2002). Susceptible to the isolation that can come with working independently from home, individuals are required to establish alternative yet fulfilling social worlds by joining co-working spaces and online groups, becoming embedded within communities, and cultivating networks of personal and professional relations. Whilst mitigating acute experiences of social and professional isolation, the onus is placed on the individual and the availability of various forms of social infrastructure to aid the establishment of such connections and communities (Latham and Layton, 2022). Altogether, these strategies and actions that can be taken to help address issues of insecurity and uncertainty, weak spatio-temporal boundaries and isolation are of practical value for those engaged in these forms of work. However, their necessity and significance highlight the more-than-financial precariousness of such individualised work.

Looking forward

Given the breadth of inquiry and the sample size, these results are restricted in their ability to make generalisable claims about the experiences of home-based, self-employed creative professionals, leaving room for further research to more extensively investigate the ubiquity of these dynamics that have been identified and their relative importance in shaping the subjective wellbeing of these workers. There is also space to engage with the heterogeneity of the creative industries more explicitly. The unique experiences of the lifestyle influencer and content creator that participated in this study represented the extreme work-to-life integration, pressures of precarious working conditions and wellbeing concerns as originally alluded to by Mould (2018). Endeavouring to incorporate professions across the numerous sectors that fall under the broad category of the creative industries however, this study was unable to investigate the extent to which these distinctive dynamics were shared by others in the same line of work (see also Mikats, 2021). A more focused examination of the nature of this specific occupation and its consequences for subjective wellbeing thus presents itself as a necessary area for further inquiry.

There is space for future investigations of the wellbeing of home-based, self-employed creative professionals to focus on the differentiation of experience across social groups and the effect of intersectional characteristics such as disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status, which were not within the scope of this thesis. In addition to further studying the influence of gender on the relationship between work and home, research could examine how issues of discrimination and inequalities of access, support and opportunity could impact, for instance, the establishment of these careers, the pursuit of self-fulfilling work, participation in social spaces and networks, and the experiences of home. Further building upon the limitations of this research, studies using quantitative measures to assess the wellbeing repercussions of individualised working practices could also benefit from the inclusion of a satisfaction of leisure needs measure if interested in the experiences of work-as-leisure, as well as a satisfaction with personal income measure to better gauge the effect of a desire for higher pay (cf. Conen and Schippers, 2019). The apparent influence of fluctuations in work on job satisfaction too suggests the need for quantitative studies interested in the effect of precarious work on subjective wellbeing to take a longitudinal approach so as to capture this variation.

As a relatively unexplored area of study, and one that becomes increasingly significant given the rise of homeworking and remote working as established organisational arrangements, the emotional geographies of homeworking is also a promising and important subject for future research. Demonstrating the value of taking a geographical approach to the study of wellbeing, a purposeful and explicit attentiveness to the interconnection and relationship between emotions and place in the

context of home revealed dimensions of the homeworking experience that would otherwise have been left undiscovered. An opportunity for subsequent work in this regard includes qualitative investigations into other professions and forms of home-based businesses to further examine the relationship between home-based work and the 'sanctuary' of home (Mould, 2018), and explore whether the symbiosis of work and home is unique to those engaged in creative labour (Hawkins, 2017). There is also scope for quantitative studies to more comprehensively analyse the relationship between the amount of time spent working from home and the emergence of different emotions, particularly experiences of entrapment and confinement.

As well as having implications for the knowledge base and research agenda surrounding the relationship between individualised work and wellbeing, the thesis also presents methodological developments to the study of subjective wellbeing. As Ponocny and Weismayer (2016, p. 109) highlight, quantitative data collected on subjective wellbeing can "compress the variety of life experiences into one or a few numerical values" and limit the opportunity of such research to inform constructive interventions as a result. By integrating the quantitative wellbeing assessment scores with the explanatory narratives provided by the qualitative data though, this mixed-method design provides a means through which these very life experiences can be 'uncompressed' while still remaining 'anchored' by the quantitative measurements and their provision of clear, standardised and reliable indications of the specific wellbeing outcomes under study (see Jha and White (2016) for a similar approach). Although substantially limiting the sample size and the creation of large generalisable datasets that these wellbeing assessments are typically designed for, the addition of these qualitative methods in this way is a promising avenue for researchers to explore the person-specific circumstances and reasoning behind the self-evaluations, feelings and judgements that they capture.

There is however the opportunity to experiment further with the combination of these quantitative and qualitative methods. For this study, the semi-structured interviews engaged participants to discuss their everyday working lives in the context of those dimensions of wellbeing covered by the UKHLS and FS measures, and only explicitly asked participants to explain the scores of individual items that were more abstract. The PANAS measure, on the other hand, played a summative role with regard to their emotional wellbeing as participants connected emotions to particular experiences in their video diaries and interviews. This approach had its advantages, prioritising the flow, discursivity and depth of discussion and providing space for colloquial dialogue and 'natural' forms of expression alongside the more uncommon and prescriptive vocabulary of the scientific scales (White, 2016). However, it was at the expense of strong and tenable links between subjective experiences and some of the quantitative wellbeing scores. To overcome this, future research could trial a more systematic combination of the questionnaires and their respective qualitative methods. For the cognitive

dimensions of wellbeing, a more methodical inquiry into each individual questionnaire item could be conducted, either through the use of structured interviews or open text questions embedded within the questionnaires themselves. Aligning more closely with the Day Reconstruction Method (DRM) and its structured use of set questions (see Kahneman *et al.,* 2004), a shorter questionnaire of emotional wellbeing could be completed on individual days along with the video diary entries, which could provide the participants with the means to reflect on why they experienced those specific emotions.

Lastly, the thesis also contributes to methodological innovations in the study of subjective wellbeing through the use of digital methods, particularly video diaries. Although digital methods were adopted widely during the COVID-19 pandemic given the inability to undertake face-to-face data collection (Keen, Lomeli-Rodriguez and Joffe, 2022), the use of Indeemo to orchestrate video diaries and questionnaires and the use of Zoom to undertake interviews demonstrate their value in studying lived experience and subjective wellbeing outside of such restrictions. Video conferencing technology offered a more time- and cost-effective means of interviewing whilst producing data and facilitating rapport with participants that was equal to that of those conducted in-person. Similarly demonstrating an efficiency in data collection as well as enabling an element of agency on the part of the participants in determining access to their lives, the collection of video diary entries as coordinated through the mobile application and online platform enabled simultaneous insight into the worlds of multiple participants on their terms. The feasibility and success of both the video diaries and the online interviews, however, were potentially facilitated by the normalisation of these technologies and these ways of communicating under the conditions of the pandemic (Self, 2021).

The specific insights provided by the experimental video diary method also reveal its value in exploring emotional experiences and their causes. Constrained by the absence of the prompting and probing of the researcher and restricted in the depth of inquiry that it could facilitate by the length of each entry, the video diaries were limited in their direct contribution to the findings of the research, in comparison to the interviews that were conducted. The interviews thus produced a large amount of the total data collected and constituted the majority of data that was discussed across chapters six, seven and eight. Nevertheless, the video diary method offered a number of benefits and made several important contributions to the research. Suggesting its promise as a preliminary or explorative method, it offered a window into the life of the participants and provided insights that informed the themes and discussions of the interviews. However, it also captured tangible and captivating examples from their day-to-day working life, and as such demonstrates the method's potential in discovering emotional experiences that might otherwise be overlooked and missed by more panoramic methods that are more removed from daily experience. In the context of this research, the method played an important role in revealing the emergence of stress as a result of the insecurity and uncertainty of employment,

but most significantly discovered the feelings of entrapment and confinement caused by prolonged periods spent working from home and the positive experiences of getting out of the house.

As well as being beneficial to data collection, video diaries can also be beneficial for the participants themselves. Rather than solely being a process of instigating knowledge exchange from participant to researcher, there was evidence from the testimonies and comments of those involved in this study that suggested a process of co-production throughout the research, with the video diaries in particular being found to be especially enlightening for them. The potential for diary studies to 'empower' participants, 'enrich' their lives, provide them with the space to learn something about themselves or even to directly improve their mood have been observed in other contexts (Burton and King, 2004; Keleher and Verrinder, 2003; Mackrill, 2008; Meth, 2003; 2004). For the purposes of this research and its focus on subjective wellbeing, many explained that they had found value in stopping, contemplating, and articulating on a regular basis how they felt and why, and in a few cases it shaped their own understanding of their relationship with work, led them to reconsider how they worked and even what they did as a profession. Being embedded within everyday life and providing the means and the impetus for individuals to acknowledge and contemplate a dimension of life that is often left unconsidered, the structure and purpose of the video diary method presents an opportunity for wellbeing research to positively contribute to the issues that it seeks to better understand:

> *"... it's forced me to think about, not just about how I feel during the course of the working day, but also to think about why I feel that way... I think, you know, what I have done and consistently do, is you just sort of take feelings at face value. And you feel the way that you feel and you get on with it, and that's it. As soon as you start actually thinking about how you feel and actually putting a bit of a label on and thinking whether you feel good, and do you feel, you know, frustrated or excited or worried or whatever it might be. As soon as you do that, then you're like, almost forced to try and understand the reasons for feeling that way. And if you start understanding the reasons for feeling that way, you know, then there is a maybe an opportunity to tweak things that have a positive impact. And to be aware, to be aware of and to limit things that have a negative impact"* (Steve, interview).

A final synopsis

Studying home-based, self-employed creative labour and its influence on subjective wellbeing provides insight into the nature and experience of this case study of individualised work and of individualised work more broadly. It reveals the self-fulfilment, satisfaction, enjoyment and meaningfulness of independent creative work, draws attention to the accompanying psychological and emotional burden of insecurity, and evidences the socialities of individually crafted relations, independent creative labour and the work-home that can underpin the positive social functioning of independent homeworkers. As well as demonstrating that individualised work can intrude and erode leisure and 'non-work' time, it discovers the positive emotional geographies of homeworking and of creative home-based work specifically, and further emphasises the necessity and challenge of regular environmental variation to this end. Contributing to an understanding of individualised work, the promise of combining pleasure and work and the value of autonomy over labour are illustrated, along with the personal repercussions of precarious work irrespective of financial difficulties. Challenged is the prevalence of social and professional isolation under the conditions of social atomisation as well as the self-centrism of self-fulfilling labour, and indicated is both the enrichment of work-life integration and the necessity and difficulty of maintaining time and space away from work. Evident too is the agency and resilience required of individuals to mitigate these potential issues associated with individualised work. The research findings have practical and policy value and open up avenues for future research concerning the wellbeing repercussions of individualised work, the advancement of the emotional geographies of homeworking as a promising field of study, and the use and development of mixed-method approaches and video diary methods for the study of subjective wellbeing.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaires

Below are copies of the three wellbeing questionnaires that were used for this research.

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson *et al.,* 1988)

Instructions:
This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you generally feel this way, that is how you feel on average.

Items:	**Scoring:**
Interested	5 – Extremely
Distressed	4 – Quite a bit
Excited	3 – Moderately
Upset	2 – A little
Strong	1 – Very slightly or not at all
Guilty	
Scared	The total score is calculated
Hostile	by finding the sum of the 10
Enthusiastic	positive items, and then the
Proud	10 negative items. Scores
Irritable	range from 10-50 for both
Alert	sets of items. For the total
Ashamed	positive score, a higher
Inspired	score indicates more of a
Nervous	positive affect. For the total
Determined	negative score, a lower
Attentive	score indicates less of a
Jittery	negative affect.
Active	
Afraid	

The UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) satisfaction measures (Jäckle *et al.,* 2017)

Instructions:
Please choose from the number which you feel best describes how dissatisfied or satisfied you are with the following aspects of your current situation.

Items:
Your health
The income of your household
Your house/flat
The amount of leisure time you have
Your life overall
Your present job overall

Scoring:
7 – Completely satisfied
6 – Mostly satisfied
5 – Somewhat satisfied
4 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
3 – Somewhat dissatisfied
2 – Mostly dissatisfied
1 – Completely dissatisfied

Flourishing Scale (FS) (Diener *et al.,* 2010)

Instructions:
Below are 8 statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by indicating that response for each statement.

Items:
I lead a purposeful and meaningful life
My social relationships are supportive and rewarding
I am engaged and interested in my daily activities
I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others
I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me
I am a good person and live a good life
I am optimistic about my future
People respect me

Scoring:
7 – Strongly agree
6 – Agree
5 – Slightly agree
4 – Neither agree nor disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
2 – Disagree
1 – Strongly disagree

Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

Appendix 2: Creative sectors

Below are the creative sectors and relevant occupations as outlined by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2016).

Creative Occupations Group	SOC (2010)	Description
Advertising and marketing	1132	Marketing and sales directors
	1134	Advertising and public relations directors
	2472	Public relations professionals
	2473	Advertising accounts managers and creative directors
	3543	Marketing associate professionals
Architecture	2431	Architects
	2432	Town planning officers
	2435	Chartered architectural technologists
	3121	Architectural and town planning technicians
Crafts	5211	Smiths and forge workers
	5411	Weavers and knitters
	5441	Glass and ceramics makers, decorators and finishers
	5442	Furniture makers and other craft woodworkers
	5449	Other skilled trades not elsewhere classified
Design: product, graphic and fashion design	3421	Graphic designers
	3422	Product, clothing and related designers
Film, TV, video, radio and photography	3416	Arts officers, producers and directors
	3417	Photographers, audio-visual and broadcasting equipment operators
IT, software and computer services	1136	Information technology and telecommunications directors
	2135	IT business analysts, architects and systems designers
	2136	Programmers and software development professionals
	2137	Web design and development professionals
Publishing	2471	Journalists, newspaper and periodical editors
	3412	Authors, writers and translators
Museums, galleries and libraries	2451	Librarians
	2452	Archivists and curators
Music, performing and visual arts	3411	Artists
	3413	Actors, entertainers and presenters
	3414	Dancers and choreographers
	3415	Musicians

Appendix 3: Call for participants

Below are copies of the call for participants materials circulated for recruitment purposes.

Call for participants one-page document

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON | **SeNSS** South East Network for Social Sciences

PhD Research: Call for Participants

Getting personal with work: The impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on wellbeing

Do you work in the creative industries*...

| On a self-employed basis? | For at least 4 days a week? | And while primarily working from home? |

If so, you're eligible to participate in this research!

*The creative industries include the following sectors: 1) advertising and marketing; 2) architecture; 3) crafts; 4) product, graphic and fashion design; 5) film, TV, video, radio and photography; 6) IT, software and computer services; 7) publishing; 8) museums, galleries and libraries; and 9) music, performing and visual arts.

What is this project about?
This research aims to investigate the combined impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on wellbeing (specifically emotions and life evaluations). In doing so, it hopes to advocate for those involved in these forms of work and contribute to the development of best practice within industry and policy.

What will you need to do?
Over a two-week period, you'll be asked to use a mobile app to keep a video diary and complete two short questionnaires. The video diary will involve filming brief entries (1 – 3 mins) at the end of each working day, as well as a short video introduction. A few months later, you'll be invited to participate in an interview. In total, these activities will only take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours of your time, and you'll receive a **£50 voucher** as a thank you!

What do you need to do if you want to participate?
If you would like to participate, have any questions, or want to find out more, please get in touch:
William.Barnes.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk

Please ensure that you:
1. Will be free to complete the video diaries and questionnaires between **18th October – 1st November 2021** and will being working for at least 8 days in that period.
2. Have a smartphone which runs either iOS 11 and above or Android 6 and above.

It is also advised that you do not participate if you have been diagnosed with a severe mental health condition.

Who's behind the project?

Will Barnes is a PhD Researcher at Royal Holloway, University of London studying the relationship between 'intimate' creative work and wellbeing. His interest in this subject comes from personal experience in the world of work, as well as the music and art that he dabbles in when he's not reading or writing for his PhD.

Call for participants Twitter post

Will Barnes
@WillBarnesx
...

📢 Research participants needed! 📢

I'm looking for people who work in the creative industries 🎨 on a self-employed basis 👤 from home 🏠

💷 Each participant will get a £50 voucher! 💷

Please RT and get in touch if you or anyone you know meets the criteria!

More info below 👇

What is the research about?
The purpose of the research is to investigate the impact that homeworking, self-employment and creative work has on wellbeing.

What will participants need to do?
1) Complete two short questionnaires (6-8 mins in total)
2) Keep a video diary for a two weeks (20-30 mins in total)
3) Participate in an interview (approx. 1 hour)

What classes as 'creative work'?
The creative industries include the following sectors:
1) advertising and marketing; 2) architecture; 3) crafts; 4) product, graphic and fashion design; 5) film, TV, video, radio and photography; 6) IT, software and computer services; 7) publishing; 8) museums, galleries and libraries; and 9) music, performing and visual arts.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

SeNSS
South East Network for Social Sciences

BRISTOL+BATH CREATIVE R+D

Get in touch:
William.Barnes.2014
@live.rhul.ac.uk

👤 RHULGeography and 2 others

2:28 PM · Aug 18, 2021 · Twitter Web App

📊 View Tweet activity

44 Retweets   **4** Quote Tweets   **28** Likes

Appendix 4: Participant information

Below are two tables outlining information concerning the demographics and work of each research participant.

Demographic information

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Region	Area	Co-habitants
P1 - Natasha	25 to 34	Female	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	West Midlands	Rural or countryside	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger), Pet(s)
P2 - Elizabeth	55 to 64	Female	White	Southwest England	A village	No one
P3 - David T	35 to 44	Male	White	Northwest England	A suburban area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger), Pet(s)
P4 - Faye	45 to 54	Female	White	Northwest England	A suburban area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger), Pet(s)
P5 - Emily	25 to 34	Female	White	Southeast England	A suburban area	Partner/spouse
P6 - Steve	65 or over	Male	White	Southeast England	A village	No one
P7 - Sammy	25 to 34	Female	White	Southwest England	An inner-city area	Partner/spouse, Pet(s)
P8 - Rachel	25 to 34	Female	White	Southwest England	An inner-city area	Partner/spouse, Housemate
P9 - Ben	18 to 24	Male	White	London	An inner-city area	Friend(s)
P10 - Dennis	25 to 34	Male	White	East of England	A village	Partner/spouse
P11 - Duncan	45 to 54	Male	White	London	An inner-city area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger)

P12 - Daniel	25 to 34	Male	White	Southeast England	An inner-city area	Partner/spouse
P13 - David S	45 to 54	Male	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	Southwest England	A suburban area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger)
P14 - Millie	25 to 34	Female	White	East of England	A village	Parent(s)/guardian(s)
P15 - Lucy	35 to 44	Female	White	Southwest England	A suburban area	Lodger(s)/tenant(s)
P16 - Stephen	55 to 64	Male	White	London	An inner-city area	Partner/spouse, Children (over 18), Pet(s)
P17 - Valerie	45 to 54	Female	White	Southeast England	A suburban area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger), Pet(s)
P18 - Alison	35 to 44	Female	White	London	A suburban area	Partner/spouse, Children (18 or younger), Pet(s)
P19 - Joanne	45 to 54	Female	White	Southeast England	A town	Children (18 or younger)
P20 - Mel	25 to 34	Female	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	Northwest England	A suburban area	Parent(s)/guardian(s)
P21 - Megan	45 to 54	Female	White	West Midlands	A town	No one

Work information

Participant	Occupation	Personal income	Household income share	Hours (per week)	Hours at home (%)	Years self-employed in creative industries	Years working from home
P1 - Natasha	Photographer, content creator	Below £10,000	Not main earner	I prefer not to say/do not know	71-80%	11+ years	8-10 years
P2 - Elizabeth	Soft sculpture teddy bear artist	£10,001 to £20,000	Main earner	51-60 hours	91-100%	11+ years	11+ years
P3 - David T	Graphic designer	£30,001 to £40,000	Earnings shared equally	41-50 hours	91-100%	11+ years	5-7 years
P4 - Faye	Graphic designer	£30,001 to £40,000	Earnings shared equally	21-30 hours	91-100%	8-10 years	2-4 years
P5 - Emily	Wedding photographer	£40,001 to £50,000	Earnings shared equally	51-60 hours	61-70%	8-10 years	2-4 years
P6 - Steve	Furniture designer/maker	Above £50,001	Main earner	31-40 hours	91-100%	11+ years	11+ years
P7 - Sammy	Writer, editor	£20,001 to £30,000	Earnings shared equally	21-30 hours	61-70%	11+ years	11+ years
P8 - Rachel	Artist, creative technologist	£20,001 to £30,000	Earnings shared equally	31-40 hours	51-60%	2-4 years	1 year or less
P9 - Ben	Musician	£20,001 to £30,000	Earnings shared equally	21-30 hours	Less than 50%	8-10 years	8-10 years
P10 - Dennis	Entertainer	£20,001 to £30,000	Main earner	31-40 hours	51-60%	8-10 years	8-10 years
P11 - Duncan	Architect, textiles artist	Above £50,001	Main earner	31-40 hours	91-100%	5-7 years	5-7 years
P12 - Daniel	Actor	£10,001 to £20,000	Not main earner	21-30 hours	51-60%	2-4 years	2-4 years
P13 - David S	Photographer	£40,001 to £50,000	Main earner	41-50 hours	91-100%	11+ years	5-7 years

P14 - Millie	Social media content creator	£20,001 to £30,000	Earnings shared equally	31-40 hours	71-80%	1 year or less	2-4 years
P15 - Lucy	Outdoor arts producer	£10,001 to £20,000	Main earner	31-40 hours	71-80%	8-10 years	8-10 years
P16 - Stephen	Musician, broadcaster, music educator	£30,001 to £40,000	Earnings shared equally	31-40 hours	51-60%	11+ years	11+ years
P17 - Valerie	Creative educator	£10,001 to £20,000	Not main earner	21-30 hours	81-90%	1 year or less	1 year or less
P18 - Alison	Artist, arts educator	£20,001 to £30,000	Not main earner	21-30 hours	61-70%	11+ years	11+ years
P19 - Joanne	Arts education consultant	£20,001 to £30,000	Main earner	31-40 hours	91-100%	11+ years	11+ years
P20 - Mel	Concept artist	£30,001 to £40,000	Not main earner	51-60 hours	71-80%	5-7 years	5-7 years
P21 - Megan	Digital marketer	£30,001 to £40,000	Main earner	31-40 hours	91-100%	11+ years	5-7 years

Appendix 5: Video diary guide

Below is a copy of the video diary guide that was circulated to the participants of the study.

Guide: The diary study
18th October – 1st November 2021

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON   SeNSS South East Network for Social Sciences

Getting started

On **Monday 18th October**, the diary phase of the research project will begin, which will involve completing two short questionnaires, recording a brief video introduction and keeping a video diary across a two-week period using an app called Indeemo.

On **Friday 15th October**, you will receive an email inviting you to sign up to the Indeemo app, before the diary study commences on the Monday. Please open the email on your phone, click on the link, and follow the instructions to sign up with Indeemo, download the app, and log in. It is advised that you **do not download the app in advance** of the invitation, as you will not be able to access the research project.

> **Important:** Please **sign up using the same email address** that the invitation is sent to, and make sure that you **enable notifications on the app** when prompted so that you can receive reminders and messages.

On **Monday 18th October**, you will be notified that the first three tasks of the diary study have begun. These will be: 1) a basic information questionnaire, 2) a video introduction and 3) a two-week video diary. All the information you need to complete these tasks will be available in the 'Task List' tab of the app from this date.

On **Monday 1st November**, you will be notified that the fourth and final task of the diary study – the wellbeing questionnaire – is available for you to complete. This is because this task is to only be completed on this day (the last day).

·indeemo·

Click here for video guides provided by Indeemo on how to sign up and submit responses to tasks on the app.

Getting in touch

If you have any questions or queries – no matter how small – about these instructions, the project and your participation, **please do not hesitate to get in touch with me**:

Will Barnes	Email: William.Barnes.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk	Phone: 07881 349876

During the study, Indeemo will also be on hand to help with any technical issues or questions you have about the app and their services:

Indeemo	Email: support@indeemo.com

1

Task List

Below is a quick overview of the four tasks. **All the information that you will need to complete each task will be available in the 'Task List' on the app** from the dates specified below.

(1) **Basic information questionnaire**

📅 18th October   ⏱ 2-3 mins

Quick and easy: click on the link that will be available in the task description and complete the questionnaire.

(2) **Video introduction**

📅 18th October   ⏱ 2-3 mins

Quick and easy: record a short piece to camera using the prompts that will be available in the task description and submit it to the app.

(3) **Video diary**

📅 18th October - 1st November   ⏱ 1-3 mins per video

The main task: at the end of each day that you've been working (**for a minimum of 8 days**), record a brief video of yourself reflecting on how work affected how you felt throughout that day and submit it to the app.

Some extra tips on keeping the video diary can be found below.

(4) **Wellbeing questionnaire**

📅 1st November   ⏱ 4-5 mins

Quick and easy: click on the link that will be available in the task description and complete the questionnaire.

Don't panic!
While there are four tasks, the first two can be ticked off easily right at the beginning on 18th October, and on Monday 1st November, Task 4 won't take long either.

2

The video diary: Further guidance

The video diary task (Task 3) makes up the majority of what you will have to do. Here are a few additional tips and pointers to help.

☑ **Try to film an entry at the end of every working day** even if it is short or you've only worked a few hours (it would even be interesting to hear if you're affected by work in some way even if you're not working). If you can, please aim for 8 entries over the two-week period, but feel free to do more if you would like to. However, don't worry if you miss a day. Reminders will be sent from the app if you haven't posted, but it may be a good idea to set your own reminders on your phone.

☑ **Reflect on how specific things related to your work affected how you felt that day, both positively and negatively.** In particular, think about the impact of working from home (and working elsewhere if applicable), being self-employed, and doing the kind of work it is that you do. Your work may affect how you feel directly (e.g. by something going well), or indirectly (e.g. by impacting other parts of your life). Please be assured that everything is interesting, and all 'work' counts, whether it is creative or uncreative; paid or unpaid; or exciting or boring!

☑ **Try to pinpoint and name the specific emotions**, thoughts or moods that you have experienced.

☑ **Use the comments section under each post**. If you wish you had mentioned something but have already submitted the video, you can leave a note underneath (or record an additional video if you wish).

☑ **Consider keeping notes.** It may help to note down some key points before you start each video diary, or throughout the day to jog your memory later.

[Click here for an example video diary entry](#)

Next steps

After the end of this diary phase of the project, I will be in touch to arrange an interview in the coming weeks/months. After the interview, I will organise for the **£50 e-gift voucher** to be sent to you as a thank you for all your help with the project.

Thank you for your participation!

3

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Below is a copy of the general interview guide developed for the purposes of this project.

Interview guide

Opening

Before we begin, I just want to reiterate that you don't have to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable answering... but essentially all this is going to be is just an informal chat around the kind of themes covered in the second half of the wellbeing questionnaire you answered at the end of the diary study.

Basically, the purpose of this interview is to focus on the more judgement based, or cognitive, dimension of wellbeing. So whereas the video diaries were focused on momentary emotional reactions and daily feelings, this interview will be about understanding why you're generally satisfied or dissatisfied with your work, or why you feel you have a sense of purpose etc. If it's okay, I'll be referring to one or two of the specific answers you gave in the questionnaire, but don't worry, it's not a cross-examination or anything!

Just before we crack on, I just want to double check that you're still happy to go ahead with this interview, and ask if you have any questions before we start?

Are you still happy for it to be recorded too? Okay, I'll start that now.

➤ Anyway, how have things been since you finished up with the video diary task a few weeks/months ago?

➤ I'd be interested to hear a bit more about how you have come to do what you do. What made you decide to go freelance/set up your own business? What were your motivations?
  • Is it connected to a hobby you once had? *If yes...* Has making a living from it changed the essence of it for you, and your enjoyment of it?

Work

➤ In the questionnaire, you said you were [*satisfied/dissatisfied*] with your job. Why is this? What's the main reason for this answer?
  • How much has this got to do with...
    o Working from home?
    o Working from [*wherever else they work*]? (If relevant).
    o What you actually do day to day (e.g. variety/significance/complexity of work & how often you get to do your actual creative practice/work).
    o The control/autonomy you have over what you do and when?
    o The support you get from others, your relationship with your clients, and helping/doing stuff for others?
  • Would you say that your general satisfaction with work often varies?

➤ People often talk about financial insecurity, job uncertainty and long hours as the downsides of being freelance/self-employed, especially in the creative industries. Is this something you can relate to? You said you work [*so many hours a week*]?
  • *If so...* how much does this affect you, and your sense of satisfaction with your work?

- In what ways do you deal with these issues?
- Do you ever find yourself accepting lower pay or overworking because you enjoy work?
- Would you say you feel a lot of pressure to be productive because you're self-employed?

➢ What kind of impact does working independently on your own have on you? Would you say you feel confident and resilient in what you do and how you do things, or do you find yourself doubting yourself at times and feeling vulnerable at all?
- Why? What helps with this?

➢ How does being self-employed and home-based affect your ability to meet other responsibilities (e.g. at home) and pursue other things you like/need to do?
- *If there is conflict*… What takes precedence? Why? Has it got anything to do with being personally invested in work?
- Is there anything you do to try to minimise the conflict between work and these other things?
- *If children*… Where does the responsibility for the children fall? Do the demands of being a mother/father conflict with work at all or not?
- Is this the main reason you feel [*satisfied/dissatisfied*] with the amount of leisure time you have?

➢ How much can you relate to this quote: "Creative work done from the home can often mean being always 'on'; times and spaces and work and leisure become almost impossible to distinguish"?
- Why is that? *If relatable*… how much is that to do with your investment in and enjoyment of the work?
- Does this affect your satisfaction with your work or your leisure time at all?

➢ Do you think being self-employed, home-based and doing the work you do helps or inhibits habits and activities that are good for you, like eating well, exercising, sleeping well etc.?

Connections

➢ (If relevant) In what ways is working from home good or bad for home life and your relationship(s) with [*whoever they live with*]?
- Does it affect the quantity or quality of time you spend together?

➢ Do you often see other people - either friends or family, colleagues, or communities/groups, work or non-work related?
- Is this important to you? [OR] Do you wish you did?
- Do you ever feel isolated at all?
- Would you say you feel well supported in what you do?

Purpose, meaning and self-esteem

➢ How much do you feel that your work contributes to your sense of purpose and meaning in life? How important is it to your sense of fulfilment?
  - In what ways? OR Can you expand? Has it got anything to do with what you contribute and do for others?
  - How important is it compared to other things?
  - What about your sense of self; of being genuine to who you are? How does work impact that?

➢ Okay, I want to run a statement by you to see whether you agree with it, and if you think you can relate to it at all: "There is a creative spark in each of us, and if it finds no outlet, we feel half-dead".
  - If you didn't do what you do, do you think you'd still be able to satisfy that 'creative spark'?

➢ How much would you say the meaning and purpose of home for you is shaped by the fact that you work here too?
  - Often people who work in an office see home as a space to relax and wind down when they're not working – to rejuvenate and 'escape' from the outside world – do you think this is different for you because you work from home?
  - Does home provide a kind of space of 'comfort', security or support that helps with work?
  - Does working from home change your relationship with the 'outside world' at all?

Looking back/forward

➢ Just before we wind up, it would be interesting to hear a bit about how the pandemic affected the things we have been talking about? You know, the impact it had on your work, your home life, and all the other things you do?
  - What kind of impact did this have on you?
  - *If relevant…* How did you feel when you didn't have any work?

➢ And looking forward, do you still feel [*optimistic/unoptimistic*] about things going forward? Why?

Wind down questions

➢ So, that's all the questions I have for the study, but if you don't mind I'd love to just quickly ask you about your experience of this whole research process.
  - How did you find it? Was it interesting at all for you (i.e was it beneficial), or was it more of an inconvenience? Please be honest!
  - Did you find the app process easy or was it hard to navigate?
  - How did you find doing the video diaries? Did you delete any uploads, re-do videos, or watch what you said?

- ➢ Before we finish, is there anything I have missed, or anything you'd like to talk about that you feel is important or relevant?

- ➢ Do you have any questions about anything?

Okay, so that's it! That's everything done. Thank you so much for putting so much time and effort into this research.

In the next few days, I'll organise for the voucher to be sent to you – which voucher would you prefer; a Love2Shop voucher which you can trade in for a voucher specific to one of 30 shops you'd like, or an Amazon voucher?

Appendix 7: Coding framework

Below is a breakdown of the coding framework used to analyse the data.

Code	Description
1. Experiences of work and labour	**These codes focus on the qualities and experiences of everyday labour and the impact they have on wellbeing.**
2. Negative qualities and experiences	**These codes focus on the negative qualities and experiences of everyday labour.**
3. Being unproductive	Not making progress, completing tasks and being productive as desired. Includes references to being disorganised and making mistakes.
3. Creative work	Elements of their creative practice that are unenjoyable, or negatively impact their wellbeing.
3. Finances, worth and uncertainty	The precarity of being self-employed in the creative industries, concerns over income, and job uncertainty/fluctuation, as well as self doubt concerning the sense of worth of their work. Also includes financial-related issues, such as space, equipment and resources. **Sub-nodes:** Busy periods; Cancelled work; Delayed pay; Downturn in work; Financial self-investment; Financial self-management; Fluctuating, uncertain work; Inadequate income; Inadequate resources; Irregular income; Justifying, defending pay; Minimising impact; Pension, holiday pay, sick pay; Pressure to secure work; Rejections; Relying on other income; Self-doubt; Undermined by others; Underpaid, stagnant work; Unrelenting work; Work to earn.
3. High workload	The demands of tight deadlines, never-ending-to-do lists, crises, unanticipated length of tasks, juggling tasks and workstreams, as well as long hours, working times or high intensity work. **Sub-nodes:** Busy days; Client, contract demands; Due to uncertainty; Finding the limit; Influxes of work; Juggling business tasks; Juggling workstreams, projects; Of establishing a business; Overload of deadlines; Perpetual work; Seasonal work; Time pressures; Unanticipated task length; Work until you drop.
3. Inexperience, psychology, perspective	Self-doubt, a lack of confidence or stress as a result of inexperience, perspective, outlook, or a psychological tendency/personality trait.

Code	Description
3. Lack of autonomy	Examples of other forces or individuals dictating their working lives in a negative way. **Sub-nodes:** Demands of clients, customers; Financial necessities; Flexibility for creative career; Impact of other organisational structures.
3. Lack of challenge	Desires to be challenged more, to problem solve and be tested.
3. Lack of social exchange and value	Negative feelings and thoughts regarding their ability to contribute something positive to others through their work. A wish for feedback.
3. Lack of variety	Repetitive and unvarying work tasks.
3. 'Non-creative' tasks	Negative experiences of admin work and other tasks that support or enable their 'creative practice'.
3. Progression and change	Wanting to be further ahead with their career, or their business, than where they are; working towards a goal or an aim, but not quite there. The anticipation of, or desire for, change. Stagnation in work. Uncertainty around or the daunting nature of the future. **Sub-nodes:** (Business) unfulfillment; Desire for progression; Desire for regular work; Self-comparison with others; Stagnation, desire for change; Uncertainty about career path.
3. Responsibility	The responsibility for work, ownership of the business, and sole accountability; working independently wirthout the cushion and support of an organisation. Of work being an 'extension of oneself'.
3. Technology and screen-time	Negative experiences of technology, and the impacts of long screen-time.
2. Positive qualities and experiences	**These codes focus on the positive qualities and experiences of everyday labour.**
3. Autonomy	Control and flexibility as to when, where and how to work, and what to do - both long term and short term.

Code	Description
	Sub-nodes: Balancing work-family; Control over business direction; Control over jobs taken; Control over workload schedule; Control over workspace; Creative freedom; Freedom from management; Freedom from organisational restrictions; Freedom to adapt (security); General statements; Geographical freedom; Temporal freedom; Working to ones ebb and flow.
3. Being productive	Making progress, completing tasks and being productive. Includes references to routine and good organisation and the general value of work for work's sake.
3. Creative work	The act of being creative for work, of doing the essential 'creative practice' of their work and the lifestyle of this, and the development and creation of ideas, and the sense of meaning or purpose, enjoyment, confidence etc. derived from this. **Sub-nodes:** Being paid for something they love; Creative spark statement – agreed; Creative vs non-creative balance; Creative work as selfish; Creativity unconfined to work; Enjoyment of creative work [further sub-nodes]; Sense of self, purpose and meaning [further sub-nodes]; Work-enhanced creativity [further sub-nodes].
3. Experience, resilience, perspective	Confidence, self-esteem and optimism derived from past experience, personal resilience, capability, perspective and direction.
3. 'Non-creative' tasks	Admin work and other tasks that support or enable their 'creative practice'.
3. Problem-solving, decision-making, being challenged	Solving problems as a part of work and being challenged through work; making decisions.
3. Progression	The promises of, and enjoyment of, career progression and achievements, business development, future possibilities and opportunities and learning. **Sub-nodes:** Appreciation of opportunities had; Business development; Career progress; Career prospects; Excitement for work; New directions; Own business as progression; Promising jobs.

Code	Description
3. Responsibility	The responsibility for work, ownership of the business, and sole accountability; working independently wirthout an organisation around you. Of work being an 'extension of oneself'.
3. Social exchange and values	Sharing, inspiring, helping, contributing and connecting through work and their work outputs, and the sense of meaning or purpose - or enjoyment - derived from this. Working towards particular values, principles or goals, and a sense of being needed and of being valued by others. Good feedback. **Sub-nodes:** Bringing people together; Building confidence, self-fulfilment; Enjoyment from outputs; General statements; Getting good feedback, acknowledgement; Getting others creative; Helping others; Offering something new, valuable; Sharing with others; Working in line with values.
3. Variety	Diversity of work tasks; variety in work, new and unique experiences.
3. Work as leisure	References to the sense of doing a hobby/interest for work, or work providing the same benefits that leisure activities or downtime do. Also includes other elements of the 'personalisation' of work.
3. Workload, stability and income	A healthy, manageable amount of work and achievable deadlines; enough work to bring in enough money, and stability and certainty with income and worth; able to juggle various tasks and workstreams; more time as a result of homeworking (i.e. no commute); hours that work for them; simply getting work. Satisfaction with other financial benefits of work. **Sub-nodes:** Adequate, good pay; Attitude; Control over pay; Creating an organisation; Experience; Financial advantages of work; Financial cushion; Getting paid, selling work; Long-term work scheduling; Manageable, satisfactory workloads; Multiple income streams; Optimism with work; Pension schemes; Securing work; Sense of worth; Strong workflow; Uncertainty equals excitement.
1. Social landscape	**These codes focus on the social landscape of independent homeworking and the positive and negative impacts these social interactions and connections have.**

Code	Description
2. Negative social experiences	**These codes focus on the negative impacts of social interactions and connections in line with specific themes. Not all references to social interactions are coded here - only those that are qualified in some way.**
3. Client and colleague interaction	Negative experiences with clients, colleagues, or audiences. If colleagues are family, this is recorded in 'personal relationships'. **Sub-nodes (clients):** Communication issues; Disagreement; Politics; Power imbalance; Unenjoyable, draining interactions. **Sub-nodes (colleagues):** Changing co-workers; Communication issues; Dependency; Irregular contact; Politics; Too much social interaction.
3. Isolation and social desires	References to feeling isolated or lonely, wishing to see others, or not being able to participate in social things or keep in touch with people. Desires to be with and around others. **Sub-nodes:** General statements; Non-work – general social contact; Non-work – support; Work- social contact; Work – support.
3. Non-work social experiences	Negative social experiences not associated with their creative work, either on a personal level or as a result of other work engaged with.
3. Personal relationships	Examples of family members being critical of and not accommodating of work; the impact of work on household and family relationships or the family themselves, or vis versa. **Sub-nodes:** Criticism from others; Others impacting work; Too much time with others; Unaccommodating, friction; Work impact on others; Work impact on time with others.
3. Self-comparison	The negative impact born from measuring oneself against someone else or the considering the perceptions of others.
2. Positive social spaces and networks	**These codes focus on the positive impacts of social interactions and connections, in the context of both work and personal life. Not all references to social interactions are coded here - only those that are qualified in some way.**

Code	Description
3. Communities and groups (non-work)	Positive social communities and networks beyond the home - in-person and online - on a personal level, such as an attachment to local communities. References to large groups are added here, instead of into 'Individuals (non-work)'. **Sub-nodes:** Connection over isolation; Generally positive; Improved relationships; Providing help and support.
3. Communities and groups (work)	Positive social relations from large groups such as communities or networks, both in person and online, beyond the home in the context of work, such as support from those in co-working spaces. **Sub-nodes:** Clients, work functions; Communities (general); Co-workers and colleagues (general); Co-working spaces and offices; Online communities.
3. Home (non-work)	Positive social relations from within the home on a personal level, such as through providing company, the sense of purpose or meaning derived from family, or being able to spend time with family because of homeworking. **Sub-nodes:** Company, countering isolation; Help and support; Sense of connection; Time with others.
3. Home (work)	Positive social relations from within the home or from members of the household in the context of work, such as family members helping with work, or being inspired by seeing them work, or work providing opportunities to bond. **Sub-nodes:** Accommodating of work; Awareness and understanding of their work; Connection and engagement with work; Enforcement of boundaries; General support with work; Help and participation in work; Time together through work.
3. Individuals (non-work)	References to specific individuals, such as external family members or friends, that positively contribute to wellbeing. **Sub-nodes:** Connection over isolation; Downtime; Generally positive; Helping them; Providing help and support.
3. Individuals (work)	References to specific individuals such as colleagues, clients or collaborators, that positively contribute to wellbeing. **Sub-nodes:** Clients [further sub-nodes]; Colleagues, co-workers, networks [further sub-nodes]; Family and friends [further sub-nodes]; Mentors and agents [further sub-nodes]; In-person interaction; Online interaction.

Code	Description
3. Positive social independence	References to being happy with one's own company, being standalone, having time to oneself, or not being in an office. **Sub-nodes:** Autonomy and environmental control; Conditional in sociable time; Enjoyment of own company; 'Fine' with own company Fine without local connections; Fits personality; Removal of social requirements and pressures; Standalone.
3. Other	More general references to positive social interactions and relationships, or references that don't fit in any of the categories above.
1. Experiences of home and leisure	**These codes focus on the impact of the spatial intimacy of work and home in the context of work, and the psychological intimacy of doing something that was once a hobby, and working for yourself.**
2. Boundaries and boundarylessness	**These codes focus on the presence or absence of boundaries between work and home and the consequential relationship and interactions between these two domains, and the impact these relationships and interactions have on wellbeing.**
3. Not switching off (and on)	Of difficulties with regard to transitioning, psychologically, between work and non-work mindsets/domains. References to feeling like it's difficult to stop working and having downtime. Work 'taking over' as a result of working independently at home; filling time with work and not being able to 'switch off' from work. Also includes references to difficulty with 'switching on' or building up to work. **Sub-nodes:** Lack of social boundaries; Lack of spatial boundaries and distance; Lack of temporal boundaries; Love, passion, enjoyment; Nothing to switch off with; People pleasing; Planning, organisation and ideas; Work communication; Work-leisure blurring; Work pressures and demands.
3. Switching off (and on)	Ability to psychologically transition easily and sustainably between work and non-work domains. **Sub-nodes:** Completing work; Cues and signals; Digitally disconnecting; Doing housework; Mental fatigue and processes; No need to; Not spatially separating work; Organising work; Other activities inside; Other activities outside; Spatially separating work; Temporal boundaries; Creative work.

Code	Description
3. Temporary escapes	References to things, activities or places that provide a temporary 'escape' from work and home, such as going for walks, reading or going to other places. **Sub-nodes:** Exercising, Reading, Sleeping, Socialising, Walking, Going somewhere specific, Gym, Hobbies at home, Swimming, Walking, Other.
3. Other places	References to other places beyond the home as having an impact on their wellbeing, beyond any connection to socialising with others and irrespective of the need to get away from work and/or home. **Sub-nodes:** Being outside; Change of environment; Contrast with home; General positive experiences; Interest and inspiration; Negative experiences; Not switching off or stopping work; Paradoxes; Separating work and home; Switching off and relaxing.
3. Work-life balance	Practical: Being able to satisfy work, household and other responsibilities and leisure needs as a result of working independently from home and the creation of boundaries or the boundarylessness of their work. **Sub-nodes:** For work [further sub-nodes]; With (dependent) children [further sub-nodes]; With health [further sub-nodes]; With housework [further sub-nodes]; With pastimes, downtime, hobbies [further sub-nodes].
3. Work-life disruption	Practical: Interruptions to work from household/family responsibilities or issues or other distractions of the home, or works impact on household responsibilities, family time, leisure time and other necessities, as a result of the boundarylessness of their work, but only in the context of homeworking and doing their passion for work. Negative repercussions of the blurring of the boundaries between work and home/life. The clashing/pressures of high demands from both work and home life. **Sub-nodes:** Health issues [further sub-nodes]; Leisure issues [further sub-nodes]; Practical issues [further sub-nodes]; Social issues [further sub-nodes]; Other.

Code	Description
2. Emotions and meanings of home	**These codes focus on the emotional experiences of home, and the meanings that the participants assign to the space, in the context of homeworking.**
3. Cabin fever	References to feeling stuck or sick of home, or getting cabin fever, as a result of working from home NOT in the context of COVID (for those references see 'COVID-19 pandemic' node)
3. 'Getting out'	References to 'getting out' of the house as having an effect on their wellbeing. Also includes references to needing a 'change of scenery' for work.
3. Home 'comforts'	References to the home providing calm, easy and relaxing spaces to work, time to oneself, and the space to work and think. Also: being around things that are meaningful to you, both personally and professionally - being 'at home' in 'your space'. General references to home being a haven, a base, a place to relax and unwind. Work as positively influencing one's sense of home. Additionally includes any negative impacts of such 'comforts'.
3. Home not as haven	Descriptions of home as being 'unhomely' as a result of work; of not being a 'haven', a 'base', or a space to relax etc in the context of work. Also includes general references to 'unhomeliness' irrespective of work.
3. Home paradox	Of wanting to be home when you are not at home, and wanting to be out when you are. Or, the tensions between the enjoyments of home's comforts and the knowledge that getting out is good and important.

Appendix 8: Information sheet and consent form

Below is a copy of the information sheet and consent form that was completed by participants.

Participant information sheet

Project: Getting personal with work: The impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on wellbeing

Researcher: Will Barnes, PhD Researcher

Institution: Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London

Date: 2nd September 2021

What is the purpose of this study and how is it funded?

This PhD research aims to investigate the impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on wellbeing. It has been devised in response to calls to better understand the consequences of the shift towards individualised work conducted in peoples own homes, in particular for freelancers working in the creative industries. In doing so, it hopes to advocate for these workers, and contribute to the development of best practice within industry and policy. The study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and is also supported with a bursary from the Bristol and Bath Creative R+D's New Scholars Fellowship Scheme.

What does participation involve?

1. Keeping a video diary
(Approximately 30 minutes in total over two weeks)
Using a mobile app called Indeemo, you will be asked to keep a video diary over a two-week period. This will involve recording an entry (1-3 minutes in length) at the end of each working day, reflecting on how your work has affected how you felt throughout that day. This will also include a short video introduction about yourself. Further instructions about the app and the video diaries will be circulated in due course.

2. Completing two short questionnaires
(Approximately 10 minutes in total)
The first questionnaire will ask about you, and general characteristics about your work. The second questionnaire will ask you about the emotions, feelings and moods you experience, how satisfied you are, and your sense of self-esteem, purpose, optimism, and connection to others. Both of these questionnaires will also be administered using the Indeemo app.

3. Participate in one interview
(Approximately one hour in total)
In an informal interview, you will be asked to reflect on why you feel the way you do about your work, and things in general. These interviews will be conducted over Zoom or in person (in a place that is quiet and where you feel comfortable, such as your home), at a time that suits you.

1

When will this be happening?

The project is broken up into two phases: the diary phase and the interview phase. The diary phase, which involves the questionnaires and video diaries, will take place from **18th October to 1st November 2021** (an invitation to sign up to the app will be sent on 15th October). To ensure a good number of video diary entries, it is asked that you will be **working on at least 8 days** during that period (if this may be an issue please get in contact). The date of the interview in the second phase can be tailored to when best suits you but will need to be between **December 2021** and **March 2022**.

What is the Indeemo app?

The Indeemo app is an in-the-moment, mobile ethnography app and experience research platform which allows you to post videos, photos and notes in response to tasks. You will be sent an invitation via email to register for the project which will direct you to download the Indeemo app on your smartphone and log in (it is advised that you do not download the app in advance of the invitation, as you will not be able to access the research project). To use the Indeemo app, you will need to own a smartphone which runs either iOS 11 and above or Android 6 and above. If you are unsure how to check this, follow [these steps](#).

What are the benefits of participation?

Studies such as this are often found to be enjoyable and productive for participants, providing an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on daily life. The project will also provide a platform for your experiences to be heard and shape our understanding of the personal impact of working practices that are prominent and on the rise in the UK. As a thank you for your time after completing the above tasks, you will also receive a **£50 voucher from Love2shop** that can be exchanged for an e-gift card from a range of [over 30 brands](#), **or a £50 Amazon voucher**, depending on your preference.

Are there any potential risks to participants?

Due to the relatively personal nature of the subject, there is the chance that participation may involve forms of self-observation that are new and unsettling. However, you will not be asked to talk about anything or put yourself in any situation that you do not feel comfortable with. You can decide not to answer any question and ask for conversations to move on from subjects you do not wish to discuss, and you will be free to withdraw from the research at any point without having to give a reason. If you have been diagnosed with a severe mental health condition, it is advised, in line with Royal Holloway's ethical guidelines, that you do not participate in this research. If you wish to discuss this further, please get in contact.

What about anonymity and confidentiality?

You will be free to decide whether you wish to remain anonymous or recognisable in this research:

- You will be able to choose whether you want to be referred to in the research by your first name, or whether you would prefer a pseudonym to be used instead.
- You will be able to choose whether you are happy or not for your video diary entries to be shown as part of presentations and other research outputs.

You will be able to declare your preference at the end of this document. While you will be free to change your decision at any time, please be aware that publications and presentations may have already been completed and circulated.

2

What will happen to the information I provide?

Your video diary entries and video introduction entry will be recorded and stored by Indeemo for the duration of the fieldwork period plus an additional six weeks, after which it will be deleted from their system and transferred to a University OneDrive folder owned by the researcher. Unless requested otherwise, your interview will be recorded and transcribed at a later date. Both the audio file and the transcription will be stored in the same OneDrive folder as the video diary entries and video introduction entry. Your questionnaire answers will be collected using software provided by Online Surveys and will also be downloaded and stored on the OneDrive folder, after which it will be deleted from their system. As a participant, you will be free to request copies of your audio files, transcripts, videos and documents, with the option of making changes to, or removing, answers, up until the conclusion of the data analysis process (likely to be around August 2022). You also have the right to withdraw consent to the use of any of your information, up until the conclusion of the data analysis process.

Data analysis will involve the use of NVivo software, as well as analytical tools provided by both Indeemo and Online Surveys. The findings from this analysis will be discussed in a PhD thesis written by the researcher. Other possible outputs from the research may include a policy brief published with the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed (IPSE), as well as academic journal articles, presentations, and talks. More creative outputs will also be considered. Some video diary recordings and stills, and quotes from the interviews, may be used in these outputs.

In accordance with GDPR protocol, your data will not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purposes of this research and the project's outputs.

How safe will my data be and who will have access to it?

Both Indeemo and Online Surveys abide by strict security measures and protocols with regard to the storage and processing of your data. After the data has been collected and processed by both companies, it will be transferred to an encrypted, password protected University OneDrive folder owned by the researcher. Staff at Indeemo and Online Surveys will have access to your information for the period that it is stored on their systems, but both companies are GDPR compliant. The recordings and the transcripts of your interviews will also be stored in this encrypted University OneDrive folder. Your signed consent form, the spreadsheet containing your contact details, and all other documents containing information you provide will be individually encrypted and password protected. Only the researcher will have access to your signed consent form, but the email address that you provide will be given to a member of staff in the Department of Geography to process your voucher. Elements of the data you provide may also be discussed with the project's supervisors.

What ethical approval processes has this project been through?

Royal Holloway is committed to undertaking research to the highest level of integrity and ethical responsibility, in accordance with the internationally agreed Concordat to Support Research Integrity. To this end, this project has been approved by Royal Holloway's Research Ethics Committee.

GDPR Statement

Important General Data Protection Information (GDPR) – Royal Holloway, University of London is the sponsor for this study and is based in the UK. We will be using information from you in order to

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undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Any data you provide during the completion of the study will be stored securely hosted on servers within the European Economic Area. Royal Holloway is designated as a public authority and in accordance with the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Act 1985 and the Statutes which govern the College, we conduct research for the public benefit and in the public interest. Royal Holloway has put in place appropriate technical and organisational security measures to prevent your personal data from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in any unauthorised way or altered or disclosed. Royal Holloway has also put in place procedures to deal with any suspected personal data security breach and will notify you and any applicable regulator of a suspected breach where legally required to do so. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible (i.e., the email address you provide us). The lead researcher will keep your contact details confidential and will use this information only as required (i.e., to provide a summary of the study results if requested and/or for the prize draw). The lead researcher will keep information about you and data gathered from the study, the duration of which will depend on the study. Certain individuals from RHUL may look at your research records to check the accuracy of the research study. If the study is published in a relevant peer-reviewed journal, the anonymised data may be made available to third parties. The people who analyse the information will not be able to identify you. You can find out more about your rights under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 by visiting https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/more/governance-and-strategy/data-protection/ and if you wish to exercise your rights, please contact dataprotection@royalholloway.ac.uk

What can I do if I have any questions or concerns?
Debriefings will be organised after you have finished to discuss your experience and any questions that may have arisen during the research. However, if you have any concerns or questions before, during or after the study, please do not hesitate to get in touch:

Email: William.Barnes.2014@live.rhul.ac.uk   **Mobile:** 07881 349876

The supervisors of this project can also be contacted at the following addresses:
Dr. Oli Mould (primary supervisor)   **Email:** Oli.Mould@rhul.ac.uk
Professor Gillian Symon (secondary supervisor)   **Email:** Gillian.Symon@rhul.ac.uk

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Next steps…

Before completing the consent form below, please indicate that you are eligible to participate in this study by **answering the following questions**.

Place a cross in the appropriate boxes (by clicking on the box):	Yes	No
1. I work in the **'creative industries'**, which includes the following sectors: • Advertising and marketing • Architecture • Crafts • Design: Product, graphic and fashion Design • Film, TV, video, radio and photography • IT, software and computer services • Publishing • Museums, galleries and libraries • Music, performing and visual arts	☐	☐
1a. On a **self-employed** basis.	☐	☐
1b. For at least approximately **4 days** a week (for approx. 18+ hours a week).	☐	☐
1c. While working **primarily from home** (approx. 50%+ of working hours).	☐	☐

Place a cross in the appropriate boxes:	Yes	No
2. I have a smartphone which runs either iOS 11 and above or Android 6 and above.	☐	☐
3. I will be working on at least 8 days between **18th October – 1st November 2021.**	☐	☐
4. I'm likely to still be working from home, self-employed and working full time in the creative industries until **March 2022**.	☐	☐
5. I do not currently suffer from a severe mental health condition. *	☐	☐

*This is to help avoid the risk of participants having a negative experience during this research, in line with Royal Holloway's ethical guidelines.

If you have answered yes and agree to the terms and conditions of the research as outlined in this document, please complete and sign the consent form that is attached below. If anything is subject to change, these changes will be communicated with you to ensure that you are still happy with the parameters of this research project. Please retain a copy of this document for future reference.

Participant Consent Form

Project: Getting personal with work: The impact of homeworking, self-employment and creative work on wellbeing

Researcher: Will Barnes, PhD Researcher

Institution: Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London

If you are happy to participate in this project, please complete and sign this consent form.

Place a cross in the appropriate boxes:	Yes	No
1. I have read the information sheet about this study and agree to the terms and conditions of the research which it explains.	☐	☐
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to any questions that have been asked.	☐	☐

Place a cross in the appropriate boxes:	Yes	No
3. I understand and accept that my data (words and visual images that I have created) will be analysed and may be reproduced in publications, presentations, talks and other research outputs written or created by the researcher.	☐	☐
4. I understand and accept that interviews and discussions will be recorded.	☐	☐
5. I understand and accept any risks that come with participating in this research.	☐	☐
6. I understand and accept that Indeemo and Online Surveys will have access to my data during specific periods of the project.	☐	☐

Place a cross in the appropriate boxes:	Yes	No
7. I am aware of my rights to ask for my data (words and visual images that I have created) to be changed or deleted, up until analysis has been fully completed.	☐	☐
8. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time from this research without giving a reason.	☐	☐
9. I understand that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.	☐	☐

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Please choose one of the following two options:

a) I would like my real name to be used in the research outputs *(Note: this will only be your first name).*	☐
b) I would like my real name to be replaced with a pseudonym in the research outputs.	☐

Please choose one of the following three options:

a) I am happy for my video diary entries to be shown in presentations or as part of other research outputs.	☐
b) I do not want my video diary entries to be shown in presentations or as part of other research outputs.	☐
c) I would like to choose which of my video diary entries are okay to be shown in presentations or as part of other research outputs.	☐

If you have answered yes to statements 1-9 on page 6, please sign below to indicate that you agree to participate in this study:

Click or tap here to enter text.   Click or tap to enter a date.
―――――――――――――――   ―――――――――――――
Name of participant (full name)   Date

Click or tap here to enter text.
―――――――――――――――
 Signature (typed)

Please provide your contact details below so that further information and instructions can be shared with you in due course.
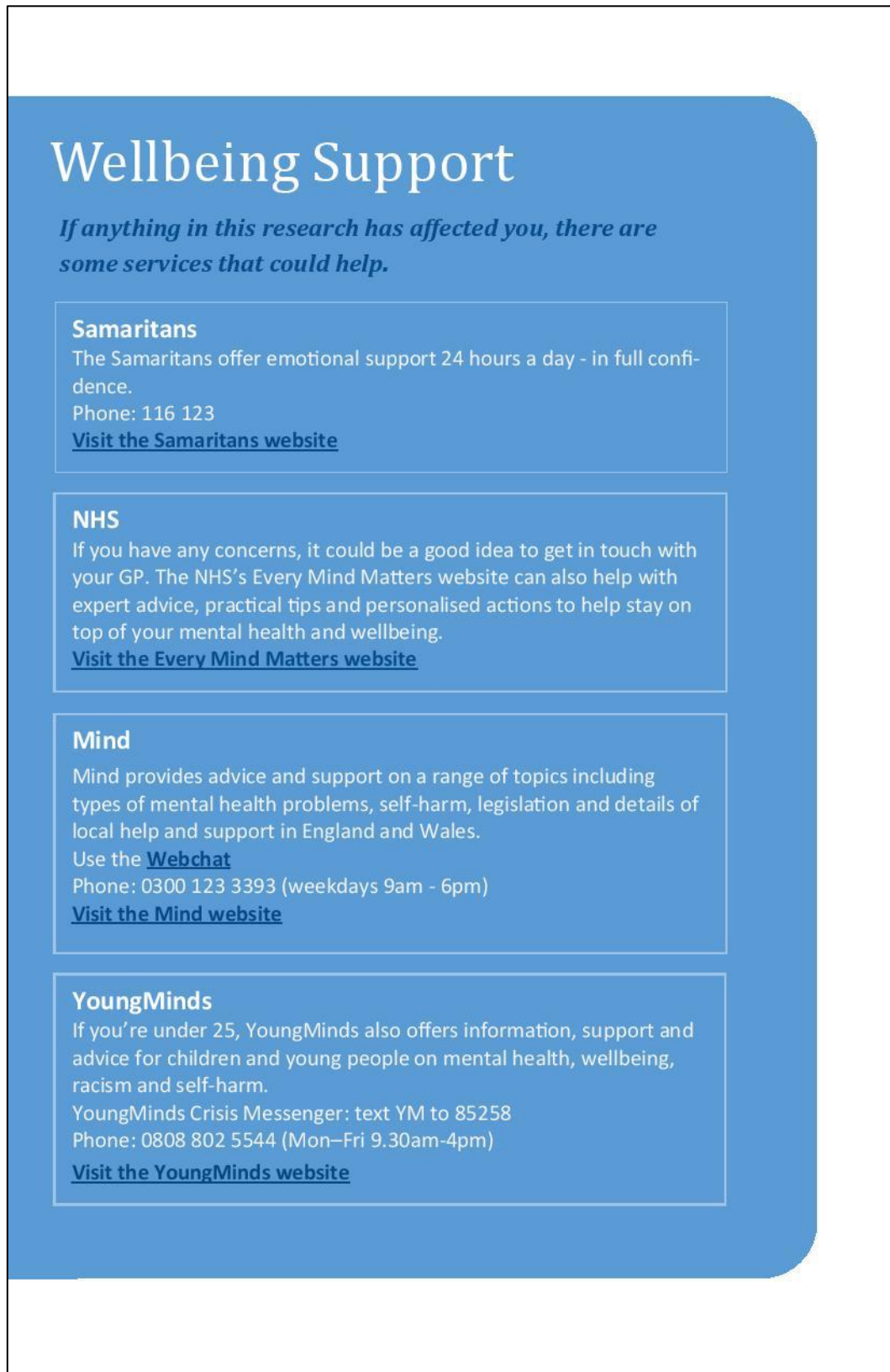
Click or tap here to enter text.
――――――――――――――――――
Email

Click or tap here to enter text.
――――――――――――――――――
Phone number

Appendix 9: Wellbeing support postcard

Below is a copy of the information postcard created to detail wellbeing services.

Wellbeing Support

If anything in this research has affected you, there are some services that could help.

Samaritans
The Samaritans offer emotional support 24 hours a day - in full confidence.
Phone: 116 123
Visit the Samaritans website

NHS
If you have any concerns, it could be a good idea to get in touch with your GP. The NHS's Every Mind Matters website can also help with expert advice, practical tips and personalised actions to help stay on top of your mental health and wellbeing.
Visit the Every Mind Matters website

Mind
Mind provides advice and support on a range of topics including types of mental health problems, self-harm, legislation and details of local help and support in England and Wales.
Use the **Webchat**
Phone: 0300 123 3393 (weekdays 9am - 6pm)
Visit the Mind website

YoungMinds
If you're under 25, YoungMinds also offers information, support and advice for children and young people on mental health, wellbeing, racism and self-harm.
YoungMinds Crisis Messenger: text YM to 85258
Phone: 0808 802 5544 (Mon–Fri 9.30am-4pm)
Visit the YoungMinds website

Appendix 10: Risk assessment form

Below is a copy of the risk assessment form that was approved by the Health and Safety Coordinator of the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Appendix 4: Royal Holloway, University of London - Fieldwork Risk Assessment Form

Form Identification No. (For Departmental Use)	

SECTION 1: GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS	
Proposed fieldwork by (group or individual): William Barnes	Status (undergraduate/postgraduate/staff): Postgraduate
Department: Geography	Name of risk assessor: William Barnes
Named Course Leader/Supervisor (if different): Dr. Oli Mould	Course and course code (if applicable): n/a

Is this fieldwork for:			
a. Undergraduates		a. Teaching purposes	
b. Postgraduates	x	b. Thesis	x
c. Staff		c. Dissertation	
d. Other		d. Other research project	

Location: Multiple – homes of research participants (to be specified)

Dates:	From: January 2022	To: March 2022

SECTION 2: DETAILED ITINERARY	
Place of departure: Home – Hartley Wintney, Hampshire, UK	Destination(s): Multiple – homes of research participants within the South East of England and London (possibly in other parts of the UK, but online interviews will be encouraged in these instances)
Mode of transport/travel arrangements: Car (personal)	Dates of stay at accommodation: Not applicable
Name, address and telephone number of accommodation: Not applicable	Name, address and telephone number of fieldwork base camp (if different): Not applicable

Summary of proposed activities:
Interviews conducted with some of the research participants at their own homes (potentially also other places where they feel comfortable). Interviews will take approximately between an hour and two hours, and will involve only the researcher (William Barnes) and the participant.

Equipment/techniques to be used:
Semi-structured interviews, notebook, audio recorder.

SECTION 3: PRE-TRIP PREPARATION AND CHECKS	
Insurance (please specify personal, third party, travel, equipment) arranged with and date: Not applicable	
Equipment inventory attached?	Yes/**No**
List of field workers attached? *	Yes/**No**
Ratio of staff to students identified to be necessary:	Not applicable
Health Checks & Vaccinations identified to be necessary (please specify): Not applicable	
Specific health requirements for individuals available to Course leader?	Yes/**No**
Record of next of kin details for each individual available to Course leader? *	Yes/**No**
Record of Foreign Office advice (to be checked immediately prior to overseas trips): Not applicable	

SECTION 4: DECLARATION
The above has been completed to the best of my/our knowledge and is an accurate identification of the known or foreseeable hazards and of the safety controls to be followed.

Risk Assessor	Signature:	Date: 2nd July 2021
Worker or course leader	Signature:	Date:
Supervisor	Signature:	Date: 2nd July 2021
Health and Safety Co-ordinator	Signature:	Date:2/07/2021

* To be logged with Head of Department

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ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: FIELDWORK RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of Person Undertaking Assessment		Date Conducted	Field Trip / Fieldwork being undertaken					
William Barnes		1st July 2021	Interview data collection for PhD research.					
Ref No	**Hazard under review**	**No & Description of Staff/Students/** **Others Involved**	**Existing Controls**	**Assessed Level of Risk**			**Further Action Required**	**By (Date) + Review Date**
				L	**M**	**H**		
Physical Hazards (e.g. extreme weather, mountains and cliffs, quarries, excavations, marshes and quicksand, fresh or seawater, etc)*								
Biological Hazards (e.g. poisonous animals or plants, aggressive animals, soil (tetanus), freshwater where rats may be endemic (leptospirosis or Weil's disease), dense vegetation (where Lyme disease from sheep ticks could be endemic), insects, hygiene, etc)*								
1	Potential risk of Covid-19	Researcher and all participants involved (between 1-18)	Masks to be worn indoors, spare clean masks will be taken provided for participants if they do not have their own. Hand sanitiser also to be used regularly, before and after entering homes. A lateral flow test will be taken before travelling to an interview. Travelling by car limits the risk of exposure to the virus (in comparison to being on public transport).		X		Before the interview, participants will be asked if they are suffering from any Covid-19 symptoms, or have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and are having to self-isolate. Interviews will be rescheduled or moved online if the participants have symptoms or are having to self-isolate. Interviews will also be moved online or rescheduled if the researcher has symptoms or has to self-isolate, or if travel or social restrictions are in place. Social distancing guidelines will be abided to.	
Chemical Hazards (e.g. pesticides, dusts, contaminated soils, chemicals brought on the site, biological fixatives, etc)*								
Man-made Hazards (e.g. electrical equipment, machinery, transport and vehicles on site, insecure buildings, slurry and silage pits, power and pipelines, military property)*								
Personal Safety (e.g. lone working, night working, attack on person or property, cultural differences, poor communication/remoteness etc)*								

2	Data collection likely to take place in an unfamiliar location. In some cases people may not be already known to the researcher.	Researcher	The 'Find my Friends' app will be enabled.	X			Regular updates of progress will be given to a family member.	
Environmental Hazards (e.g. pollution, rubbish, disturbance of eco-system, cultural/social differences etc)*								
Travel Hazards (public transport, travel disruption, vehicle hire, accommodation, catering, driving abroad, off-road driving etc)								
3	General travel risks (possibility of road accident and physical injury)	Researcher and members of the public	Online communication will be encouraged in place of long journeys. Journeys will unlikely be longer than 1.5-2 hours in length one way, which the researcher has experience doing. The car and driver are covered by adequate, comprehensive insurance.	X			Speed limits and other rules of the road will be abided to. Driving in adverse conditions will be avoided.	
Safeguarding (children, vulnerable adults, both students and locals if appropriate)								
First aid (for field trips only)								
For UK trips only: Emergency Procedures (terrorist attack, travel disruption, severe weather, serious injury etc)								
Other Hazards (please specify)*								

4

				X		
	Potential psychological/emotional stress caused by the discussion of a sensitive topic (the research focuses on wellbeing)	Research and all participants involved (between 1-18)	Individuals that have been diagnosed with a severe mental health condition will not be recruited for this research (individuals interested in participating will have to complete an eligibility form, prior to the consent form, that asks them whether they have been diagnosed with a severe mental health condition). Information postcards detailing local and national mental health and wellbeing services will be prepared and offered to the participants if necessary. Interviews will be appropriately spaced apart to allow for the information to be processed by the researcher. The project supervisors will also provide support if needed.	X	During the interview, participants will be reassured that they do not have to place themselves in any situation that might make them feel uncomfortable, and that they can withdraw from the research at any point without having to give a reason. The interviews will be conducted in a way that will allow the participants to control the pace, depth and direction of the discussion of any emotional topics and, if necessary, they will be paused or terminated. Journaling will be used by the researcher to process emotions that may arise.	

* Specify precisely which apply

Name of Person Reviewing the Assessment	Date Reviewed	Job Title of the Person Reviewing the Assessment

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