

**Work Centrality in the Independent Work Economy of Post-Industrial Society**

by

**Paul Jonathan English**

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at

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## **Abstract**

In the last decade, the nature of employment has undergone a fundamental and progressive shift. Many observers believe we are at the dawn of a major 'job shift' (Bridges, 1994). Futurists including Handy (1984), Robertson (1985), Bridges (1994), and Foot (1996) have all pointed to the movement away from organisational jobs toward independent work. These individuals propose that individuals would become self-employed service providers, who would work on their own account to meet their own needs, often on a portfolio of contracts for different clients. There has been significant factual support for these predictions. In Canada, self-employment grew twice as fast as paid employment over the past two decades, but between 1990 and 1995 it grew a staggering nine times as fast.

The transition from a culture dominated by organisational employment to one dominated by independent workers will bring about fundamental shifts, that may have a major impact on the fundamental meaning and interpretation of the place of work in people's lives. The purpose of this study was to examine the potential impact of experiences of independent work on work centrality. Work centrality has been defined as, "the beliefs that individuals have regarding the degree of importance that work plays in their lives" (Paullay, Alliger, Stone-Romero, 1994). Fortunately, there are many individuals who are currently working in this manner, and this study sought to obtain and understand their experiences of independent work in the context of work centrality.

The most appropriate method with which to approach this study was deemed to be narrative analysis. The intent of this qualitative approach was to extract rich descriptive information that could generate greater understanding of the potential effects of independent work on work centrality. A semi-structured interview format was employed, which sought to elicit the participants' stories, anecdotes and general experiences of independent working. Questions pertained to salient characteristics of independent work, in the context of the value and decision making components of work centrality. The results of the narratives were maintained on an individual to individual basis, in order to obtain a more holistic view of each unique experience. Central themes were identified across the participants, and core narrative in respect of these themes was identified.

Participant's narratives generated numerous insights into the nature and meaning of independent work at the dawn of the post-industrial era. The pivotal factor emerged as the degree of control and autonomy inherent in the independent realm. In short, there was a much greater sense of ownership over their work behaviour. Participants were able to dictate the content and direction of their work, and their flexibility and control over work patterns allowed them more opportunity to position work according to personal values, needs and desires on a consistent basis. It emerged that independent work can create a more transparent vessel, that can provide a more accurate reflection of work centrality relative to other life spheres. However, it emerged that this almost utopian world of independent work is heavily mediated by financial security, the power balance between the individual and the market, and several unique characteristics of independent work.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### Context for the Study

In the last decade, the nature of employment has undergone a fundamental and progressive shift. Many observers believe we are at the dawn of a major 'job shift' (Bridges, 1994). The catalyst for this shift can be seen as the transition from the industrial to the 'post-industrial society'. The rapid advances in digital technology at the end of the 20th century are serving to replace the industrial era's electromechanical infrastructure with a computational infrastructure (Fortune, May 17, 1993). The economy is increasingly focused on knowledge and information in a service led economy, as opposed to physical goods in a manufacturing economy. The subsequent impact is the creation of a fundamentally different society, with a wholly different economy and culture.

These shifts have begun to erode traditional and standard forms of work. In their place, non-standard work is flourishing. Standard employment is usually defined as a full year, full time job with a single employer. Most Canadians are employed this way, but trends suggest that this is rapidly changing. For example, the Economic Council of Canada (1990) found that half of all new jobs created between 1980-1988 were 'non-standard.' Non-standard employment includes part-time, short term, temporary or contract jobs, and the 'own account' self-employed (The Advisory Group on Working Time, 1994).

It is becoming a widely held belief that the non-standard work of today will soon become the norm, and the traditional job will become the exception rather than the rule. David Foot (1996) believes that this proliferation of non-standard work will result in a growing number of us having 'transitory' career paths, where the workforce will need to adopt whatever occupation is necessary to get work. Acting essentially as a self-employed service provider, individuals may need to develop a series of employment relationships to achieve the hours and income required. Handy (1994) predicts a similar environment, referring to 'portfolio workers', who would perform different bits and pieces of work in different forms for different employers. Robertson (1985) refers to a re-birth of 'ownwork' where individual workers focus on their own account to meet their own needs. This type of independent work will be increasingly mediated by communications technology, as work becomes more de-centralised and de-localised. Toffler (1980) spoke of a return to the cottage industries characteristic of pre-industrial society, on a new higher electronic basis. This development was termed the 'electronic cottage' industry.

The intuition and extrapolations of futurists like Toffler (1980), Robertson (1985) Handy (1984) and Bridges (1994), relating to how work will develop in a post-industrial society, are achieving significant credibility as major symptoms of their predictions emerge. Perhaps the largest surprise is the speed with which characteristics of this predicted future have emerged.

Self-employment grew twice as fast as paid employment over the past two decades, but between 1990 and 1995, it grew a staggering nine times as fast. Even though there are five times as many paid workers as self-employed ones, the number of new jobs created by the two sectors was nearly equal during the first 11 months of 1996; 108,000

paid employees and 94,000 self-employed. From 1986 to 1996, growth in self-employment (39%) was four times that of paid workers (10%) (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Spring 1997).

### Central Research Question

There is evidence of a proliferation of independent workers who operate from home, on a contract portfolio basis. How will this way of working affect how work is interpreted and positioned for the individual? Does independent work lead to a fundamental re-evaluation of the centrality of work?

### Research Objective

To develop a model that will identify the key issues and factors that can determine work centrality in this world of independent work. It is intended that this model will highlight the decision-making processes involved in how work is positioned in the life of the individual.

### Significance of the Study

This emerging 'job shift' will obviously have a major impact on the fundamental meaning of work and employment in peoples lives. The transition from a culture

dominated by organisational employees to one dominated by independent workers will bring about fundamental shifts that will reverberate throughout society.

Just as the dominant features of industrial society were quite different from those of the agricultural and religious society which it succeeded, so the dominant values, lifestyles, priorities, institutions and modes of thought in post-industrial society will be different from those that have been dominant in the industrial age (Robertson, 1985, p.4).

The critical question relates to the **centrality of work** in such an environment. Such fundamental change will inevitably cause many to re-examine their motivations and their attitudes toward work.

Now for the first time in the human experience, we have a chance to shape our work to suit the way we live instead of our lives to fit our work. We would be mad to miss the chance (Handy, 1989, p.177).

An alternative and less positive viewpoint comes from Tom Peters, quoted in Bridges (1994), who suggested the transformation of today's employees into independent business people will be 'utterly wrenching' and it will take decades to achieve with significant 'social breakage.' Inevitably, for some this transition will be a liberating experience, for others, traumatic. The opportunity for self-actualisation through work will be offset by the loss of security. Time will become unstructured, and the division of work and leisure time will become ambiguous and complex. In the more free and flexible world of the portfolio worker, would there be an increased salience of work in society as people engage in intrinsically motivating work? Or will the ongoing, fragmented and difficult search for short-term contracts, and the greater opportunity for leisure in a

flexible workday lead to a downward revision of work as the central feature of human existence?

### Implications for Leisure and Other Life Spheres

The issue of work centrality has direct and profound consequences on the nature and meanings of leisure and other life spheres. An individual's life span is conceived as a combination of multiple spheres, where specific roles are carried out. The principal roles in modern society include work, family, community and leisure. The principal environmental contexts within which roles are played include the home, community, and the workplace. Temporal constraints rarely permit individuals the freedom to fulfil their desires in all spheres, which necessitates a decision process, relating the quantity of time and affect allocated to each role. Dubin (1956) raised the question of "central life interest", which relates to this evaluative process. Leisure is more likely to be considered secondary or even instrumental when the individual has a strong work orientation (Goldman, 1973). In contrast, when employment is regarded as instrumental, then work patterns may be adapted to leisure ends (Levitan & Johnston, 1973). Similarly, the relative salience of family and community will have significant effects on the centrality of different spheres.

The fundamental assumption of this research is that variations in the centrality of work will have immediate effects in the other life spheres, family, community and leisure. Economic dependency on work necessitates its centrality in terms of time and energy if not in terms of values and beliefs. The requirements of work continue to take precedence

even for those who regard work as instrumental activity. Therefore it is a logical and practical research approach to view as the primary task, the determination of the potential centrality of work. Only then, can the future salience of other spheres be contemplated.

### Methodological Overview

Fortunately, for the purposes of this research, “millions are already attuning their lives to the rhythms of tomorrow” (Toffler, 1980, p.23) and as such we can gain valuable insights into the work style of the future, by ascertaining their perceptions. To date, the vast majority of research undertaken in the area of work centrality has been quantitative, establishing statistical relationships between work centrality and various variables, such as demographics, nationality and occupational status (The MOW International Research Team, 1987). However, it is strongly felt that such statistical indicators are inadequate to represent the inherent complexities relating to how and why people position work centrally, or on the periphery of their lives. There is a need to develop a deeper and richer understanding of individuals’ perceptions, feelings and experiences in relation to work centrality. This can only be effectively achieved through qualitative research approaches, that can address the issues as a whole in the full context of the participants’ ‘world’, rather than on an individual variable level. This is particularly pertinent to this study, as the phenomenon of widespread independent working, outside of traditional organisations, is relatively new. The key task at this stage therefore is to enter the social world of the participant, and determine their social construction of reality, using thick description rather than reductionist statistical procedures.

The qualitative methodology to be employed is narrative analysis. Narrative analysis takes as the object of investigation the story itself, and it typically takes the perspective of the teller rather than that of society. Researchers do not have direct access to another's' experience, but they can attempt to interpret it through talk, text, interaction and interpretation (Reissman, 1993). The purpose is to see how respondents impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives, how they represent and restructure the world. Narrative analysis has two principal benefits. Through the telling of stories and anecdotes, narrators can be seen to be opening a window on themselves and their culture, in this case, their working culture. This new working culture should 'speak itself' through a series of individual stories. Secondly, in the analysis stage, narrative analysis is different from other qualitative methodologies in that it does not fragment the texts, rather it holds the story together to provide a greater context, clarity and understanding as to why the individual holds certain opinions, or behaves in a certain way.

### Delimitations

Using the construct work centrality in a qualitative study is recognised as potentially problematic. The operational definitions of work centrality have been established almost exclusively in the context of quantitative studies. This study intends to utilise the components of the construct (MOW International Research Team, 1986) as a framework for investigation in a qualitative methodology. These components however,

will only provide a provisional framework and will not be constraining on the direction the study takes.

Furthermore, the population to which this study relates, that of freelance contract workers, who work independently, and / or in virtual environments, is recognised as highly diverse, covering a broad spectrum of industries and professions. The small sample qualitative approach, by its nature precludes the possibility of a representative of the larger population. However, this is not an objective of this study. The primary objective is to generate themes and issues, which may relate to the broader population.

### Limitations

The major limitation relates to the sample composition. With qualitative methodologies, specifically narrative analysis, very small sample sizes are standard. As outlined, the sample in this population will be approximately 5-7 individuals, as it is anticipated that thematic saturation can be achieved with this number of participants.

It is obviously important therefore, to identify appropriate individuals. For this reason, I intend to use a primary group of three consultants I have worked with, gaining insights and forming perceptions of these different working environments. As a relationship already exists, there is the possibility of a researcher to participant interaction effect. Moreover, there is the possibility that I have gone native to a degree, pre-judging the salience of different issues on the basis of exposure over a period of time. This is acknowledged and will be taken into account.

## Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this investigation the following terms will be operationally defined:

### Post industrial society.

Stephen Barley of Cornell University noted that the economies of the advanced industrial nations revolved around electrical power, the internal combustion engine and the telephone. These 'infrastructural technologies' facilitated the transition from an agricultural to a manufacturing society. Post-industrial society is characterised by the replacement of the industrial era's electromechanical infrastructure with a computational infrastructure (Fortune, May 17, 1993). Economies will increasingly be based on knowledge and information as opposed to physical goods. The subsequent impact is the creation of a fundamentally different society, with a wholly different culture.

### "Job Shift."

Bridges (1994) describes the job as a 'social artefact' that has become deeply embedded in our consciousness. He believes that not only is 'the job' an artificial creation, but furthermore, we have become oblivious to its artificiality. Post-industrial society is initiating the second great "job shift", which will effectively result in the 'job'

being dismantled. The focus, once again, will be on specific work that needs doing, rather than on a framework of jobs.

#### Own account self-employed.

Self-employed on “their own account” relates to individuals who are self-employed but employ no paid help. This will be mostly described in terms of an independent worker.

#### “Ownwork.”

Individuals who will work on their own account to meet their own needs, to achieve their own purposes, in their households and local communities, on a personal and inter-personal level. This style of work, Robertson (1985) simply refers to as ‘ownwork.’

#### Portfolio worker.

Handy (1994) predicts a society of portfolio workers. The portfolio would be a collection of different bits and pieces of work, in different forms for different clients, and the word ‘job’ will begin to mean a client (Handy, 1994). This way of working is seen to be an increasing necessity for independent workers, in increasingly fragmented labour markets.

### The transitory career path

This is not dissimilar to Handy's concept of the portfolio worker. Foot (1996) proposed that the transitory career path will involve adopting whatever occupation is necessary to get work. The transitory worker may work frequently in a temporary position, perhaps on short-term projects in 'virtual organisations.'

### Virtual working

If something is described as virtual, it is said to have the effect but not the form. With virtual working, it is possible to see tangible business results, while the process of producing the work is largely transparent. People are working but cannot be seen (Birchall & Lyons, 1995). In the context of this study, this effectively relates to the notion of home-working, where new asynchronous and synchronous communications technologies permit work to be completed away from the client site.

### Work centrality

Work centrality has been defined as, "the beliefs that individuals have regarding the degree of importance that work plays in their lives" (Paullay, Alliger, Stone-Romero, 1994). Alternatively, Mannheim (1975) provided an operational definition of work centrality or 'work role centrality,'

the relative dominance of work related contents in the individual's mental processes, as reflected in responses to questions concerning the degree of concern, knowledge and interest invested in the work role relative to other activities, and in the individual's emphasis on work related sub-identities" (p.81).

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Part 1: The Emergence of an Independent Work Economy**

The assumption that the rapidly changing employment landscape of the late 20th century is simply a reflection of a slow emergence from a global recession, is effectively erroneous. Rather, it appears reflective of major structural shifts in the Canadian economy, as the world economies move from the industrial into the post-industrial age.

Stephen Barley of Cornell University noted that the economies of the advanced industrial nations revolved around electrical power, the internal combustion engine and the telephone. These 'infrastructural technologies' facilitated the transition from an agricultural to a manufacturing society. The rapid advances in digital technology at the end of the 20th century, are serving to replace the industrial era's electromechanical infrastructure with a computational infrastructure (Fortune, May 17, 1993).

Harvard sociologist, Daniel Bell was the first to term the new era as the 'post-industrial society.' Naisbitt (1982) sees the same era as 'the information society'. The post-industrial society is often equated with the growing service economy which is a true shift (see below), but the overwhelming majority of service workers, are involved in the creation, processing and distribution of information.

**Table 1          Sectoral Employment in Canada (% of total business sector)**

Sector	1971	1981	1986	1991
Primary	11.7	9.04	8.16	7.22
Manufacturing	27.81	23.07	21.28	19.15
Construction	9.91	9.21	8.39	8.91
Services	50.58	58.68	62.17	64.73

Source: Gera & Masse (1996).

The 'knowledge economy' is yet another term for the new post-industrial era, and the mega-shift from an industrial to an information society is highlighted by the shifts in the white-collar 'knowledge work-force.' Up-skilling in the Canadian economy is clearly evident, as the share of white-collar employment in total employment has increased from 53.4% in 1971 to 68.3% in 1995. In contrast, the share of blue-collar employment fell from 46.6% to 31.7% over the same period (Gera & Masse, 1996).

The productivity of knowledge has already become the key to productivity, competitive strength, and economic achievement. Knowledge has already become the primary industry, the industry that supplies the economy the essential and central resources of production (P. Drucker, cited in Naisbitt, 1982, p.16).

The re-structuring from an industrial to an information society will be equally as profound as the shift from an agricultural society to an industrial society. The key observation is that the shift from agricultural to industrial took around a century to happen, whereas this shift has occurred over a couple of decades (Naisbitt, 1982). The

subsequent impact is the creation of a fundamentally different society, with a wholly different culture.

A new civilisation is emerging on our lives, and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it. This new civilisation brings with it new family styles; changes ways of working, loving and living; a new economy; new political conflicts; and beyond all this an altered consciousness as well (Toffler, 1980, p.23).

The focus of this study will be on the major implications that the post-industrial society holds for work and employment. The symptoms are already beginning to emerge, and the predictions for more distant horizons are consistent in their detail. In fact, it has become almost fashionable today, to hail the end of work as we know it. One such prophet is William Bridges whose 1994 work "Job Shift" has raised a number of interesting perspectives:

What is disappearing today is not just a certain number of jobs, or jobs in certain industries, or jobs in some part of the country.....What is disappearing is the very thing itself: the job (Bridges, 1994, Preface).

Bridges argues that the world economies are at the dawn of a second major 'job shift.' The first great job shift occurred at the time of industrialisation, with the migration from an essentially agricultural lifestyle to the Dickensian, 'dark, satanic mills' of industrial society. The shift from pre-industrial to industrial society serves to provide a very important context for the shift from industrial to post-industrial society. Similar kinds of economic shifts were evident and similar kinds of distresses were felt. It parallels and illuminates the shift occurring today.

## The First Great 'Job Shift': Industrialisation

The job concept emerged in the early nineteenth century, to package the work that needed doing in industrialised nations. Previously people worked on clusters of tasks, in a variety of locations, schedules set by sun, weather, and the needs of the day. Language reflects social reality, and the reality of the pre-industrial era was that people did not have 'jobs' in the fixed and unitary sense: they did 'jobs' in the form of constantly changing string of tasks.

In most (pre-nineteenth century English) households, an adequate subsistence depended on a complex of various forms of task-work and wage labour. Regular, full-time employment at a single job was not the norm (R.W. Malcolmson in Bridges, 1994, p. 29).

Before 1800, job always referred to some particular task or undertaking and never to a role or position. Jobs were not provided by an organisation, but rather by the demands of the life situation, the requirements of an employer, and the various things that had to be done in that time and place (Bridges, 1994). Laurie (1989) referred to Noah Webster and his writings from 1785. Webster's contemporaries were apparently the epitome of self-sufficiency and versatility. Independent farmers who could usually turn their hand to whatever was required, in a distinctive lifestyle, commonly referred to as the 'household factory' or 'household economy.' The transformation toward industrialisation would quickly erode self-sufficiency and re-make artisans into workers dependent upon wages (Laurie, 1989).

Holding a 'job' was undoubtedly alien for village folk. They lost the freedom to move about to complete varying tasks in different places on a schedule set by the earth's natural rhythms. There were no longer the fluctuating periods of low activity and feverish activity that so characterised the agriculturally based lifestyle. In stark contrast, the demands of work in factories never varied. The machinery dictated the time, place and task for the workers.

The new world of jobs destroyed the old inter-personal relations that defined social rights and obligations; it was making traditional crafts obsolete and it was fundamentally changing the way in which people had inter-woven home and work. Moreover, people had always provided as much as possible of their own food and clothing as they could, and worked jobs for money to meet additional needs. Subsistence was maintained until new needs arose. The concept of working over and above current needs was a very new concept (Bridges, 1994).

There was more to overcome than the change of employment or the new rhythm of work; there was a whole new culture to be absorbed and an old one to be traduced and spurned (Pollard, cited in Bridges, 1994, p.36-37).

For several generations of industrial society, the vast majority of workers have been involved in long term, monogamous employment relationships, featuring standardised hours, locations, work schedules, and remuneration systems, with the mass workforce living by similar rhythms set by organisations. These terms and conditions have become synonymous with having a 'job'.

## The Second Great Job Shift: Post-Industrial Society

Bridges (1994) describes the job as a 'social artefact' that has become deeply embedded in our consciousness. He believes that not only is 'the job' an artificial creation, but furthermore, we have become oblivious to its artificiality. What will happen if 'the job', in a conceptual and a practical sense, becomes obsolete? According to Bridges we are now witnessing a second major 'job shift'; and we can anticipate similar 'social breakage' as generations of employees are forced into an employment environment which is distinctly alien to their expectations.

The second great "job shift" will effectively result in the 'job' being dismantled. The focus, once again, will be on specific work that needs doing, rather than on a framework of jobs. Indicators suggest that the field of work will be completed in more diverse, flexible, fluid and technologically mediated ways. Toffler (1980), like Naisbitt (1982), highlighted that the workers of the post-industrial era will be dealing with information and not with physical goods. Therefore, if the flow of information has no real geographic limitations, he anticipated that the new mode of production makes possible a return to cottage industry on a new higher electronic basis.

There is substantial evidence emerging in support of Bridge's theory. The 'jobless recovery' is a growing reality, and traditional full time jobs appear to be being rapidly replaced by more transient work forms. At the same time, technology is displacing human labour while de-localising and de-centralising work away from central offices and factories and into 'electronic cottage' industries (Toffler, 1980). These changes will have

the same profound impact on our 'social rhythms', as did the migration from the fields to the factories in the 19th century.

### The Emergence of an Independent Work Economy

When considering the future, most people are anxious as to where they will fit in the evolving economy. Rifkin (1995) believes politicians are strangely deaf to what he believes will be the most explosive issue of the decade, "will there be a job for me in the new Information Age?" In truth, the answer to this question is probably no. The job has effectively encapsulated the meaning of work throughout the industrial era, but in the short term, there will be very few jobs in the traditional sense. There will be work, but not for all. The era of mass labour is probably at an end, and the era of independent work appears to have begun in earnest.

The intuition and extrapolations of futurists like Toffler (1980), Robertson (1985) Handy (1984) and Bridges (1994), relating to how work will develop in a post-industrial society, are achieving significant credibility as major symptoms of their predictions emerge. Perhaps the largest surprise, is the speed with which characteristics of this predicted future have emerged. The inextricable advance of technology has facilitated change at such an unprecedented rate, that the work of the future is no longer a distant horizon.

Robertson in 'Future Work' (1985), suggested that as the hopes of achieving full time organisational employment fade in post-industrial society, the dominant form of work will no longer be seen as 'employment', but as self organised activity. Many more

people will take control over their own work, as mass labour becomes confined to economic history. They will work on their own account to meet their own needs, to achieve their own purposes, in their households and local communities, on a personal and inter-personal level. This style of work, Robertson simply refers to as 'ownwork.' This does appear a very idealistic vision, but the changing nature of organisations and the kinds of employment opportunities they are creating, combined with the de-centralising effects of technology, to some extent points in the direction envisaged by Robertson.

Bridges (1994) likewise, believes tomorrow's workers are going to be more craft based on an independent basis, than job based on an organisational basis. They are going to be more like independent business people than conventional employees. They become a portable resource for work, rather than a 'jobbed entity.' They may be employed full time for a while, then on contract to different organisations, then hired to consult, then working part-time. Work will be more fragmented and unpredictable.

Responding in a similar way to the emerging trends, Handy (1994) predicts a society of 'portfolio workers.' The portfolio would be a collection of different bits and pieces of work, in different forms for different clients, and the word 'job' will begin to mean a client (Handy, 1994).

Work no longer means, for everyone, having a job with an employer. As organisations disperse and contract, more and more of us will be working for ourselves, often by ourselves. The new shape of work will centre around small organisations, most of them in the service sector, with a small core of key people and a collection of portfolio workers in the space around the core (Handy, 1994, p. 74).

Halal (1996) suggests these new employment relationships should be viewed as being on a continuum. At one end is the traditional full time job, while at the other end is the self-employed entrepreneur. The new employment contract lies at the middle of this continuum, offering a loose association with the employer but also the autonomy of the entrepreneur.

Organisations will still be critical to the world of work, but as organisers rather than employers. Indeed, in addition to established organisations, the modern portfolio worker will have to create their own 'virtual organisations' made up of clients and co-workers (Handy, 1994). Handy (1989) describes tomorrow's organisation as a 'shamrock' or a 'three leaf operation.' The first leaf is made up of the professional core. It will consist of the professionals, technicians and managers who possess the skills that represent the organisation's core competence. The second leaf is made up of external contractors who supply the services that used to be provided in-house. Some of these will work as individual contractors and some as employees of vendor companies. The third leaf is the contingent workforce (temporary workers and part-timers), who will come and go as needed. The second and third leaves relate more to non-traditional work, and will come to dominate the labour market.

Many organisations could argue that the downsizing phenomenon of recent years has been an economic necessity, but a minimalist workforce achieved largely through 'outsourcing' is increasingly an organisational strategy. Companies are beginning to focus on their core business, and outsourcing additional requirements to specialist service providers. Handy describes the new organisational structure using a *doughnut* analogy.

The central hole of the doughnut relates to the core business, around which is a bounded space where partnerships and the new 'contingent workforce' will be housed.

Today's organisation is rapidly being transformed from a structure built out of jobs to a field of work needing to be done....jobs are rigid solutions to an elastic problem. When the work that needs doing changes constantly, we cannot afford the inflexibility that the job brings with it (Bridges, 1994, p. 1).

It is with these types of work opportunities that Foot (1996) believes will lead to a major growth in 'transitory' career paths. The transitory career path will involve adopting whatever occupation is necessary to get work. The transitory worker may work frequently in a temporary position, perhaps on short-term projects in 'virtual organisations.'

Bridges (1994) believes that Handy's three leaf analysis is very pertinent, but does not do justice to the fact that temporary workers now include the professionals as well as the traditional clerical ranks, and may be equally skilled and ambitious as the core professional. Bridges views the demarcation between these different types of workers as less distinct, and will become increasingly fluid and flexible in terms of who does what.

Increasingly people will be hired for the skills they possess to work on projects, and not to fill job vacancies.

Employees will be seen by employers as talents in an enormous vending machine who can perform services, and it will become obvious that employee A is not as smart as employee B. There will be nowhere to hide.... people will no longer be able to stop learning, because they will have to distinguish themselves as a talent for sale (Industry Week, Aug 21, 1995, p.23).

According to Foot (1996), transitory freelancers, will be generalists more than specialists, flexible enough to adapt quickly to rapid changes in demand for their services. Specialisation is still important, but it has to be part of a broader context. The person who can offer a range of services within a broad speciality is the one most likely to prosper in the economy of the future.

John Stanek, CEO of International Survey Research Corporation, provided an interesting possibility of how this portfolio employment process may occur. He suggests that it won't be uncommon, for people to get their jobs the same way that longshoremen do today, by checking in at a central location to see if and where there is work, for whom and for how long.

There could be a lot of one day, one month, one year jobs where people come in, perform an assigned task and leave...the average period of time that people will spend with individual companies will drop dramatically (Industry Week, August 21, 1995, p. 24).

Industry Week (Aug 21, 1995) voiced the opinions of E. Lawler, of the University of Southern California. Companies and individuals will have to develop multiple relationships. The idea of a single employment model is gone. He suggests that companies are going to have to establish a portfolio of employment relationships and identify how many of each they will need to be successful.

It is already clear that portfolio workers will not be a homogenous group. The hierarchies that exist in the world of full time employment will readily transfer. Rifkin (1995) has talked of a shift from 'mass labour' to a highly skilled 'elite labour'. There is a growing consensus that low skilled and poorly educated workers will be increasingly

marginalised in a labour market that places a high premium on education and training. Bill Gates (1996) reflected on a growing perception that parents are insecure about their children's employment prospects, having read repeatedly that there will be two societies in the future: highly paid knowledge workers and low paid service workers.

Charles Handy (1994) has also made the observation of an increasingly divided workforce. He argues that the knowledge workers, the professionals and the managers, are the real beneficiaries of the information age because they own the new property. "Focused intelligence, the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and know-how, is the new source of wealth" (Handy, 1994, p.23). For individuals at the lower end of the education and skills continuum, the portfolio lifestyle is likely to involve a difficult existence, collecting available pieces of part-time, temporary and contract work to make ends meet.

### Existing Evidence for these Predictions

#### The proliferation of non-standard employment.

Time magazine (November 1993) noted that the labour market was 'in the midst of a profound structural transition', where the economy has begun to really move away from traditional sources of hiring. Non-traditional forms of employment are increasingly replacing full-time work. Non-standard employment includes part-time, short term, temporary or contract jobs, and the 'own account' self-employed (The Advisory Group on Working Time, 1994).

The landmark report from The Economic Council of Canada “Good Jobs, Bad Jobs” (1990) found that fully 50% of all new jobs created between 1980 and 1988 were non-standard. Technology, globalisation and a sectoral shift toward the service sector have had profound effects on employment patterns. The story is the same in the USA. Lawrence Mishel and Jared Bernstein of the Economic Policy Institute noted that 25.9% of jobs created in the recent recovery were part-time and 27.7% were temporary. New jobs have been created, but they tend to be in the lower paying service sectors (Mother Jones, April/May 1994).

Figures from Statistics Canada’s publication, ‘Perspectives on Labour and Income’ (Winter, 1995) reported that large increases in non-standard work (part time, temporary, own-account self employed and multiple job holders) were particularly felt by the youngest segment, 15-24. Between 1989-1994, females (15-24) in non-standard work, increased from 49% to 64%, and males (15-24) from 41% to 52%. The Financial Post Daily (Sep.23, 1994) quoted an alternative angle on figures from Statistics Canada, showing that the proportion of 15-24 year old workers with less than standard hours more than doubled, from 24% in 1976 to 51% in 1993.

#### Significant expansion of part time work and multiple job holding.

Statistics Canada’s definition of part-time work is a job of fewer than 30 hours a week. Canadian Business (April 1996) reported that over the period of 1976-1993, the number of working Canadians employed for less than 30 hours a week, went up by 55%. As of July 1994, more than two million, or one in six Canadian employees work part-time

(HRDC, 1994). This is very much a feature of female and youth employment patterns. Fully 50% of part-timers are women over the age of 25, and 40% are young people.

These effects have directly stimulated the growth of multiple job holding, where people hold at least two jobs. Multiple jobholders or 'moonlighters' averaged 650,000 in Canada between 1993 and 1995. Last year, 1996, saw a significant increase to 700,000. The proportion of multiple jobholders rose to 5.1% in 1996 from 4.9% in 1995 (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Spring 1997).

There appears to be several factors behind this growth. With the decreasing opportunities for permanent full-time employment, many individuals are experiencing a growing need to take on more than one part-time or limited term job to fulfil their financial commitments. The low increase in real earnings in recent years has forced many workers to take on additional work. A second possibility is that the perceived erosion of job security may have pushed some people to take a second job as a buffer against sudden unemployment.

#### Major expansion in self-employment.

For generations, society has gone to work in institutions and corporations, which became central to our daily lives. The role of the employer became greatly extended to provide income, social contacts, self-esteem and even a sense of identity (Naisbitt, 1982). It is apparent that society has begun to wean itself off a collective institutional dependence, learning to trust and rely on ourselves.

Statistics Canada have highlighted that between 1976-1994, the number of self employed women trebled to 598,000 and for men it doubled to 1.2 million. Over 1996, self-employment gains totalled 125,000, giving an updated figure for total self-employment in Canada of 2.4 million, or 17% of the population (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Spring 1997).

Self-employment grew twice as fast as paid employment over the past two decades, but between 1990 and 1995, it grew a staggering nine times as fast. Even though there are five times as many paid workers as self-employed ones, the number of new jobs created by the two sectors was nearly equal during the first 11 months of 1996; 108,000 paid employees and 94,000 self-employed. From 1986 to 1996, growth in self-employment (39%) was four times that of paid workers (10%) (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Spring 1997).

This is in large part, seen as a reaction to changing labour market conditions. Self-employment has been rising rapidly in recent years, partly because of a restructuring of both the private and public sectors. Many companies and public sector bodies have contracted out services that used to be provided in-house, which has stimulated the growth of individual contract workers. The proliferation of temporary and contract work opportunities created by employers has indirectly swelled the ranks of the self-employed.

Evidence that this is a major factor behind the growth can be taken from a closer analysis of where the growth in self-employment is coming from. In 1989, 7% of 15-64 year olds were self-employed on "their own account" and a similar number were "employers." By 1994, the number of employers fell marginally to 6%, while the "own account workers" increased to 9%. Among the different classifications of self-

employment, “incorporated without paid help” experienced the greatest growth (117%), between 1986 and 1996. In 1996, this group numbered 200,000 or 9% of all self-employed. The largest groups are the “unincorporated without paid help.” They recorded the second largest growth (53%). In total, they numbered 1.2 million or 52% of all self-employed (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Spring 1997).

It can be argued that the huge growth in self-employment is in many ways misleading. It masks the fact that a high proportion of the self-employed, are simply employees on a less secure basis. This group tends to be virtually indistinguishable from employees. The implication is that firm’s treatment of workers as self-employed, takes them out of the statutory and social protection associated with traditional employee status. The Advisory Group on Working Time (1994) found grounds for concern in the situation of this sub-group of the self-employed, termed the ‘dependent contractors.’ Self-employment suggests an inherent element of choice and control over hours and various aspects of work. However, in the modern context, the shift from employee to self-employed is simply a change in the terms of employment, to free the employer from obligations.

An additional explanation for the growth in self-employment is that many individuals have simply come to the realisation that with the volatile and insecure nature of modern employment, ‘setting up on your own’ becomes an increasingly rational route. Organisations in both the public and private sectors can no longer be relied upon to provide ongoing employment.

### Changes in job tenure.

A direct consequence of these shifts, is that Canadian workers are experiencing declining job tenure, which in turn feeds the perception of falling job security. There has been a substantial shift from jobs that last between 1 and 5 years, to those lasting less than 12 months. Between the periods 1981-5 and 1991-4, the proportion of jobs that lasted 1-5 years decreased from 21% to 16%. At the same time the figure for jobs lasting less than 12 months increased from 59% to 64%. The fraction of jobs lasting between 5 and 20 years (14%) and 20 years or more (16%) remained largely stable (Perspectives on Labour and Income, Winter 1996).

### Virtual Working: 'Electronic Cottage Industries'

Moreover, not only does it appear society will see fundamentally altered employment relationships. The way work is carried out is undergoing revolutionary changes, as a result of technology's catalytic effects. Electronically mediated work will increasingly transcend the limitations of time and place (Halal, 1996). This is perhaps best reflected in two major changes in the nature of the workplace itself; the de-localising of work and the demise of the office.

Firstly, work is becoming increasingly de-localised as technology has facilitated a geographical dispersal of operations in many organisations. For example, Metropolitan Life has a group of 150 people in County Cork, Ireland analysing the medical claims of people in North America (Bridges, 1994). This can have the positive effect of generating

work in remote communities, but conversely it can cause fragmentation in a local working community, which may have depended on a specific industry or company for generations.

Secondly, the new mode of production, based on information rather than physical goods, makes possible a return to cottage industry on a new higher electronic basis, and with it a new emphasis on the home as the centre of society. This has been greatly facilitated by the development of synchronous and asynchronous technologies that allow the creation of virtual working environments. This has resulted in it being as easy to produce work, and communicate with work teams from home as it would be from within the same building.

Even as early as the late 1970's, futurists such as Toffler (1980) were predicting a return to the old cottage industries, facilitated by technological communications advances.

One change is so potentially revolutionary, so alien to our experience, it needs more attention than it has received so far. This, of course, is the shift of work out of the office and the factory and back into the home (Toffler, cited in Birchall & Lyons, 1995, p.20).

The world of telecommuting has achieved almost mainstream status in recent years. Initially, issues of transportation and pollution were the rationales suggested, now it appears economics prevails once again. Telecommuting saves the company and the individual time and money. Bridges (1994) reported on Arthur Andersen, the huge consulting and accounting firm that has already equipped one-third of its professionals with lap top computers and cut them loose from the office.

The home working phenomenon to date, has received mixed reactions. It is often fun for a while, but people soon begin to miss the 'high touch' elements of the workplace (Naisbitt, 1982), such as the office gossip and the warm interaction with co-workers. To counterbalance this however, the electronic cottage phenomenon raises once more the possibility on a mass scale, of families working together as a unit, which in itself could lead to greater community stability, and a deepening of face to face relationships in the home and neighbourhood. There are obviously costs and benefits to this work form.

Alone in their electronic cottages, they feel a high tech isolation. Yet the attractions are still there - a chance for more time with the family, the choice to work at night, and if one so chooses, the opportunity to eliminate the word commuting from one's vocabulary (Naisbitt, 1982, p.35).

Naisbitt (1982) argued that whenever new technology is introduced, it needs a counterbalancing human response, the 'high touch', or the technology is rejected. The alienation felt in the 1950's workplace was in response to the most intensely industrialised period in history. The more technology driven we become, the more people seek human compensation and aggregation to offset the alienation factor. As a result of the emergence of these high tech independent-working environments, Naisbitt (1982) questioned the long-term success of electronic cottages. Work could become more vicarious and abstract as a result of technological intervention, which opposes the reality that people want to be with other people. The need for more 'high touch' collaborative networks between independents will therefore become paramount..

Networks are people talking to each other, sharing ideas, information and resources....the important part is not the network, the finished product, but the process of getting there - the communication that creates the linkages between people and clusters of people (Naisbitt, 1982, p.192).

Of course, networks have existed in all walks of life. However, in the new working environment, their significance and meaning changes as a result of the technologically mediated, virtual nature. If something is described as virtual, it is said to have the effect but not the form. With virtual working, it is possible to see tangible business results, while the process of producing the work is largely transparent. People are working but cannot be seen (Birchall & Lyons, 1995).

Virtual organisations are project focused, collaborative networks uninhibited by time and space. They are without the spatial territory and the cultural norms so important in traditional organisations (Hal Richman, cited in Birchall & Lyons, 1995, p.19).

The proliferation of outsourcing is feeding the growth of independent tele-contractors and virtual working networks; equally, it could be said that the advances in communications technologies, facilitates and therefore feeds the outsourcing process. It appears to be a symbiotic relationship that is accelerating the progression away from traditional full time organisational jobs and toward non-standard work forms.

### Summary

The evidence therefore, is rapidly emerging to support the predictions of several futurist authors (Toffler, 1980; Naisbitt, 1982; Robertson, 1985; Handy, 1989, 1994;

Bridges, 1994; Foot, 1996). The nature of work and employment in post-industrial society is undergoing fundamental change. The catalytic impact of technology and globalisation, with the subsequent effects at the organisational level, has dictated that the full-time job is no more. More transient and contingent employment opportunities and self-employment are rapidly replacing the 'job'. In addition, the de-localisation of work continues at a significant rate. An independent work economy, filled with portfolio workers operating in virtual working environments appears a growing reality.

Like it or not, man by man, modem by modem, we are becoming a freelance nation. We are insecure, sure, but we are also as the word implies, free (Esquire, May 1995, p.74).

## Part Two: Work Centrality in an Independent Work Economy

The transition to post-industrial society is causing a fundamental change in the nature of work patterns. It is apparent that the nature of employment is shifting, featuring less stability and predictability, more change and uncertainty. It values performance and skills, not loyalty and tenure. Its 'players' are self sufficient rather than dependent. The predicted transition to an 'ownwork' or 'portfolio working' economy is likely to be one of the most explosive issues of the next decade. The features of the emerging 'job shift', are likely to be a major departure from the vision most people hold at the present time, for how their working life is going to develop. Tom Peters, quoted in "Job Shift" (Bridges, 1994) suggests that the transformation of today's employees into independent workers will be 'utterly wrenching' and that it will take decades to achieve with significant 'social breakage.' Charles Handy (1989) takes a very different perspective;

Now for the first time in the human experience, we have a chance to shape our work to suit the way we live instead of our lives to fit our work. We would be mad to miss the chance (p.177).

Work is being increasingly moved outside of the organisation, and subsequently, more into the realm of the individual. This allows the individual more control over when and how we do the work. For society to begin to structure life around the portfolio employment lifestyle will be a major challenge. A society dominated by individual workers, rather than a nation of employees will naturally have a fundamental impact on how society views the primary meaning and importance of work. In pre-industrial society,

clear demarcations between work and other life spheres did not exist. Work followed the natural cycles of days and seasons. In the Industrial era, work became more organised, structured and standardised to achieve synchrony with the new means of production.

Just as the dominant features of industrial society were quite different from those of the agricultural and religious society which it succeeded, so the dominant values, lifestyles, priorities, institutions and modes of thought in post-industrial society will be different from those that have been dominant in the industrial age (Robertson, 1985, p.4).

Therefore, the critical question emerges. How will work be interpreted and positioned in the post-industrial world? Is it likely that those living the portfolio lifestyle could utilise the associated freedom and flexible time structures to allow themselves to develop a more balanced and fulfilling life? Would the potential for greater leisure be a key element of its attraction? Alternatively, work as time may indeed decrease in a 'less work economy', but conversely work as a primary need and motivator may need to increase if one is to maintain an acceptable income in the face of limited opportunities. Moreover, if individuals focus on a vocation that they find absorbing and fulfilling, and provide them with an intrinsic drive, work centrality could increase.

Fortunately, as Toffler suggested back in 1980, "millions are already attuning their lives to the rhythms of tomorrow," and as such, some degree of insight can be obtained from this section of the workforce.

## The Origins of the Work Centrality Construct

A key observation to be made is that an enduring and fundamental belief in most societies of the world, is that work is central to human existence. The earliest origins for these beliefs are thought to have emerged from the dominant religions of the world. Consider the following statements.

Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the Earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguishes man from the rest of the creatures (Pope John Paul II, cited in Robertson, 1985, p.64).

He who neither worketh for himself, nor for others, will not receive the reward of God (The Prophet Mohammed, cited in Furnham, 1990, p.1)

The activity of working has numerous outcomes, the most salient in the modern context being economic income, but work provides a multiplicity of non-economic benefits. These would include to sustain life, to maintain contact with reality, to be part of a community, to serve God, to attain status, to structure time, as self-fulfilment in the improvement of society, self-esteem, identity and a sense of order (The Task Force on Work in America, 1973). The value of work over and above financial reward is illustrated by the fact that between 65-95% of individuals in national labour force studies, in a variety of countries, state that they would continue to work 'even if they had enough money to live comfortably for the rest of their lives without working' (MOW International Research Team, 1986). Work appears to be related to a broader social value, providing a purpose in life and a link with society as a whole.

### Alienation and involvement.

To assist in the understanding of work centrality, it is purposeful to examine the concepts of alienation and its obverse, involvement. These two constructs are seen as bipolar states of the same phenomenon. Alienation has been defined as “a dissociative state of the individual (a cognitive state of separation) in relation to some other element in his or her environment” (Schacht, 1970, cited in Kanungo, 1979, p.120). According to Marx (1844, 1932), labour or working on a job is, “the existential activity of man, his free conscious activity – not a means of maintaining his life, but for developing his universal nature” (cited in Kanungo, 1979, p.121). Therefore, a state of work involvement will result when the work situation elicits behaviour that is perceived to be; voluntary, not instrumental for physical needs, instrumental for higher order needs including self-realisation, and conducive to developing individual abilities to their fullest potential. If these conditions are not met, then Marx proposed that a state of alienation from work would result.

Marx identified two job conditions that are responsible for alienation. The first condition relates to the separation of workers from the product of their labour. They feel that they have no sense of ownership over their work, and that they cannot influence the disposition or quality of the product. Secondly, that the worker feels a lack of control over the means of production. Overall, it is the lack of autonomy and control over one’s work that defines the Marxian concept of alienation (Kanungo, 1979).

What constitutes alienation of labor? First that work is *external* to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work, but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary, but imposed, forced labor. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means of satisfying other needs (cited in Kanungo, 1979, p. 121).

Marx assumed that work is either instrumental as a means to an end, or it is consummatory as an end in itself. Workers who maintain an extrinsic value orientation are said to view work instrumentally, in that work possesses little value in and of itself, but rather serves other ends. These ends usually include financial security, material standard of living, access to leisure activities, and social status both at the work place and within the community. In contrast, there are others who have an intrinsic value orientation, who do not value working simply for its instrumental outcomes, but rather regard it as a central integrating factor in their individual and social lives (Adrisani, 1978). The job content is viewed as an important source of enrichment in which individuals encounter challenges, assume responsibilities, make creative decisions, overcome obstacles, enhance competency, and express their personal aptitudes. Through this involvement, the worker is said to achieve psychological growth and self-fulfilment through work.

Theories of human motivation suggest that human behaviour is purposive, it has directionality, and it is initiated by needs states. Behaviour will always be instrumental in satisfying those need states. An individual work behaviour therefore, will also be purposive, in that it is aimed at both intrinsic and extrinsic need states of the individual

(Lawler, 1973). It could be argued therefore, that work can also be instrumental in satisfying intrinsic need states.

### The protestant work ethic (PWE).

Analysis of the positioning of work for the individual and society has been addressed by many different theoretical constructs. The concept of work centrality is thought to have its origins in the work of Weber (1930) with the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE). Weber stated that capitalism grew more rapidly in Protestant areas because of their different value system. The ethic of sobriety, social responsibility, restraint in lifestyle and devotion to work, led to the label of the “Protestant work ethic.” Weber saw the Protestant Work Ethic as the key to the realisation of man’s potentialities to the fullest extent. Weber was impressed by the,

grandiose efficiency of a type of man, bred by free associations in which the individual had to prove himself before his equals, where no authoritative commands, but autonomous decisions, good sense and responsible conduct train for citizenship (cited in Kanungo, 1979, p.122)

In motivational terms, it is implicit that if work cannot provide an environment that satisfies the needs for autonomy, responsibility and achievement, it will lead to alienation.

The work ethic implies that workers find a fundamental meaning in work roles. People work, because they want to, because it can be satisfying and fulfilling to do something that has meaning and value to oneself and others. The work ethic traditionally

related to the fact that every hour of idleness was an hour lost to labour for the glory of God. Over the centuries, this religious rationale for work became coloured by financial motivations. Weber believed it was the Puritans who introduced a financial association to the work ethic.

Weber maintained that the Puritans felt obliged to be regarded as chosen by God to perform good works. Success in a calling (occupational rewards) thus came to be seen as a sign of being the elect. Puritans thus sought to achieve salvation through economic activity (Furnham, 1990, p.2).

#### Central life interest.

Dubin (1956) expanded on the PWE and developed the 'central life interest' (CLI) construct. Dubin proposed that individuals in western society would not find work and the workplace, an overall central life interest. The construct, CLI, being operationally defined as 'an expressed preference for a given locale or situation in carrying out an activity.' Dubin looked at work involvement as a Central Life Interest. A job involved person is one who considers work to be the most important part of their lives and engages in it as an end in itself. A job alienated person engages in work in a purely instrumental fashion.

Subsequently, there have been numerous examples of measures used by researchers and theorists to examine the attitudes or orientations toward work, such as work involvement, work alienation, job commitment, and work commitment. Measures include those that examine an individual's attitudes to work in general, and toward an individual's current job, such as Lodahl and Kejner's 'job involvement' measure (1965).

### Job involvement.

These previous constructs are from a sociological perspective. Psychology approached the same issue of alienation from the other end of the continuum, involvement. Psychological perspectives are based on motivational theories, emphasising the need satisfying qualities of the job as basic determinants of job involvement.

Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined job involvement as the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self image. They operationalised job involvement as the degree to which a person's work performance affects self-esteem. This is similar to definitions of French and Kahn (1962) who proposed that the centrality of an ability is the degree to which it affects self esteem. Vroom (1962) emphasised intrinsic need satisfaction as the essential condition for higher job involvement. With higher autonomy and control, there is higher ego involvement, which increases job involvement.

Lawler and Hall (1970) proposed that the definition of job involvement should be limited to the notion of psychological identification with one's work. They suggest that performance-self-esteem dimension is an index of intrinsic motivation and not job involvement, as they see self-esteem as an intrinsic need. However, supporters of this dimension argue that intrinsic need satisfaction is a necessary condition for job involvement. Lawler and Hall however, assume that intrinsic needs are central to the self-concept of the individual.

Overall, the consensual opinion is that situations lacking in opportunity for the satisfaction of intrinsic needs of the individual such as self-esteem, achievement, autonomy, control, self-expression and self-actualisation will decrease individual involvement in work.

Kanungo (1982) criticises the assumption that intrinsic motivation is central to the individual's job involvement. That satisfaction of intrinsic needs may be a sufficient but not a necessary condition for work involvement. It is quite likely that involvement in work may depend upon the degree to which the job is perceived to meet salient needs, be they intrinsic or extrinsic.

For the job involved worker, work would be a key part of his life, and would be affected very much personally by his whole job situation. On the other hand, the non-job involved worker does his living off the job. Work is not as important a part of his psychological life. His interests are elsewhere, and the core of his self-image, the essential part of his identity is not greatly affected by his work.

#### Work involvement.

Kanungo (1982) was one of the first researchers to clearly distinguish between the constructs that related to present job scenarios and those that related to broader meanings of work. Kanungo proposed that the involvement of the individual with work in general, refers to the normative belief regarding how important work should be. It is the issue of how central working is in one's life when compared with other life roles. It is the

development of a cognitive belief state of identification with work would depend very much on past and present socialisation experiences.

Training in the PWE in one's formative years can produce a normative belief in the goodness and centrality of work. Western culture emphasises individualism, and promotes greater saliency for autonomy and personal achievement needs. PWE in such cultures trains people to believe that work can satisfy these salient needs and can bring about a sense of individualism.

Involvement with work in general is viewed as a generalised cognitive (or belief) state of psychological identification with work, in so far as work is perceived to have the potential to satisfy one's salient needs and expectations. Likewise work alienation, can be viewed as generalised cognitive state of psychological separation, where work is perceived to lack the potential for satisfying one's salient needs and expectations.

### Work Centrality Defined

The constructs 'work centrality' (WC) or 'work role centrality' relate more to the importance of work in a generic sense. Paullay, Alliger and Stone-Romero (1994) completed a construct validation of two instruments, one designed to measure job involvement (JI) (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) and one to measure work centrality, which was actually the instrument that operationalised the 'work involvement' construct outlined above (Kanungo, 1982). Results indicated that JI and WC were moderately correlated but separate constructs, indicating that measurement of attitudes to work in general can be differentiated from attitudes toward current jobs. Paullay et al (1994) also found that

'work centrality' and PWE are separate constructs, contrary to their hypothesis that they were indicators of a common construct. They found that PWE items focused more on the strength of beliefs about the value of work, whereas the work centrality items tended to measure the personal meaning that the respondent places on work.

Work centrality has been defined as, "the beliefs that individuals have regarding the degree of importance that work plays in their lives" (Paullay et al.1994). Alternatively, Mannheim (1975) provided an operational definition of work centrality or 'work role centrality':

the relative dominance of work related contents in the individual's mental processes, as reflected in responses to questions concerning the degree of concern, knowledge and interest invested in the work role relative to other activities, and in the individual's emphasis on work related sub-identities (p.81).

There remains a degree of conceptual confusion between the inter-relationships of PWE, CLI, job involvement, work involvement, and work centrality. These constructs have shown to be distinguishable, and yet still moderately correlated. Therefore it is viewed that the work centrality construct is still evolving. *For the purposes of this study, the overall work centrality construct proposed by The Meaning Of Work International Research Team (1987), will be adopted.* The MOW International Research Team identified two major theoretical components of the work centrality construct. These two components provide a broader and more inclusive construct, that acknowledges elements of the PWE, CLI, job involvement and work involvement, as being relevant to the overall conceptualisation of work centrality.

The first component relates to a value orientation toward working as a life role. The second component relates to a decision-making orientation, regarding which life sphere is preferred for different behaviours. The value orientation component has itself two elements, identification with working and involvement or commitment to working. Work identification is the result of cognitive consistency processes, where working is compared to an individual's perception of self. The individual develops a distinct identification where work may be central or marginalised in one's identity. The second element relates to the level of involvement or commitment to working. Work involvement is an affective measure, often examined from a behavioural perspective, in terms of how many hours an individual allocates to the work sphere. Commitment is more an enduring future intent to continue working, largely unaffected by short term events and circumstances.

The decision orientation component of work centrality is very comparable to Dubin's (1956) 'Central Life Interest' analysis. This component is based on the assumption that a person's life is divided into several sub-spheres, including work, family, leisure and other social roles, which are preferred differentially. The theory proposes that individuals will participate in less preferred spheres because of instrumental rewards that may be associated with these spheres, but will in general attach greater significance to behaviors that occur in the more preferred life spheres. The work sphere can occupy the central life sphere, or may be a less preferred sphere. Self-identification is closely associated with choice of most preferred life dimension. The choice of preferred life sphere and the behaviors associated with it imply a level of involvement. As most individuals need not and indeed cannot be committed or involved to all spheres,

commitment and involvement becomes a selective process (MOW International Research Team, 1987). The general notion of multiple role theorists is that the commitment to different roles can result in role strains or even role overload (Mannheim & Schiffrin, 1984). When role overload occurs, coping may necessitate a reduction in the centrality of certain roles and adaptations in the others. The issue of which dimension or role should be positioned as central is as Godbey and Kelly (1992) suggest, not simply one of individual choice, but one which needs to be contextualised in the dominant values and culture of society.

Interestingly, authors on the subject of work centrality tend not to single out any a priori explanation for why working should be important in an individual's life. For one individual it may be financial, for another it may be socio-psychological factors. Subsequently, measures of work centrality do not represent any specific rationale.

However, research to date has indicated that work centrality and related constructs are a factor of several variables. Mannheim (1993) gave an overview of this research. Significant factors include demographic and socialisation variables, such as age, sex and education (Lindsay and Knox, 1984; Mannheim, 1993; MOW International Team, 1987). Paullay et al (1994) argue that socialisation is central to the individuals positioning of work in their lives, and as such the beliefs that are held will be relatively enduring. Of particular interest to this study, is the relationship between occupational status and work centrality.

### Occupational Status and Work Centrality

Working as an activity embraces a multiplicity of diverse pursuits. Inevitably, the nature of the work that one does will dictate the extent to which it is a preferred life sphere. The transitions that are anticipated to occur on a large scale in post-industrial society will fundamentally alter the nature and meaning of work. The majority of workers in recent generations have been employed in jobs, working for organizations. This has been shown to be changing at a rapid rate, toward a 'freelance economy.'

Inevitably, the nature of attitudes to work will be heavily dependent on one's job. While many employment situations can provide meaningful job content and context, it would be fair to say that the majorities do not. The personal meanings and importance of work in most peoples' lives have been greatly affected by the nature of employment in the industrial age. The story of industrialisation, has been one of an ongoing struggle between the employing classes and the workers. The employers have attempted to impose order and discipline, while the workers have attempted to maintain freedoms and engage in activities of their own choice.

Over the span of man's history, although a phenomenal amount of education, indoctrination, and incantation have been devoted to the effort, ordinary people have never been quite persuaded that toil is as agreeable as its alternatives (Galbraith, 1958, cited in Veal, 1987, p.66).

Industrial society has created employment that effectively meant that the work of people and communities has tended to be exploited for purposes not directly connected

with their needs or their own purposes and values (Robertson, 1985). Subsequently, the intrinsic motivation to work, characteristic of the traditional PWE, has been suppressed while the extrinsic motivation of financial reward became fundamental to the meaning of work in the industrial age. Work has effectively become a means to an end.

So much of employment is routinised, segmented from the whole process of production, with few opportunities for personal interaction, and paced by machines or quotas, that any intrinsic interest would be hard to find. It is no wonder that many workers do no more than is required and are primarily interested in the paycheck (Kelly, 1990, p.77).

Herzberg (1959, 1966) has contended that mainly intrinsic factors such as the work itself and opportunities for responsibility, achievement, recognition, advancement and personal growth lead to job satisfaction and motivated work behaviour. Conversely, job dissatisfaction is thought to result from inadequate extrinsic or hygiene factors, which stem from the work environment, such as earnings and fringe benefits, job security, working conditions, hours of work and satisfying inter personal relationships. However, several critics have attacked Herzberg's methodologies and findings (Dunette, 1967; House & Wigdor, 1967). Mainly on the basis that individual differences (age, sex, personality) were not considered, arguing that most organisational rewards contribute somewhat to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The lack of intrinsically motivating employment in industrial society has inevitably led to a downward revision of the importance of work in peoples' lives. There is an almost ubiquitous dissatisfaction with work in modern society, among white and blue-collar workers. Dubin (1956) who formulated the concept of central life interest

(CLI) looked at the importance of work in peoples' lives. Only 24% of the factory workers in the study could be defined as job oriented in their life interests. Three out of four preferred their associations and activities outside employment. Meaningful relationships, feelings of worth, and enjoyment were sought outside the job. Dumazedier (1974) referred to work by Barrett (1961) and Goldthorpe (1959) that showed a general decline in work centred values, not only among factory workers but among a growing number of supervisors and managers, who valued spare time and self-fulfilment more than the previous generation and viewed work more instrumentally. Kahn (1972) found that in terms of being 'very satisfied' with work accounted for only 40% of managers and professionals, 22% of clerical workers and 16% of unskilled workers. Parker (1971) asked simply, 'what is your main interest in life?' Of those employed in business, 11% replied work, whereas 29% of those working in human services said work. When Kelly (1978, cited in Kelly, 1990) asked participants to rank various life interests in a an Eastern suburb, 80% of adults with relatively high education and occupation levels, believed that their families and homes were most important to them, 12% leisure and community and 7% their work.

Employment can provide some social identification and enjoyable associations, but in reality most people recognise work as a necessity of subsistence. It can directly contribute to the spheres of home, family and leisure which, in themselves, may be more intrinsically rewarding to the majority of the population. Economic dependency on work necessitates its centrality in terms of time and energy if not in terms of values and beliefs. The requirements of work usually take precedence even for those who regard work as instrumental activity (Blauner, 1964, cited in Kelly, 1990).

An increasing proportion of the population experience a conflict between their work, which does not appeal to them, and their lifestyle outside of work which really engrosses them. In this context work often turns out to be the loser. The only ones not to experience this conflict are those who have work as a lifestyle (Zetterburg & Frankel, 1981, cited in Veal, 1987, p.71).

Working as a lifestyle is perhaps most pervasive in the realms of the self employed. This group will receive additional focus, as the nature, structure and meaning of their work is probably the most effective comparative indicator, for how work in a portfolio working or freelance economy may be positioned.

#### Work centrality and self-employment.

The confusion between employment and work, does cloud the issue of work centrality. Work in industrial society has oriented around jobs, to the extent where working is synonymous with having a job. Jobs are frequently restrictive and controlling by nature, in order to serve the interests of the employer. Robertson (1985) believes that most people believe they ought to have a job, but the majority of people in jobs are usually not deeply committed. If as Bridges (1994) predicts, and society becomes de-jobbed with a paralleled growth of independent working, society could witness the re-emergence of a 'cleaner' concept of work, as separate from employment. This in turn could lead to a resurgence of an intrinsic motivation to work, and greater work centrality.

Those people who find meaning and satisfaction in their work, tend to be those with the greatest freedom to develop their own contexts of work, and set a direction and choose the results they wish to produce (Kelly, 1990).

The true work ethic is now more likely to be found among self-employed people and others who have decided not to work in a conventional job, but rather dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to their own chosen sphere of work (Robertson, 1985, p.64).

Research into work centrality has supported this proposition. Several studies have indicated that work centrality is higher among the self-employed relative to other categories of occupational status. The Meaning of Work International Research Team (1987) found that chemical engineers and self-employed owners of small businesses had the highest work centrality. Mannheim and Schiffrin (1987) obtained similar results:

A significant job characteristic in the Work Role Centrality (WRC) regression is employment status. The significantly higher level of WRC among the self-employed suggests that the cognitive investments in work and the relative importance of the work role are positively related to the amount of responsibilities and autonomy at work, as well as to personal ability and advancement (p.97).

Self-employment status is obviously an important structural condition, which affects work role centrality and the nature of role strains. Using the MOW International Research team's conceptualisation of work centrality, the following studies identified by Kolvereid (1996) help to clarify why the work centrality of the self-employed is consistently higher than traditionally employed individuals

Research by Brenner, Pringle and Greenhaus (1991) found that individuals perceived that operating their own business is more likely to provide them with exciting

and desirable work outcomes. Those who preferred to operate their own business believe such a career provides greater development of knowledge and skills, higher income, more leisure time, greater variety, more comfortable working conditions, and the opportunity to work with people they admire and respect. These results indicate a higher level of affect for working, and a greater degree of cognitive consistency between working and self.

Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Sonek and Rosenthal, (1964) found that self-employed individuals reported significantly higher work-related worries and lower absence rates. Eden (1973) attributed this lower absence rate to a feeling of being indispensable. Eden (1973) found that self-employed individuals work harder, travel more and work longer hours. Hammermesh (1990) and Chay (1993) also found that self-employed worked significantly longer hours. These results suggest evidence of a greater level of involvement in work. Eden (1973) highlighted several perceived positive outcomes for the self-employed including higher levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of role conflict and role ambiguity, greater opportunities to develop special abilities, and greater autonomy and freedom in work. These results indicate a high level of congruence between work as an activity and perceptions of self, and also that self-employed individuals seem better able to make effective decisions regarding activity in different life spheres, or life roles. Thompson, Kopelman & Schriesheim (1992) found that self-employed individuals had higher commitment to their work than organisationally employed individuals. Thompson et al (1992) also found a stronger relationship between job and life satisfaction, job and self-satisfaction and job and family satisfaction for self-employed, as compared to organisationally employed individuals. Once again, this implies that self-employed individuals have a higher cognitive consistency between work

and self, and it also reflects the more effective decision orientation toward different life spheres. The research by Kolvereid himself (1996), found that security, social environment, work load, avoid responsibility, and career are the main reasons given for preferring organisational employment; while economic opportunity, authority, autonomy, challenge, self-realisation and participation in the whole process are reasons usually given for preferring self-employment.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### Qualitative Research Approach

##### Rationale.

The vast majority of research that has been undertaken in the area of work centrality has been quantitative. The focus has been on statistical representations of the position of work in people's lives (Dubin, 1956; Parker, 1971; MOW International Research Team, 1987). Several relationships have been identified, including the relationship between occupational status and work centrality (Mannheim, 1975 & 1993; MOW International Research Team, 1987).

However, it is strongly felt that such statistical indicators are inadequate to represent the inherent complexities relating to how and why people position work centrally, or on the periphery of their lives. There is a need to develop a deeper and richer understanding of individuals' perceptions, feelings and experiences in relation to work centrality. This can only be effectively achieved through qualitative research approaches, that can address the issues as a whole in the full context of the participants' 'world', rather than on an individual variable level.

Furthermore, the whole issue of independent working, home-working and virtual work is a relatively new phenomenon. In this context, an application of a quantitative research framework, applying statistical analysis is perhaps premature, as the

understanding of this environment is very limited. It can be argued therefore, that theory generation rather than theory confirmation is the key task at this stage. It is perceived that the critical need is to enter the social world of the participant, and determine their social construction of reality, utilising thick description rather than reductionism statistical approaches.

### Constructivist and interpretive paradigms.

Qualitative research approaches are consistent with the constructivist paradigm and the closely related interpretive paradigms. The central premise of these paradigms is that the complex world of lived experience should be understood from the point of view of those who live it.

It relates to a concern for understanding the meanings of social phenomena, grasping the actors definition of a situation, for *verstehen*.. The *verstehen* tradition stresses understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behaviour, the context of social interaction, an empathetic understanding based on subjective experience, and the connections between subjective states and behaviour (Patton, 1980). *Verstehen* has been defined as, 'an experiential form of common sense knowledge of human affairs' (Schultz, 1967, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.120).

The constructivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of the social actors (Schwandt, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It is concerned with understanding human

behaviour from the 'actors' own frame of reference. Within the bounds of this paradigm, there is a need to be aware and sensitive to the fact that multiple realities exist. The important reality is what people imagine it to be (Patton, 1980). As Lofland explains; "In order to capture participants 'in their own terms' one must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality. That, indeed, is the first principle of qualitative analysis"(1971, cited in Patton, 1980, p.28).

These paradigmatic beliefs are fundamentally opposed to the more traditional positivistic paradigm. The positivist seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals. Positivistic approaches have a tendency to focus on the facts and causes of behaviour and utilize statistical analyses to obtain their data.

#### Theoretical framework: symbolic interactionism.

The theoretical framework for this study draws on the social psychological theory of symbolic interactionism. This theory aims to understand the process of meaning making. Blumer (1969, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) claims that symbolic interactionism rests on three premises: First human beings act toward the physical objects and other beings in their environment on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them. Second, these meanings derive from the social interaction between and among individuals. Communication is symbolic because we communicate via languages and other symbols. Third, these meanings are established and modified through an interpretative process.

Symbolic interactionism requires that the inquirer actively enters the world of people being studied, in order to see the situation through their eyes, as seen by the actor, observing what the actor takes into account, and how it is interpreted. Once the individual context can be defined more accurately, subsequent inquiry and analysis will be more focused and accurate.

### Methodological Technique: Narrative Analysis

#### What is narrative analysis?

The significance of narrative analysis is bound in the realities of everyday social life. The telling of stories and anecdotes is a ubiquitous form of communication, employed by people of all walks of life, at all stages of the life cycle (it is one of the first forms of discourse we are exposed to as children). It is a 'universal human activity' (Reissman, 1993) that holds a central position in most cultures of the world.

If one defines narrative as a story with a beginning, middle and an end that reveals someone's experiences, narratives take many forms, are told in many settings, before many audiences, and with varying degrees of connection to actual events or persons (Manning & Cullum-Swan, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.465).

The narrator usually attempts to take an audience into a past time or 'world' and relate what happened to them. The significance of personal stories and anecdotes, extends far beyond a simple sequence of events and details. Narratives often serve to make a point, frequently a moral one. Branigan (1992) proposed that when people tell stories,

anecdotes and other kinds of narratives they are engaged in “a perceptual activity that organises data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience” (p.3). Narrative is an organising principle by which “people organise their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world” (Bruner, 1990, p.35).

Narrators often take fragmented and complex experience and order them with a coherence that is probably not wholly reflective of the actual event or scenario. Narrativisation assumes point of view and not historical truth, it assumes that relating complex events will vary because the past is a selective reconstruction (Reissman, 1993). “In so doing, we move well beyond nature into the intensely human realm of value” (Cronon, 1992, cited in Reissman, p.4).

Narrative analysis takes as the object of investigation the story itself, and it typically takes the perspective of the teller rather than that of society. Researchers do not have direct access to another’s experience, but they can attempt to interpret it through talk, text, interaction and interpretation (Reissman, 1993). The purpose is to see how respondents impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives, how they represent and restructure the world.

Narrative analysis techniques attempt to examine the story and analyse how it is constructed and structured, the language used and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades the listener of its authenticity (Reissman, 1993).

The researcher along with the participants engage in the task of identifying key or core narratives, the most important aspects of the stories in order to develop the central themes of the story.

## Rationale for Narrative Analysis

### Cultural insight.

The unique world of the growing class of the independent 'portfolio' worker, operating in 'virtual work environments', has largely been unexplored. It can be assumed that the various cultural role expectations, symbols and meanings society has traditionally attached to work and work roles, will differ significantly in this new environment.

It is anticipated that this working culture will 'speak itself' through a series of individual's stories. Chafe (1990, cited in Cortazzi, 1993) sees narratives "as overt manifestations of the mind in action: as windows to both the content of the mind and its ongoing operations."(p.79). Narratives then can be seen as opening a window on the individual or with a larger number of individuals, 'opening a window' on their culture.

Results in the form of narrative will obviously provide subjective perceptions, but "it is precisely because of their subjectivity - their rootedness in time, place, and personal experience, in their perspective ridden character - that we value them." (Personal Narratives Group, 1989b, cited in Reissman, p.5). The narrative analysis approach gives prominence to 'human agency and imagination', and it is therefore well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity (Reissman, 1993).

### An holistic approach.

Narrative analysis is perceived to be the most appropriate methodological technique, given the nature of the task. The work centrality construct is complex, drawing on individual value and belief systems, lifestyles and behaviours. It is felt that the narratives generated will contextualise an individuals work centrality in an array of different factors and experiences, probably over an extended time frame. It is perceived as critical therefore, that the inter-relationships between these various factors and experiences, are maintained in 'whole' form, and not fractured into discrete categories. The intention of narrative analysis is to keep the narrative in tact, allowing the researcher to analyse the whole story and the interconnections between the segments.

Narrative analysis, unlike traditional qualitative methods does not fragment the text into discrete content categories for coding purposes, but instead identifies longer stretches of talk that take the form of the narrative - a discourse organised around time and conceptual events in a world created by the narrator (Reissman, 1990).

### Data Collection, Transcribing and Analysis

The intention therefore was to utilise qualitative methodologies, specifically narrative analysis, to ascertain the perceptions, insights, feelings and experiences of the defined sample, through in-depth intensive interviewing. The majority of the data was

collected in one audio taped interview session, with additional follow up enquiry being conducted asynchronously using electronic mail. This approach was successfully completed for all participants, with only participant 5 being unavailable for the follow up asynchronous questioning.

In narrative analysis, the taping and transcribing of the interview is obviously a key task. In accordance with Reissman (1993), this began with a first draft of the entire interview. Subsequently, the narratives were repeatedly analysed to obtain the words and striking features of the conversation. Key sections, which appeared to contribute significant meaning or explanation, were selected for more detailed transcription and analysis.

As mentioned previously, the central analytical task in narrative analysis is to determine the sections of the text that can be identified as 'core narrative.'

The core narrative is the most central and complex component of narrative analysis. It represents the essential meaning of the story in terms of its information content, its interpersonal impact and the language in which it is told (Viney & Bousfield, 1991, p.759).

Core narratives were identified after repeated systematic examination of the texts. Narrative was identified as core narrative, if it appeared to communicate the very essence of the overall message in relation to a particular issue. The determination of core narrative was undertaken on an individual to individual basis primarily. Numerous and often striking commonalities were apparent across the narratives of the participant group. These were formed into themes that were seen to represent the experiences of both the

individual and the sampling group as a whole. Further determination of core narrative occurred after the determination of themes.

The identification of core narrative should ideally be a combined effort by the researcher and the participant to ensure that the researchers perceptions of the central themes, issues and meanings in the stories are similarly viewed by the individual, whose social construction of reality the research is attempting to interpret. This was achieved through post-analysis member checks with three of the six participants. The remainder of the group was unavailable for this process. On the whole, it was apparent that the determination of core narrative by the researcher was mostly accurate.

### Interview Outline

The key focus is on the issues and themes that relate to how and why participants position work in their lives currently as independent workers. How and why they positioned work in the past while working as organisational employees, and on a more incidental basis, how and why they intend to position work in the future.

Reissman (1993) expressed a preference for less structure in interview instruments, in the interest of giving greater control to the respondents. She suggested developing 5-7 broad questions about the topic of enquiry, supplemented by probe questions in case the respondent struggles to get going. Certain kinds of open-ended questions are more likely to elicit narrativisation, i.e. 'when did X happen' as opposed to 'tell me what happened' or, "would you describe a time." However, even questions that

would be expected to lead to a yes/no response can often lead into a story, so the determination of triggers can be unpredictable.

The provisional categories for enquiry were based on the issues raised in the literature, the conceptual definitions of work centrality by the MOW International Research Team (1987), and personal exposure to the unique working environment of 'portfolio workers.' However, the research approach is sufficiently flexible to adapt and change on the basis of the categories defined by the participants themselves.

The 'unique nature of independent work, home-working and virtual working', will be explored to gain a richer insight into participants perceptions of this working environment. Particular emphasis will be placed on the comparison with experiences of organisational employment. What issues does it generate that could illuminate and explain individual work centrality?

The issue of a 'fluid time space' and how time is used is of significant interest. The inherent flexibility of time structures provides freedoms that will inevitably impact on how individuals balance different life dimensions, and more specifically, whether they manipulate other life spheres around work or vice-versa. Once again, how does this compare with experiences of organisational employment?

'The opportunity for a self-actualised workforce' aims to examine the realism of the possibility of a self-actualised workforce through the transition to independent work. To what extent is the type of work done reflective of the direction the individual wishes to pursue? How much control do they feel they have in reality, in a contract to contract environment?

'The issue of a work ethic and commitment to work' aims to explore the value and belief base of the individual in regard to their work attitudes, and whether there has been any change before or as a result of the transition to independent working.

The 'decision orientation regarding preferred life spheres', aims to ascertain at a more macro level, individual perceptions of working and how it is positioned in relation to other life dimensions. How do the participants balance the different life spheres and why? How does this compare to experiences of organisational employment?

'The irregular and unpredictable flow of work' is an issue that appears very salient to the experiences of the independent workers that the researcher has been exposed to. What impact does this have on the positioning of work?

Therefore the first categories for enquiry were relatively broad, pertaining to the general issues relating to working as an independent. The data collected elicited from the initial interviews formed the basis for core narrative and theme generation. The narratives from the first interviews were examined and analysed with the intention of gaining significant insight into the nature and characteristics of independent working. These narratives were then used to generate informed analysis as to the potential impact of independent working on work centrality.

At the next level of enquiry, an alternative approach was adopted. The follow up questionnaire attempted to confirm the inferences regarding independent work and work centrality, by using the work centrality construct and its components as the primary basis for questioning. Participants were asked to respond to questions relating to the value component and the decision making component of work centrality (MOW International Research Team, 1987), and were then asked to make explicit reference as to how

independent work affected their perspectives. In this way, opportunity was created to cross-reference and confirm analysis formed after the first interview stage.

It is important to note that the follow up was conducted asynchronously via electronic mail. This does have some implications. The lack of synchronous interaction means that visual cues are not available, which has two main consequences. Firstly, this can mean that opportunities for additional supplementary questions and probes are missed. A further related point is that asynchronous communication can create conditions that can compromise the trustworthiness of narratives.

### Data Management

The data was managed using comparable methods to those described by Kirby and McKenna (1989), whereby the research data is maintained in a series of files, including identity, tape, document, content and process files.

There is a need to keep the identities of all participants anonymous, partly to protect the individuals and partly to encourage more open and detailed accounts. A coding system was employed and all transcriptions and audio-tapes will be labelled accordingly (i.e. participant 01, participant 02 etc.). These were maintained in the identity file. All audiotapes of the interviews were maintained in the tape file. The document file included all research literature, and original transcripts of the interviews. The content file maintained all data that has been selected as core narrative and associated information and analysis that explains its identification thus. Finally, the process file held the research journal. This will provide additional information about each interview, including

information regarding the setting, time, place, and mood. All striking features of the interview or factors that served to alter the direction of the investigation will be logged and clarified. Furthermore, the journal will hold personal interpretations and perceptions of the data, which will be necessary when attempting to determine the validity of the study at a later stage.

### Sampling Issues

The sampling strategy employed in this study, was a hybrid of chain or snowball sampling, which identified cases of interest from people who know people whose cases are information rich; and stratified purposeful sampling which illustrates sub groups and facilitates comparisons. Two main sub groups were sought. Firstly, those who made a conscious and unilateral decision to leave organisational employment to pursue independent working; secondly, individuals whose hand was forced somewhat by changes in their employment relationship. It was thought that this division was necessary, in order to obtain a more balanced perception.

The intention is to obtain seven individuals on the basis of the following criteria:

- (i) They are self-employed, “on their own account.”
- (ii) They have been organisationally employed, and have made the transition to an independent status.
- (iii) They operate on a ‘contract to contract’ basis.

- (iv) Sub-group 1: Unavailability of traditional work, or events in organisational employment, such as early retirement, downsizing or outsourcing, were the stimulus for the individual to work in this way.
- (v) Sub-group 2: They made a conscious choice to leave traditional employment to work in this way.
- (v) They can be described as 'knowledge workers.'

In the proposal of this thesis, the first source of participants were to be members of a local group of independent workers, (who are known to the researcher), who operate and collaborate as independents in virtual working environments. This group were to be used to generate a further two cases, on the basis of the evolving criteria. For diversity, additional individuals were to be sought who were unconnected with this primary group, to ensure that the salient themes and issues are not particular to one network of professionals, as they may have become aligned on the basis of a similarity in attitudes, behaviors, lifestyles, religion, professions etc. Furthermore, female representation was to be sought. Ultimately therefore, the majority of respondents will be unknown to the researcher, in order to increase the perceived validity of the study.

In the event, six participants were involved, and the sample obtained closely matched the desired criteria. There is some degree of complexity in regard to the desired sub-groups. Narratives indicated that for several of the participants, the motivation to go independent was more of a composite of reasons, and did not prove to be as clear cut as was initially presumed.

It is important to locate the researcher, in reference to the sample obtained. Two of the six individuals, participants one and three, are people that the researcher has worked with professionally on several occasions. The remainder of the sample were obtained through a 'snowball sampling' approach, which proved effective.

### Issues Relating to the Validity of the Study

#### The problems of subjectivity.

Interpretation of narratives is by its very nature, a subjective process. The researcher essentially filters all of the data. The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it (Reissman, 1993). Reissman (1993) suggested the need to locate oneself, in reference to the study, so the audience can take this into account when reviewing the conclusions and analysis.

The author of this study, has worked personally with two of the six participants in the sample. During this time it is somewhat inevitable that I have gained insights and developed perceptions of these different working environments. There is the possibility therefore that I have gone 'native' to some extent, pre-judging and pre-qualifying the study, in terms of the salient issues that have emerged through exposure to their working patterns over a period of time. In such a scenario, the need for 'disciplined subjectivity' becomes more important (Erickson, 1973 cited in Borman, LeCompte & Goetz, 1986). There will a great need for self-awareness with regard to interview structure and interpretation of responses. Moreover, to maintain internal validity to a greater extent, the

imposition of meanings by the researcher will need to be checked with the participants' view of the 'proposed reality.' There is a need for a clear distinction between researcher imposed versus subject generated meanings. Furthermore, external reviewers will be needed to verify certain conclusions and analyses. An additional procedural inclusion will be to record personal interpretations before beginning the research, and to maintain a record of personal interpretations in the journal referred to in the data management section.

### *Pre-judgements on the study*

Before data collection, notes were taken relating to the several personal pre-judgements held regarding the probable outcomes of this study. Regarding the value component, it was assumed that the valuation of working as a life role would increase for the independent worker. It was thought that independent work would lead to a re-emergence of a true work ethic, where work would be valued more as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. It was thought that choice and freedom would be the pivotal factors in this positive evaluation of working. Regarding the decision making component, it was assumed that this positive evaluation of the work role would result in an increase in the relative importance of working in relation to other life roles. It was further assumed that the demands of independent work would necessitate greater centrality in terms of time and energy investments. These two combined were expected to lead to increased role conflict.

### The problems of replicability.

Maintaining a high level of internal and external reliability in qualitative research is often difficult. Results vary from researcher to researcher, subject to subject and over time (Borman, LeCompte & Goetz, 1986). Particularly with narrative analysis, the degree of control over the data is minimal (deliberately), as the intention is to allow the individual to define their own categories and perceptions of reality. However, the fact that the approach is less structured does not necessarily negate any possibility of the study being replicated in some form. To facilitate this, there is a need to record and justify the evolution of the methodology, as direction changes. This will allow future researchers in the area to have a better understanding of the final data and analysis.

Furthermore, in terms of external validity, it is frequently argued that qualitative studies essentially represent themselves, and cannot really be compared across different groups. However, there are few phenomenon that are studied by qualitative methods that are truly unique. Most will have counterparts elsewhere (Borman, LeCompte & Goetz (1986). Borman et al., suggest the need to develop a rational basis for comparison of research sites and populations. They talk of 'transferability' where the methods, categories and characteristics must be identified so explicitly that comparisons can be made across groups. Also, the need for 'comparability' is mentioned, where standardised and non-idiosyncratic terminology should be used as frequently as possible.

### The problems of trustworthiness of narratives.

Personal narratives represent a point of view and not historical truth. Largely, the past is a selective reconstruction where experiences are related in ways, which are congruent with rather than undermining current identities. Subsequently, the researcher should look for trustworthiness rather than truth (Reissman, 1993).

To attempt to determine the trustworthiness of narratives, one can look for the persuasiveness of the account in terms of the availability of evidence to support the story. Furthermore, the 'coherence' approach proposed by Agar and Hobbs (1982 cited in Reissman, 1993) could be functional in this regard. Coherence is examined at three levels, global, local and themal. Global coherence refers to the overall goals the narrator is trying to achieve, such as the justification of an attitude or action. Local coherence refers to the coherence of different sections of the narrative, in terms of how consistently different events relate to each other. Finally, themal coherence, in terms of the development of narrative around key themes. Agar and Hobbs found that frequently, the three different elements of coherence would offer three different perspectives on the same discourse, whereas at other times they are mutually reinforcing.

In the event, attention was paid to these issues of coherence, but limited experience will have compromised the effectiveness of this process. The issue of trustworthiness was addressed mainly through the search for consistency. Do the different fragments of narrative align themselves in support of each other, or are there certain degrees of contradiction throughout the course of the narrative?

The key observation across all participants in respect of trustworthiness, was the apparent tendency towards a positive rationalisation of their circumstances. Independent work frequently presents both extremes of positive and negative experiences of working.

It should be acknowledged that there appeared to be an over emphasis on the positive aspects, while the negative aspects were subjugated to a large extent. This may indeed be a true reflection of their reality, but there were certain inconsistencies that suggested that a degree of rationalisation was apparent.

## Chapter Four

### Results

#### Organisation of Results

The background and the structure for this study were based closely on the conceptual definitions of work centrality, proposed by The Meaning of Work International Research Team (1987). For continuity, the results of this study will be presented within the same conceptual framework.

The MOW International Research Team clearly identifies that the referent in work centrality research is working (paid employment) in general as opposed to working on a current specific job. Furthermore, the concern is with the psychological meaning of work to the individual. The definition of work centrality is *a general belief about the importance of work in one's life*. There are two major theoretical components of the work centrality construct. The first component involves a value orientation toward working as a life role. The second component involves a decision orientation about preferred life spheres.

The focus of this study is to examine the implications of portfolio based independent working, for work centrality. Subsequently, the results largely relate to the two components of the work centrality construct. The major themes that emerged will be discussed briefly, following the reporting of participants' narratives.

The narrative of the participants will be presented individual by individual, rather than presenting fragments of all the participants' narrative on a thematic basis. This is intended to provide a more holistic approach, maintaining some degree of continuity and context for the narrative of each participant. Key or core narratives from across the participant group were examined, and the consistencies and commonalities in these important aspects of the stories, were identified in order to develop the central themes across all of the narratives. Core narrative has been highlighted by the bold, italicised text.

## Participant 1

### Overview.

He is 50, married with one teenage son. He is currently working as an independent marketing and sales consultant, based out of Halifax. He works from a home office. His background is in world travel as a freelance tour operator and the hotel business as a marketing executive. The transition back to independent work happened six years ago.

The reasons for his transition back to independent work help illuminate and explain his current viewpoint on his working life. He strongly felt that he was at heart an independent worker. The motivational factors that caused him to return to independent work were wholly intrinsic. He sought autonomy, control, freedom, and mental challenge, and was determined to avoid the boredom and frustration he found in his prior experiences of organisational employment.

At this juncture, he is very content with his lifestyle. He does work very long hours, largely to maintain sufficient cash flow to cover his monthly costs. He displays a reasonably high level of concern over where the next work will come from. So although it was evident that he is not financially motivated, in the sense of material acquisition, the cash flow issue is a strong motivation for his activity.

He exhibits a strong sense of identification with his work, and he displays a traditional work ethic. The high level of pride in his work suggests almost a craftsman's ethic. He acknowledges that market realities and financial realities mean that he has to do a lot of work that ideally he would not do. On the whole however, he pursues projects that

interest him, working with people that he likes, which is the fundamental motivation for him to work as an independent.

### Working background.

**Researcher:** The first thing is if you can give me some sort of background, a little bit of a biography in terms of your working life to date. Just a brief overview.

I'm 49 years old, I have been working since I was 17 I guess, on and off...of that period of time, which is what 30 odd years? I have worked freelance or self-employed for 20 of those 30 odd years and I have worked for companies for 10.

**Researcher:** And what was the sequence of those?

The first couple of years were for companies although they were really student-type jobs. The next stretch which would be probably from the age of, I would say 20 to 32, was all freelance. From 32 to 42 was....or thereabouts...was working in companies and then back to the self-employment world.

**Researcher:** What initiated the transition both ways when you first went into organisational employment and then when you went back to self-employment. What was the trigger for that?

I think the trigger initially, which may or may not be helpful, I think the initial trigger to go into an employment status was that the freelance work I was doing was world travel based so it was things like that....and I was 32 years of age, I had a relationship with (his wife) that came to a point where my freelance work had me on the road 11 months of the year so it was a sort of make your choice, either continue to do the freelance thing...well, it wasn't just the style of work, it was the work, which was world travel or come up with a different sort of strategy that.....the only reason I went into the corporate world was that at the age of 32 coming off the road it was mission impossible to parlay that into a Canadian based version of that - freelance, it was my line of work which was just so unique that there was no such thing ...so if I was to return to Canada and lead a more normal life pattern, in my head at least at the time, my definition meant "getting a job" and in those days that was still pretty much the default, it was.....self-employed

people were a very small percentage of the population, so I came back....then with that sense that well if you're going to return to Canada and get...make a living, you have to get a job so therefore what job would I get and it was something that was an obvious segue for my line of business, so I went into the hotel business. The reason why I left it was the realisation some years later that really at heart I was an independent worker.

### Core Narrative by Theme

#### Personal identification with working as a life role.

P1 recognised the effects of socialization in the development of personal interpretations and meanings regarding work. The key referent group for his underlying attitudes toward work appeared to be his family, which had an entrepreneurial heritage. The meaning of work to an independent, self-employed worker can be significantly more positive, than the more pervasive attitudes to work in society.

The challenge with self-employed people I think to some degree also is not only themselves but their families and the backgrounds of their families. For example, is it, can it be easier for the sons and daughters of the self-employed people who get married to live that life, no question...I don't think there's a question about that. *I think their culture, their family culture has shown them the options, has shown them that work is a rich, satisfying.....or can be a rich, satisfying love affair and not a depressing, agonising prison.*

**Researcher:** Does your family.....anybody in your family been involved with self-employment?

*Yeah, both of my grandfathers were merchants, were self-employed and I got some sense of self-employment from them. What I got from both of them was a tremendous sense of what the entrepreneur has a duty....to not just make money, but a duty to make some sort of a decent contribution to the community. My father was an employee all his life*

and my mother came from a family that was reasonably well off so she never worked, she didn't have a background in that, ***but I just think it's more a question of one's nature, or at least it is in my case, I just know after 30 years of work that the nature of being in control of my own work however the subject of that might be, is critically important.***

This latter reference to the need for control permeated and in many ways underpinned P1's attitudes toward working as a life role.

Control element can develop increased identification with work.

Although the independent worker must operate to a large extent within the market boundaries, the key thing is that the independent, project based worker, at least has the opportunity and flexibility to try and gravitate toward work that is preferred and away from that which is not. P1 proposes that this is very unlikely in traditional jobs. A key factor identified is the temporal boundary around projects, which can make work direction more malleable on an ongoing basis.

Yeah, ***given the circumstances which are the bills have to be paid***, and you live in Halifax, not in New York.....there are certain sorts of realities that you must face, but the other thing is that if you're lucky you have the opportunity to incrementalise yourself ***or steer yourself in the right direction. For example, the self-employed person is only ever doing projects. So a project has a start and an end. If you hated it, you don't do it again. If you love it, you can steer your way towards more of those projects. That flexibility is often reduced or even missing for most people who are imprisoned by jobs*** if you want to think about it from that point of view. There are lots of jobs that are rich and rewarding, but many of them are repetitive and boring, and those folks when they get trapped by benefits really suffer.

It was clear that P1 saw independent work as having a much greater potential to satisfy his salient needs, as opposed to more traditional organisational jobs. A degree of confusion emerged relating to attitudes toward a specific job and toward jobs in general. It developed that it was not so much the traditional job that he found boring. In fact, his first job he found interesting, mainly because it was a 'big picture' job, with a higher degree of autonomy. He indicates a higher level of identification with this job, as it was more congruent with his salient needs. His subsequent jobs did not meet his personal working needs, identified as autonomy and an opportunity to make a clear contribution.

It was boring because the hotel based work which eventually drove me out of the business, was initially boring *because I went from a corporate big picture job which I found quite interesting, quite exciting*, which was (Hotel Corporation) where I was responsible for all sales from Canada to the international network, primarily resorts, so I was selling conventions, I was selling major customers who instead of....I would influence them to take their convention to a (Hotel Corporation) resort in Florida or Mexico, or wherever as opposed to buying from the (Hotel Corporation) rep who would send them to their resort in Honolulu.....so that's the competitive environment that I very much liked, *but I liked it because it was a working environment which pleased me, I was absolutely my own boss*, headquarters was in (US city), nobody ever came to visit.....Now what happened, they closed that office, I moved into operations because that was the direction I had to go, so I went from that world to working in a hotel as the Director of Marketing of a hotel with the boss on site being a general manager and I worked in that building. So here's a person who's spent the early part of their life travelling around the world, every day new city, new hotel.....blah, blah, blah....then coming back to deal with the large expensive issues of major conventions on the move to all sorts of different, exciting destinations and now we're positioning this person in an airport hotel where you work six days a week and you go to your office and you go to meetings and talk about the butter patties and the garbage compactor and that sort of operational challenges which are the real life of the hotel business, and I had zero interest in that. Zero - being confined to a building, so I would never have made it as a teacher.....so that helped me understand that I really wasn't.....(Hotel Corporation) was a fabulous company with tremendous benefits, tremendous training, much of which I took in my eight years with them, but at the end of the day I was chased out of the company *because I just hated operations and I*

*wanted to get back into something that was more global in perspective.* So I left (Hotel Corporation), came to this smaller, less bureaucratic hotel company in Halifax and then eventually left that, went back into private work because I really didn't feel I was making any contributions in that business. *I was making a huge amount of money but I was making no impact on the business,* I was not growing the company, which was what I felt I needed to do there and the reason was the owner of the company did not at the end of the day want to grow the company, *so I said "well, I'm not making a contribution, I'm wasting your money, I'm bored, so I'm leaving".*

P1 believes his preference for freelance work is a fundamental personality issue. This personality element was interpreted in terms of salient needs. For P1, monetary reward is not as significant a factor as the need to avoid boredom in work. Therefore it would appear that in P1's work, intrinsic need satisfaction takes precedence over extrinsic need satisfaction. This personality component re-occurred through the body of the interview.

I don't think it was just the first crack at it, *I think it was more of a personality style thing.* One pattern which has emerged late in my working life is that I'm much more....this has only recently occurred to me as I've probably said to you before, *I'm much more frightened of boredom than I am of not having money...* And that's the sort of thing that needs literally decades of data before you can reach these conclusions, and that's absolutely true. *I die literally if I'm bored. And you can pay me double, triple, quadruple the amount of money that I make, and I would still die...*

It emerges again, that control is P1's salient need in his working life. He has a fundamental need to be able to control the nature of his work. The fact that he is able to achieve that control through independent work provides him with a better feeling about his work. This would appear to be as much a negative reaction to organisational experience, as a positive experience in independent work. He does acknowledge however that he may not appear to have control over his work at all, but he feels it himself. A key

observation here is that he seems to have a very strong identification with the way of working as well as the content of the work.

So therefore independent work may or may not show us that... the people who do it.....maybe they're more self-confident, maybe they're more realists, maybe they're not at all, maybe it's by accident that they do it.....*maybe they just have a better feeling when they're working on their own, but I'll tell you that I'm much, much happier working a 100 hours a week in my little office here where I feel some.....I feel that I'm going to no meetings that I don't chose to go to, I am wasting nobody's time and nobody's wasting mine. I'm either being paid to do the work or attend the meetings or I am choosing to do the work and attend the meetings because I chose to do it.*

Researcher: So it sounds like choice and control are.....

It's entirely that in my view and it's, once again, it's the subject of your other world because if you've actually analysed my life, *an objective analyst could say this is completely irrational cause that's not how it's playing out, but that doesn't matter to me because that's...I feel that I have more control.*

*So I'm much more interested in...I'm motivated by ideas, I'm motivated by my ability in a self-employed environment to explore ideas, to work on them, to make my own decisions about where I spend my time or don't and pay the consequences myself in terms of how it affects my income.*

The perception of control continually re-emerged as a pivotal factor in his perceptions of work. There was an issue of subjective versus objective perceptions of how much control P1 actually has. P1 has choices and exercises those choices and the inherent flexibility of his working style. Conversely, independent work is by its very nature difficult and unpredictable, and therefore difficult to control.

*Now, I can do that and I can decide on a Thursday morning at 10:00 to go and meet somebody on that subject because I control my world in some way. So it's a little bit perverse, it's a little bit unrealistic, it's massively subjective, this whole concept of me controlling my world... I think I'm controlling my world because I ultimately have the ability to say yes or no to any of this... other observers looking in would say here's a guy who's working himself to death, not making anything like as much money as he could do if he lived in New York and worked for a company. And probably both are true, but I'm just happier doing this.*

The degree of control and choice is mediated by financial realities.

The researcher probed to determine the extent to which P1 was in reality, able to dictate the type of work he wanted to do and how he did it. This would imply that an opportunity exists to pursue self-actualising work on an ongoing basis. P1 acknowledged certain realities meant that he must 'follow the market' to a large extent. In his 'personal mission' P1 places large emphasis on the desire to work with people he likes, which further suggests the desire to utilise the inherent control and flexibility of independent work, to create a very personal work environment.

*I think you're right... it's a little bit like the artist who says well I would really rather do fine china but the only thing the market will pay me for is this crude, crappy porcelain stuff that I whip up and I think that a lot of that is true, but I also think that we're all big people and I think that we make choices in life....so I'm not going to blame anybody that I happen to live in Halifax and that I happen to make less money than I could in Toronto and all that kind of thing....so that I'm doing....I'm forced to do crappy little assignments when my true and appropriate role in life is to be in New York, or Toronto and making triple the income and dealing with quality people....I don't look at it that way. I think that my little mission, personal mission, is can I do work that I'm proud of with people I like to work with? And it's as simple as that...and as long as I can do that, get satisfaction out of the work, and enjoy the people I'm working with, boy that is, when you think about it, at the outside maybe 10% of the population has that luxury.*

It became apparent that even when the market weakens the degree of real control, in terms of work direction and content, the perception of control and the perception of ownership remain strong.

At least back in the independent working I can...*I'll do some pretty crummy projects but they'll be projects that \_\_\_\_\_ personally is talking to somebody and agreeing to do and my signature goes on it. It isn't because a company sent me to do it, it's because I made the decision.* But there's also an opportunity to do some projects which are more inspiring and more helpful and make a contribution to the world instead of just either sitting in idle with your brain dead and collecting a pay cheque or doing a whole lot of work that's meaningless. So I think really that was a fundamental part of my departure from corporate life, which is I'm sick and tired of doing work which is negative, hostile towards others, and not helpful. *Can we find a way to still make grocery money and do something that's more helpful - the assumption is yes, so let's get on with it. And I've been very happy with that shift.*

#### The potential alienation of organisational employment.

Regarding the transition to independent work again, P1 found it somewhat difficult financially. To establish yourself as an independent worker takes time, and this has to happen without the regular income that is a constant in organisational employment. For this reason, he sees the transition as more difficult later in life when you have well established financial responsibilities, and a certain standard of living. He believes traditional jobs can lead to a suppression of salient intrinsic needs, and lead to increased focus on economic needs, allowing these to dominate. Subsequently, it can be assumed that identification with work would decline in this environment. The need for control and

confidence, were seen as key personality characteristics that may determine who makes the transition.

It was rocky because by one obvious fact is that when you are young, have no dependents and no more mortgages, no car payments, it's very much easier to be an independent worker. It's a given that if you transition from corporate life to private practice late in life, you need a minimum of three months of income sitting in the bank and how many people in this credit expanded world nowadays actually have three months of money sitting in savings? A. And B, how many of those people who actually have that would use that to prime a pump of self-employment? Very few. *So that's why I think very few people transition even those who are perhaps at heart an independent worker, transition back to independent life, independent work life, after they have been hooked by a system which provides benefits and some stability because they use that to leverage up the credit and bigger houses, bigger cars, blah, blah, blah.....and after you've been at that for even four or five years, wow! When you face the reality that going independent may be appealing but it is the destruction of all that.....at heart that's what it means.* I think what that means is that most people who might have interest in self-employment say o.k. on balance I'm just not prepared to make that shift.....*I think it has to do with character, personality, whatever.... where you really do fundamentally have the sense that both you need to be in control, and you are in control, you know enough to know what you are capable or not capable of....you know basically, intuitively where you fit in the marketplace, you have confidence to know that you can keep making money.*

Much comment had been passed and adjectives used in reference to jobs, largely in a negative association. It became clear, that it wasn't an objection to jobs in themselves, but rather an objection to the form 'work' takes on in many job scenarios. It would appear that P1 firmly believes that the vast majority of jobs could not satisfy his salient needs. This again can be linked to the need for ownership and control, over the nature and meaning of the work role. If this control can be effectively exercised, the cognitive consistency between the work role and self can be maximised, and the level of identification with working will be increased.

Interestingly, P1 indicated that he would be very willing to accept a job in the future, should it hold many of the control and autonomy characteristics of independent work.

***I would... I've often thought about that, and I have to suggest that I don't have a negative prejudice towards jobs. I have a negative prejudice towards boredom and I have a negative prejudice towards making no contribution.....Making a difference, making something valuable, doing some valuable work.*** In other words, what I could not do, couldn't live with, is being paid \$100,000 a year to be a bus conductor because I would immediately sit there and say this is not right. I may not have many brains, but I have more brains than is required to do the bus conductor job and I don't care if it's absolutely acceptable and I've got more money than I would ever need, this is not right. ***So I can't go through live unless I feel that I'm making a contribution, pushing something, doing something of value, and from a fun point of view, working with people who I enjoy working with, so that's the mission.*** Can we have fun with people we like and can we do valuable work? Can we get up each day and say I really think that the current project is worth doing? That I would be quite prepared to accept in a job format, but it would be more likely a job which somebody said look I have a specific mission, it's a two year mission....***you may be the guy for the job, do you want to do it for two years and here' a start and here's and end and this is the specific mission,*** . . . it would lead me to ask all the questions I think that you usually see in these movies where there's a military operation. I'd say give me a lot of detail around what you want done, give me a lot of detail around the budget and how many resources I can have to get it done, ***do I have complete freedom to get the team together that I want to get it done***.....those sorts of questions and then sure I could see taking on....

**Researcher:** You'd accept the job in a sort of self-employed format?

***Exactly. But if it is in the context of the usual which is come and waste 40% of your life on politics, go to a lot of meaningless meetings where you're offering nothing and the process is getting nothing from you, then the answer is no, no.***

Greater identification with work can relate to a more positive affective response.

P1 clearly has a strong positive affective response toward working as an independent. The reasons that he cites for leaving organisational employment are based on the failure of his jobs to satisfy his salient needs, while having an awareness of the potential of independent work to satisfy those salient needs. Control has emerged as a central need, as have the closely related needs of autonomy and freedom.

His experiences of organisational work had left him with a negative affective association, while his previous experience of freelance work had left him with a very positive affective association.

so I came back... then with that sense that well if you're going to return to Canada and get. . make a living, you have to get a job so therefore what job would I get and it was something that was an obvious segue for my line of business, so I went into the hotel business. *The reason why I left it was the realisation some years later that really at heart I was an independent worker, that's what I really love to do, I loved the freedom, I loved the mental stimulation, I loved the sense of control I had over....although it's pure perception, because in practical objective terms you have less control, but anyways, but the perception was that I would have more control over doing things or imagining that I would do things that I wanted to do as opposed to things that I was told to do, or somebody else would make me do.*

P1 clearly highlights how the ability of independent work to satisfy his salient intrinsic needs, greatly outweighs the importance of the more predictable and more substantial financial rewards that can perhaps be gained through traditional employment. It becomes clear that financial reward does not stimulate any degree of emotional

involvement for P1. The degree of emotional investment in his work is derived from other more 'internal' factors, including freedom and autonomy.

My old boss at (Hotel Corporation), for example, who is rich by virtue of being with the company 20+ years, doing well, investing well, he's got millions literally, he keeps telling me how much he envies me....*the freedom, independence, and the ability to say I don't want to do that project, or I'm out of town, or I'm going to go to my cottage for a month and whatnot.* What does it mean to him? What it means to him is that he is at heart an entrepreneurial spirit but he got trapped by a company with a benefit scheme that was so rich that he couldn't say no to it, so in his state of mind he's an entrepreneur at heart that spent his entire working life selling out to the company for money. *That result, I'm sitting here worried about next month's forecast in terms of where will my money be, but if you ask me in my heart am I happy, I'm blissfully happy. Here's a guy who just grinds his teeth every night, he's got millions in the bank, but he grinds his teeth because he's depressed that he sold himself to the company* and so he's got tons of money and of course he buys all kinds of cars, and boats...he's got tons of stuff, but he keeps telling me that he envies me with my pipsqueak little office and my two twelve-year old cars, sorry two thirteen-year old cars.

It emerged that P1 highly values the satisfaction that comes from earning the money to get by, to pay bills and buy food. There is a clear and personal connection between work and the outcome, and this again is strongly linked to the issue of control.

I think it depends on one's attitude... I think that there are people who would be... there's no question in fact that perhaps even the majority of people would listen to what I just said and say well I have a totally different view of life. I would rather be the harried executive who made \$75,000 a year and even worked the occasional weekend day, now that I have the money, that I would never do that, ever. And I would never worry about benefits or pension because that all comes along with it. I do this and I have no pension and no benefits - zero. Everything I pay for, every benefit I pay for has to come out of the money I find in the market. So I think that a lot of folks, maybe the majority, would say I have a different view, I would rather up front sell myself in bulk, get a bulk wage which I think is consistent, get benefits which I think are consistent, and put up with the agrees

that came along with that. I'm the opposite personality, I just don't. ... I think my subjective opinion of that is that is just something I want to do. *I would rather do that, I would rather have no benefits, I would rather be 100% responsible for me and my family and have the sense of satisfaction that comes from that, from being however perversely it may be the case in control of my life so that I feel some.... I feel the satisfaction of getting through, I feel the satisfaction of actually paying the light bill and putting food on the table. I also feel the terror that comes when that may not be working, but that's the stimulant in life that I need* and the alternative which is perhaps the majority of you is just to me, a slow death. There's no question, I think that I'm in the vast minority in terms of current here in history.

### Behavioural indicators of involvement.

Narratives have clearly indicated the high degree of involvement and identification P1 has with his work. As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that work related content is salient in his cognitive processes. With the psychological 'spillover' into other spheres, it becomes difficult therefore to separate out work and non-work time.

*when you're an entrepreneur and a self-employed person you really never do switch it off, it's like the farmer. You're driving from here to Ontario in your car and you're thinking you know those nine projects and you're moving them around in your mind. If that happened, this one would move that up and you're driving along the road and this is what's going through your head... If you're a good employee with a well-balanced work and leisure scheme, that doesn't happen, but it does if you're self-employed and I think in some measure, again, it comes back to are you cut out for that life or not? Are you a farmer by nature or are you not? I am a farmer by nature even when I'm at leisure I'm constantly fascinated with the business opportunities and if I'm drinking beer with my cousin in (town), Ontario in the garden, I'm saying now (name), what's happening in business, what's working, what's not working, what are the opportunities. And he says, you know there's a big opportunity for a tourism development program in (town) and we're missing the boat and I will immediately attack that...what would that be?*

And I find it a fascinating, endless puzzle *so I'm never off duty in that regard.*

Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

Tellingly, although P1 talks of a high level of engagement and satisfaction from his work, there are many elements of his day to day work that would be dropped, given the financial freedom to do that. This suggests that work for him is a constantly changing mix of work as an end in and of itself, and work as a means to an end. Commitment to working as a life role is therefore heavily dependent on the nature and meaning of the work available. There is perhaps a greater long-term commitment to intrinsically satisfying work, than to more instrumental activity.

*There wouldn't be any more of the borderline stuff, it would just be another routine, workshop or another routine marketing, planning exercise. And as I've said to \_\_\_\_ I keep getting pulled back into these marketing planning things, as I've said to \_\_\_\_ the truth of the matter is that my life to marketing is the same as the life of a plumber to plumbing. It's my trade, I've done it for a long time and it bores the shit out of me, it really does.*

Once the financial necessity of working is taken out of the equation. P1's conviction to continue working is a testament to a strong work ethic, or at least a determination to provide a contribution and avoid boredom. Retirement from an organisational job is something that is commonly met with eager anticipation. This can be seen largely in terms of the disconnection between the individual and the personal meaning of their labour.

So if somebody gave me a million dollars or enough money that I would not have, or Bill's model, which I think is a good one, which is that can you find a way as an entrepreneurial activity and hopefully someday (company name) will be this, that you will get dividends equal to \$5,000 a month before you get out of bed in the morning. And that's a....I really believe that at this stage in life, that is a major threshold. *But I would still work and what would I be doing? I'd probably. .. the mix would probably shift.....I'd probably be doing a lot more with every it as much passion and every bit as much fascination and every bit as much determination I would be doing project work but suddenly a lot less of it would be paying me. I'd be working with our new issue of youth at risk at a macro level world-wide and that's a fascinating challenge. It's a fascinating problem. Can you make a contribution? Who knows, but let's get into it.* With all of the things that were done in the past and never really had the time to do properly like (name) and I invented that not soup kitchen thing, but the van that goes around, the bus that goes around town and collects appropriate food from hotels to recycle to soup kitchens. But we saw in our work that there was a huge amount of food that the Health Department was forcing hotels to throw in the garbage so we said let's get a group together and figure out how to stop that. Some of it is edible and there are people who need it - let's figure out how to do that. I think there would be a lot more of that stuff that I would be doing and the truth of the matter is if somebody gave me a full time income, I might still be working 75 hours a week. I don't know.

Personal interpretation of the relative importance of work.

P1 had demonstrated a high degree of involvement and identification with his work. To attempt to ascertain the relative importance of his work, the use of Dubin's term 'central life interest' was employed. It is apparent that how people position their work, engages a lot of normative influences. A healthy work ethic is regarded as a positive attribute in society, however there appears to be a degree of social disapproval attached to excessive work centrality. Moreover, the phrase 'central life interest' evokes a perception of the highest priority. This may be true

for many in terms of time and energy investments on a day to day basis, but it may not be true in terms of value structures, with regards to family and other life roles.

**Researcher:** Would you say that work is your central life interest?

*Oh no...god no. I think....that's a little bit unkind....(associate) says the same thing and when I went to Sweden I think I proved this to myself, to my great gratification....that I am not as much of a workaholic as either (associate 1) or (associate 2). Because (associate 1) and (associate 2)....we were all living in \_\_\_\_\_ house over there cause we had no money so of course \_\_\_\_\_ had sensitively offered since he was in the Caymans, so we all gleefully took his house. And there we were. And these two idiots immediately laptops up... endlessly all weekend long and I'm sitting reading a car magazine and I said I proved it, I proved it, I can switch off.*

Positioning of work can change over time.

In terms of his working history, P1 left his freelance work to pursue more traditional employment. He came to a point in his life, that personal needs were given a greater priority than his work. Work was positioned to fit with more salient needs at that point in time.

I think the trigger initially, which may or may not be helpful, I think the initial trigger to go into an employment status was that the freelance work I was doing was world travel based so it was things like that.....and I was 32 years of age, *I had a relationship with (his wife) that came to a point where my freelance work had me on the road 11 months of the year so it was a sort of make your choice, either continue to do the freelance thing....well, it wasn't just the style of work, it was the work*, which was world travel or come up with a different sort of strategy that.....the only reason I went into the corporate world was that at the age of 32 coming off the road it was mission impossible to parlay that into a Canadian based version of that - freelance, it was my line of work which was just so unique that there was no such thing...so if I was to return to Canada and lead *a more normal life pattern, in my head at least at the time, my definition meant "getting a job" and in those days that was still pretty much the default.*

The ability to position work rather than being positioned by it.

P1 told a story that highlighted the way in which flexibility and choice can be utilised in the working life of the independent. His working style means that time and the allocation of that time becomes more fluid. It would appear that he could position his work, rather than him being positioned by it, as would occur in a standard job setting. The independent is able to use the more fluid time space to extend the period over which work is present, which can create windows of opportunity for other life roles on a consistent basis. What emerged was that although the opportunity does exist to take advantage of this flexibility, the significant time demands of the independent work role can limit the extent to which this opportunity can be exercised.

Oh it manifests itself in this way. In my world I have about.....*mostly a 48 to 72 hour time \_\_\_\_\_ which means that everything beyond that is fluid pretty much*, unless I have major projects with patterns laying down an event. Which allows you to imagine a certain flexibility in that time beyond 72 hours. *Within 72 hours it's generally a juggling match...*but I remember right back to when I was 21 and I was riding around a sail boat on a Tuesday afternoon in Toronto on Lake Ontario with an actor friend of mine. . I was a freelance tour escort, I was doing that . . .so I would work, I would go 70-80 days on the road and I would come home and I would arrive in Toronto in the middle of July or something and I would have three weeks off and I would go sailing for three weeks.....*and I remember riding on a Tuesday afternoon with this actor friend of mine saying there is no amount of money in the world that could ever replace my ability to spontaneously go sailing with you on a Tuesday afternoon when everybody else, many people with many, many, many times more money than I will ever have in my life, who absolutely must be in their three-piece suit in their office this Tuesday afternoon and I am sailing because I chose to do that.* There's no amount of money that will ever, ever replace that and I was 21 when I thought that and I still think it today.

**Researcher:** Do you still take advantage of that now?

Well, a specific way would be I know because of my work patterns, state of mind, that I do my best...probably my best thinking and analysis and writing work between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00, and I can often do a double in that. In other words in that four hour patch I can do as much work as in any other time of the day it would take me eight hours to do. So I will get up out of bed, get a cup of tea, come back here, flip on my computer and I will start writing at six. And I will go straight through until 10:00 non stop and taking advantage of that, what I know is my own best performance period. Then what happens usually after 10:00 what happens is the day overcomes you. The business presses in on you, e-mails, telephone calls, people on leads, callbacks...so you lose control of your day. Then it's a sunny day and my wife says to you want to play tennis this afternoon and I say yeah let's go and play tennis. So I will go...or go to the pool at 2:00, lie in the sun, read a novel for half an hour, go for a couple of links, play an hour and a half of tennis, come back, put something on the barbecue, come back to my office at 8:00 and work until midnight or 1:00....*but I would rather trade the impulsive task management and swim and Tuesday afternoon sail, for working 6 hours on a Saturday. In other words I construct my work patterns precisely the way I construct it.* The typical... you'll appreciate this... the typical old English working pattern of at 6:03 the alarm clock rings, 6:21 I get out of the shower, have my slurp of tea as I go out the door to catch the 6:38 so that I can be in my position, punch my time clock at 7:13 so that I can... you know, that sort of thing. Which I would really die at.

Potential for greater integration of life roles.

An excellent metaphor was put forward by P1, that of a farmer. That there is always work that needs doing, but equally there are always little opportunities during the day to relax, or fulfil other roles. Independent working for P1, allows a greater decision and choice component, and there appears to be a greater integration of different roles. He identifies how he can integrate fragments of work, family and leisure throughout the day.

No. I don't take traditional vacations and I don't think... I don't know many independent workers or entrepreneurs that do....*it's more, the best metaphor I can think of is the farmer metaphor. Which is that there's always work to do, seven days a week and there's always little opportunities for relaxation within that work environment. This whole notion that human beings segment work and recreation and draw this massive, this curtain crashes down between the two so that we work, work, work, so that we can relax and then over here we can't think of working, just relax, relax, relax* I mean that's basically a construct of the last 100 years of human life..... But, so the way I work is that I'll go away to my cottage, or to my island in the \_\_\_\_\_ for a month or six weeks, take all my computer equipment with me, within three hours of arrival I have my whole electronic office set up, a call comes in from Toronto, nine hours after arrival I get in my car and drive to Toronto to a business meeting, come back, fly to Calgary for three days, come back on my computer doing a project from the Island, working, working, working. . . and this summer was an example. *I was there five weeks and never had a day off in the traditional sense, but.....somebody says o.k., you have an island on a lake in (place) and you work all day or whatever the heck you do, you get up at 6:00 and you do your e-mail and you do this and you do that, and you go for a swim at 8:00, swim a quarter of a mile and you come back and at lunch you have a bowl of soup and you go for a paddle, then you come back and late in the afternoon you go for another swim and sit on the dock and have a cocktail with your family. This is a bad picture?* So I'm enormously lucky in that regard I think, *but again I'm choosing to construct my work and my working life according to my definition of it* and again, far rather do that and ride around in a 13 year old Toyota than have mountains of money, mountains of electronic toys and be sitting in my Lexus with two cell phones in traffic in Toronto, buy-sell, buy-sell, buy-sell.....no...Not my idea of a good time.

#### The nature of portfolio working.

P1 provided a very clear representation of the difficulties and challenges of a more portfolio based working life. Economic factors dictate that he must maintain several projects concurrently, and it becomes apparent why significant cognitive investments are necessary to work successfully in this way.

**Researcher:** You mentioned earlier on about working for you and the department of work being somewhat of a juggling process...can you talk a little bit more about that in terms of what you actually find yourself juggling?

Well, I suppose the one analogy is the lawyer analogy. Because a lawyer is basically a consultant. We all have these examples of the lawyer who is working on three or six or 13 files simultaneously. The law firm is quite encouraged to have the lawyer working on 13 instead of three. The more files you work on simultaneously, the more disjointed your thoughts, the more whipshod you feel about things because you can't really get below the surface on any one thing unless you have conveniently organised things to say I'm going to take this 48 hours and only work on Mrs. Smith's case and then I'm going to move to Mr. Jones' case and then I'm going to move to this case over here. And that never happens. What happens is two things. *One is all three of those cases have to be thought about simultaneously and then the firm wants you to work on ten others on top of that, so that's the basic environment in which you're working. So for example, all those files have either leads that require a lot of thinking, a lot of work, a lot of perhaps proposals or perhaps follow-up or they are projects which are doing this on you constantly, the client is saying I need this...I absolutely need this 12-hour piece of your hide and I need it within 48 hours....oops sorry miscued.* And the next guy in line who said that was really not, didn't really need it. So this is completely off-line now. OK so you've got ready for an extensive 12-hour run, pushed everything off the table and now oops you've got the 12 hours back, ok. what are we going to do with the 12 hours, *are we going to get in all the huge massive amount of thinking and management that that requires and it's been sitting there just idling for weeks, saying I'm nagging you, I'm nagging you, I'm nagging you.....you're not doing this.* So you say right I've got 12 hours back I'm going to dig into \_\_\_\_\_ and you pull this out and you spread it all around your office at 6:00 some morning and by 9:30 that morning you think you've got a handle on this thing, this piece, you know I've got 37 leads and I think I've organised them into As, Bs, and Cs, according to where the money is, you've got this whole data base thing and I think I've reacquainted myself with that and of course, it takes you 2-3 hours to dig down into the file and get yourself reacquainted and then, all change. So you were getting ready for a really big rich day, to really move this stuff forward, bang blew it all up because a phone call arrives and a client who had something idling in the background says there's a big panic on at the agency or the this and the that, we absolutely have to get this done, we have to get it done today. Oh, o.k. what do you need? I need you to be at the office at 11:00 so we can go through this thing, and what's that going to take, it's going to take an hour so you know it's going to take two and then that creates more action plans and so on and so forth. So

you've in effect in that situation you may have wasted the three hours of planning because that goes into stall mode and now it loses value within 24 or 48 hours so that just sort of blows things to the bottom again...and it just sits there idling again till it can be rejuvenated and I don't think that that's any different frankly than the lawyer example. That's the typical management consulting model where you could easily say you know *a far better way of living would be to only ever have three files at any one time that you were working on. Absolutely it would be a better way of living, but if you have a \$7,000 monthly overhead and three files over time would equate to \$3,000 a month, you're short a huge amount of money so you've got to stuff it and maybe it's 13 open files at any one time that nets you at the end of the day the \$7,000 that you need to keep going.*

The necessity for a craftsman's work ethic.

Independent work for P1 necessitated a strong work ethic. Work produced was very personal, and therefore quality and pride in one's work are viewed as paramount. This attitude is reflected in significant investments of time and energy to ensure good work. In many ways, the reputation of the independent is the key to success in this way of working.

**Researcher:** Would you say you have a traditional work ethic?

*Oh very much so, very much so. Why did I get up at 5:30 this morning and spend hours fussing over a report, which I was not paid to do. I was paid for the contract a month ago, the client has come back, needed help. Why am I spending...I spent two days this week and moved all billable work off my table to do that, why? Because I think that at the end of the day all you've got is your reputation and your own sense of what is your threshold for quality? For the quality of your personal work. Is it high, is it low, do you care at all? If you don't, then there could be a circumstance where a lot of money falls out of the sky on you, but even at that, what's the satisfaction level. So I have a high... very stiff work ethic. The good news is that I am the only victim of those demands. So that means that my quality standard means that I have to spend my entire weekend doing something right as opposed to submitting something that is rubbish, then I am the only one, and*

*perhaps my family, who will suffer from that decision.* So I'm not imposing that on employees or others, I'm not beating them up, I'm only beating myself up. But also I think that if you're going to be self-employed, and I'm a marketing consultant, so I have a clear sense of this, that anyone who is self-employed their work is their marketing. It's that simple. If their work is good, if it's high quality, if it relentlessly searches for a way to do it better, then they will always have work.

To add some context with regard to P1's work ethic, the researcher asked about how organisational employment had affected his attitudes toward the personal importance of his work. That personal connection between the individual and the outcomes of their labour is often weakened in a job environment.

*I think it has, but I'm..... that's a telling thought actually, because I actually find organisational life to be de-motivating with reference to the quality of.....I found it to be de-motivating with reference to the quality of my work. Because what were the signals or impressions? Do it right or do it wrong? Doesn't matter much.* The standards seem to be the standards of the lowest common denominator instead of my personal standards and I'm not...I don't see myself as a person of fussy or abnormal standard levels, I think there's a certain quality that when you promise something to somebody, it should be of a certain standard.

P1 makes inferences to socialization factors that contributed to his work discipline. Early influences contributed to the development of his work values. These would appear to have been strengthened and consolidated in an independent work environment.

I don't see myself as a person of fussy or abnormal standard levels, I think there's a certain quality that when you promise something to somebody, it should be of a certain standard. *Also, I think that I had traditional teachers in the sense that the very basic stuff was taught to me which is that when you promise something, you should deliver it, when you promise something to be delivered on time, you should deliver it on time* and if you goof it up you shouldn't charge

your customers for that. *It's just sort of basic standards*, it's not....I'm not a fanatic who has to....I'm not a quality control fanatic like some of my consultant colleagues.

It was interesting to note that P1 feels no sense of isolation or alienation, working alone from home. In fact, again, it was regarded as a positive, as it allowed a greater work focus. Social activity is regarded as important, but it is separated from work activity

I would say 100% positive. I really like it, I really enjoy it for two reasons. One is again the control thing in terms of the calendar bills, *I really do like to have my own quiet space when I work. It doesn't bother me in the slightest to be here in this office for weeks, months on end working alone - not in the slightest. Because you've got a phone that rings every 7 minutes, e-mail is dumping mountains of stuff on me, the fax machine is running continuously*....And in fact, with those three dimensions I sometimes have to stop and refuse to answer the phone so that I can get some peace and quiet to do the thinking, the analysis and the work and the writing that I need to do, that I'm paid to do. So I'm not the kind of person who's bothered by that at all. Again, it goes back to the issue of ...*I am a highly social person but I do not see value in social activity which is not.... if it's work related....social activity which is endlessly killing time around the water cooler to no result.* I mean, I differentiate that from a good old piss up at the pub with my mates which I love to do, right? But I don't make some up. If you've got work you've got a deadline, particularly if you're self-employed and if you get unfocused you don't make money, you don't make enough money, that's a motivator to stay focused.

It was interesting to note that in many ways, a one-person operation is a mini-business. Businesses require numerous activities and personnel. In the world of independent work, in many instances the individual is left covering roles and responsibilities that would normally have been dealt with by additional people. This has significant implications for the necessary time investments of the independent worker.

Working as a one-person operation, has significant implications in terms of P1's time and energy. After working in the corporate world with a staff, the need to do everything alone was a difficult transition.

And most importantly, what do I need to really focus on, I'm only one person, I no longer have secretaries, I no longer have 20 or 25 sales guys working for me, I no longer have whole organizations that are just hanging around waiting for instructions from me so I can say, I think I told you this story...at one time the girls in my office gave me a stamp that said "Handle It", it had a pad you know, an old traditional felt pad and it said "Handle It" because I use to come into my in tray which would be this deep, and I would put "Handle it Jennifer", "Handle it Josephine", "Handle it Michelle" and I would just ship this stuff out and direct many other people to do the work, that was my job. *Well now, one of the big challenges to people transitioning, which I think they don't really realise transitioning from corporate life in their 40's, to independent life is that there are no more "Handle it" people so if you want your pencils sharpened you do it, if you want the coffee cup cleaned you do it, if you want somebody's e-mail loaded you do it. In addition to that you also have to do all the consulting work which is what people are paying you for, but you're probably doing four hours a day of work that somebody else used to do and nobody's paying you for that. So by definition your day expands to 12-14 hours immediately.* It's a pretty unpleasant kind of realisation for a lot of people who used to be supported by teams of other folks and they used to complain about a 10 hour day. So there are many I think unpleasant dimensions to independent work but people who come late to it discover and again the reason why I have been happy with it is that I think about that, I balance it continuously and analyse it.

So what's the lesson? The lesson is whatever you choose and I say this to my son, use the information you've got to get as much freedom of choice as you can get, learn something about yourself and then do something you love. *Because 95% of the population, I believe, goes to work each day into something they either don't like or hate.* So if you have the choice of doing something you love, God bless! Isn't that something to grab a hold of?

He reflected on the common, negative evaluation of his way of working. It is clear that although it is a very demanding way to work, and that it does require

significant work focus, it is balanced by the potential for the satisfaction of salient needs. The perceptions and realities of control, freedom and flexibility seem to significantly dilute the oppressive time and energy challenges of independent work.

In the article which is the guy gets up and at 7:00 gets to his desk, does admin. invoicing and related from 7-9, from 9-5 he hits the phones and sells his services into next week and beyond and the from 5-midnight he does the work that that telephone solicitation created the previous week. So he works until 7 in the morning until midnight and then on the weekends when there's no selling time on the telephone, he does catch-up on log jammed projects. That results 7 days a week, anywhere from 14-16 hours a day, except on weekends when he might shrink to 8-10 hours. ***My point on this is I read this and I thought this is massively depressing and completely untrue and then I actually stood back from it and said it may be massively depressing but it is completely true. That is exactly the way I live, but I'm happy and anyone who is reading this article would find it depressing beyond words, they would find it revolting.*** So the flavour of it, the positive side of it, the freedom, the independence, all of that stuff, is lost in that kind of portrayal and the pattern. Because independent workers and entrepreneurs have a pattern over time where they say ***yeah this may be tough, it may look bad, but over time patterns always show. I will always make a living, the system will always produce it for me, if my work quality's up, if I don't get lazy, and I stay alert, I will always make a living so that's another thing that we have to keep in mind.*** There's a tendency I think to look at the consultant life, or the independent worker's life from the perspective of the employee as opposed to from the perspective of the independent worker. So the stories of these lives are always written by employees or people who have an employee perspective about them as a kind of an anomaly or a kind of an ape in a zoo as opposed to from the perspective of the person who actually lives in the zoo.

I feel a little bit like an actor...I imagine or I see actor who are interviewed around this sort of stuff...because actors are interesting, they describe these things, but they often describe that sort of thing, ***oh this is just terrifying and it's this and it's that and I'm up and I'm down and I'm all over the map. And somebody says well fine, would you go to work at Sobeys? And they say WHAT? Are you kidding me, I would die.*** And I

think there's a certain pattern of that in the personalities of the self-employed.

The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

The issues moved on to look at the fluctuations in work that can occur for the independent. It was of interest how the flow was managed, and what decisions were made during the peaks and the troughs. It emerged that it is very rare to get a true balance, and a well managed flow of work. Tendency is that in both the peaks and the troughs, P1 will continue to put energy into work search, for fear of 'the well drying up.' This could be viewed as a behavioural indicator of high work centrality, although the motivation is certainly more about financial security than the inherent enjoyment of working.

*The usual response is that you don't take time, you keep selling because you're worried that the money won't be there, so you free sell your time, you just sell, sell, sell, sell. I think this is typical of us as independents. Then you complain bitterly when you get so much work that you can't possibly either A) deliver it or B) deliver it at the quality level that you would ideally chose to do. But the patterns, the evident flow of independent life I think is exactly that, is having a flow. Never, or almost never, do you have the right balance. The reality of life is that you either have too much or not enough. That's the tide on it. Can you learn to live with that? Obviously the short answer is yes, but I don't know many people, I don't know many independents who masterfully organise their lives in such a way that they say you know, I'm making conscious decisions to work seven days a week for six months and at that time, I'm going to take six weeks off and go to Italy and live in a villa....I don't, I mean everybody dreams of that, but I don't know of more than a handful of human beings who actually do that. I think what is more likely the case, is that it's a happy trade off that you accept those circumstances for the freedom to get up every single day and have a new puzzle, a new challenge, a new thrill, a new worry, descend on you because it keeps you alive, it keeps you alert. And you desperately hope*

*that your family are the types who will actually accept that. That's a strong part of it.*

The salience of cash flow was clear. It was described in a way, which showed its pivotal role in P1's work behaviors. Cash flow effectively runs the show, because of the need to cover monthly overhead. It makes P1 keep work, up front and centre.

*Yeah, you're selling your time because if you've got a great big (gesturing to cash flow forecast and overhead chart) this big \_\_\_\_ that requires six or seven thousand a month to keep it going and you do your forecast here, three month forecast and I've had months where I had \$7,000 of expenses and no money. I'm two weeks away from those expenses and I have no money and I'm sitting here, so it would be a great idea to take a few days off, right go golfing, I think that's a pretty courageous person who would do that. And then the other flip side of it is that when you're having a good run, three or four months *and you say wow I've got some cash built up well maybe I should go golfing, well wait a minute maybe that cash will go away, maybe my lucky streak will turn to bad times.....Keep it going, keep looking for more business.* So that's the general pattern and you either learn to live with that or you don't. I think a lot of self-employed people who are not truly matched for it, find that really, really hard and they just give up and they say well life is a trade. I'm going to trade the useless meetings, the obnoxious people, the complete waste of my time for the money so that I don't have to sit here every day on the tips of my toes being alert. There are lots...I think perhaps the majority of people are like that.*

Consultancy is always projects so there is no standard revenue stream that supports the overheads, so it's....as (consultant) in (consultancy firm) says *it's a rolling three month bankruptcy.* I look out three months on my forecast, every month I look out three forecast revenues which allows me to get re-focused on how well or badly am I doing. *How much of a financial crisis am I in?*

So that implied that in the independent world, money is the master. The financial needs are paramount in the volatile and unpredictable world of the independent, and that

necessitates a stronger work focus. This was in some ways ironic, in the sense that a key attraction of independent work, is the opportunity to pursue more intrinsically motivating work. Yet, extrinsic needs appear to dominate to a greater extent in this lifestyle.

***I think money is the master in the sense that at the end of the day money is what you put on the counter in Sobeys. That's a given whether you're the prisoner of a bureaucratic job or whether you're the prisoner of an independent life, that's at the end of the day what it is. OK fine. Now how you choose to work is the next dimension and my choice will always be independent work.*** There are circumstances that I can imagine where I would take a job but unless it were really as you've described, a project, it would be a defeat I think at a soul level for me.

A telling comment refers to the cash flow issue, and how it in large measure dictates his behaviour patterns. This desire for a more reliable and consistent income stream can be seen as the key attraction of organisational jobs. Month to month, a predictable wage is provided.

So I can retreat to my car books and the occasional novel and I think that others have an even greater struggle in terms of... ***the obsessiveness of working, but I think the fundamental nature of this thing is that if you actually provided us not with that, but if you provided the independent worker with cash flow, a lot of our obsessive behaviour would simply disappear.***

Technology mediated home office environments can be a mediating factor.

The interview moved to discuss the implications of working from home. Overall the reflections were positive, but it was acknowledged that work became very accessible, which led to increased working hours, which can cause problems in terms of balancing various life roles. An interesting observation is that he spoke of the longer hours being a result of either being motivated by your work or being pressured by your work. This ties in with the issue of behavioural measures being used to imply a level of involvement. Work is always present at home, and is effectively 'on tap.' The extent to which this opportunity is utilised can be seen as indicative of work centrality. However, the reality is probably this, that work behaviour can be determined by a combination of involvement and necessity.

It's... in many ways all encompassing. Which is both good and bad. There are a number of physical things that are discoveries. *One is I sleep less than 30 feet from this office. Convenient one would think. What I've discovered about this at-home office environment is the reverse of what I expected to discover. Most people would say wow there's no commute time, you know that's two hours back in your day. The reverse is actually true. The work-at-home office means that you work a lot longer hours if you are motivated by your work or pressured by your work with the result is that my typical pattern in the winter is probably 14 hours a day.....14-16 hours a day is the typical pattern. Weekends, eight hours. Summers that would go down because of the occasional tennis game and so on and so forth, it would go down to maybe 12. But it's still hugely more than the average worker in society, massively more.....It's just a finding in my life that working at home has created a natural tendency to work longer hours which is reverse which I thought it would, and the other part of it is that it requires a lot of thoughtful work to try to keep that in balance with family life, with other pressures. For example, my wife has told me recently, all you ever do is work, that's all you ever do. And in large measure I think she's probably right, it's too easy to walk by the door and say I'll just check the e-mail and when you're an entrepreneur and a self-employed person you really never do switch it off, it's like the farmer.*

Tied in with the issue of a home office, is the role technology plays in the independent's working life in the modern age. He sees it as a double-edged sword. It is enormously empowering, and can have very positive implications for productivity. However, it can easily lead to increased work activity, as it continually delivers volumes of information, and any time of the day or night.

*Pretty predictable I think with what others are finding which is that....there's two points to be made about that. I think is the enormous empowering and helpful nature of the technology. At the same time, the prison-like grip it has on us, so that if we are at all either at one end of the spectrum workaholics or at the other end just motivated people who are interested in a trade and are stimulated by work, you know that 24 hours a day somebody can be communicating, something can be happening, so you're sort of like a drug addict, pulled to the stimulus of what the technology will give you. So what do I do at 6:00 a.m. when I come in? I fire up my computer immediately double click on \_\_\_\_\_ and go and pick up all my e-mail and sometimes there are 20 or 30 that have arrived since 12:00 when I shifted it off. Now I have a little feast of all sorts of newly arriving tidbits. So that's both a positive and a negative.*

So the technology has enabled us, which allows me to do things, which allows me actually to live in this house, and work in this office when ten years ago it would have been impossible. So thank you for that. Self-management issues, how do we prevent that from eating us alive is the question? And the whole other issue of the fact that generally technology I think is not freeing us in the sense of freeing us from work. It is freeing our minds to be ever more creative, ever more expansive, ever more exploratory around work and the endless nature of work. So technology has provided an opportunity for work to always be there. Certain personalities will respond to that, the entrepreneurial personality likes that because it's like having a big, rich buffet all the time, it's always there. *The person who segregates work from pleasure for mental relaxation is massively threatened by that. And even frankly the entrepreneur is in some ways because there are certain times when you've got to shift it off.*

## Participant 2

### Overview.

P2 is in her 40's, married with two children around university age. She works in various capacities, possessing a wide portfolio of working activity. She runs a computer consultancy, works on contracts abroad as an agricultural statistician, and is involved in training contracts. Some of this work is done alone, and some is done with other associates. In addition, she and her husband manage some properties, and she also works voluntarily with the local immigrant community. She works out of a home office.

She has been working as an independent for about 20 years. The impetus to work in this way, was the flexibility it provided for her young family. She now cannot imagine working for anyone else. She greatly enjoys her work, except perhaps for the training component, which she plans to drop. The flexibility her work style has allowed for family time has been greatly valued over the years.

The key thing with Participant 2, is that she recognises that financially she probably does not need to work, which gives her much more scope to pursue work that she is interested in, whether this is paid or voluntary.

### Working background

**Researcher:** First of all if you can give me an overview, sort of a background in terms of your working life to date.

OK, I did a (Masters degree) and then I went to (country) on a Rotary Scholarship for a year and did a few things but I travelled quite a bit that year and then I came back here and worked at (institute) for five years and then we had our first child and I didn't want to work full time so I started a consulting company. Just really for me to work part-time as I wanted with scientists at the Institute but that was a time that they were doing a lot of contracting out so my self-employment grew to having other people associated with the company so I guess that's about 20 years ago and since then...about 18 years ago and since then I've had seven or eight people, sometimes 15, sometimes as little as 6 maybe, working with this company, this computer consulting company. So that's . . .

**Researcher:** It's your company and you have other associates?

It's my company and yeah that's right. And they really...they work on contract so as we get research contracts. Now some people have worked...one fellow has worked since the second year, he's sort of been with the company since then and we just always get contracts but it's very much contract driven and that's federal government contracts mostly scientific. And then about ten, in 1985 I had a chance to do contract work for the (international organisation), for the Food and Agriculture organisation and I did that, one contract in (Asia), the first one, that was two months. And as with anything, once you get known by an organisation, if you go and do a reasonable job, since then I've had lots of opportunities to take short-term contracts doing statistical, being part of a team that helps do agriculture censuses in developing countries.

### Core Narrative by Theme

#### Control element can develop increased identification with work.

P2 has been able to pursue specific contracts that she has found that she really enjoys. As she indicates, it is different work than is undertaken locally, but she has had the opportunity to 'grow' into that field, having the ability to effectively control her working evolution. If she had been employed, the opportunity to pursue this direction in her work may not have arisen.

And as with anything, once you get known by an organisation, if you go and do a reasonable job, *since then I've had lots of opportunities to take short-term contracts doing statistical, being part of a team that helps do agriculture censuses in developing countries so....* typically I would go and work with a group of statisticians and data analysts in the country and sometimes there's one other outside person *but often I'm the only one that's brought in to sort of help that part of the project. And that I just love, one minute you're here in (city) and two days later you're in (country) working with a group. So I've done quite a lot of that in (country) and some in (country), three contracts in (country).*

**Researcher:** So the type of work you're doing overseas is similar to what you do here?

Well, actually no. It sounds like it should be but here they're quite focused in their programming sort of jobs. Overseas it's more facilitating the group to get the statistics and doing training so they know how to do it. *So I've really sort of grown in this agriculture statistics field as I do these...*

Her feelings toward the independent way of working are largely positive. P2 clearly has a strong identification with this working approach, as independent work

continues to satisfy salient needs. The key salient needs seem to be oriented around the control, choice and flexibility themes. This is valued in the respect of allowing opportunities for time with family. It was clear that P2 positioned work according to her needs. Work did not position her. Also, the financial rewards from the self-employment are perceived to exceed the alternative of a job.

**Researcher:** At any point have you looked back and thought I'd like to do a traditional job again?

No.

**Researcher:** So what do you see as the main benefits to this sort of lifestyle?

Oh I just can't imagine myself ever being...First of all, working for anyone else *because I'm very used to determining what I'm going to do and so on. And being somewhere at a set time every day, whether you feel like working or not.* I'm sure I work more hours than if I were in a traditional job, but I really enjoy working but at my pace. Our kids are now just about ready. . one is gone and one is in grade 12. *Until now I've been...it's been very nice with kids, been around, been here after school.....any time I want to do anything I just take the time to do it.*

**Researcher:** You sort of segment your day and decide how you do it?

Yeah...Plus, I don't think....no I don't think anyone could pay me what I think I'm worth to be there nine to five actually any more, so no I would never. ....

**Researcher:** You'd never go back to a traditional job?

Oh I don't even think I could, I don't think I'd be good at it. *I like to work according to my rhythm.....*

Degree of control and choice is mediated by financial realities.

It became clear that financial security allowed P2 a greater ability to choose the direction and content of her work. She intends to drop part of her work portfolio that she doesn't enjoy as much, losing the income but gaining more flexibility and time to travel. With this ability to dispense of work that is instrumental for financial needs, P2 is able to focus on work that is instrumental for higher order needs. Her narrative made reference to a friend whose unpredictable income flow undermines the ability to pursue more self-actualising work.

I think that people can.....*again it's a financial thing*. If they're very tied to having money come in every month in a fairly even pattern then I think from other self-employed people I know, *then they're less able to say I don't really want that kind of contract, I won't take that*.....but the ones who are able to....*we have a friend who is a film maker who was working for (government organisation) and he left (government organisation) to be private film maker and that's.....he's sometimes very busy and sometimes he has no work at all and I think that right now he wouldn't refuse anything, although he has a certain kind of film that he wants to work at*.....but he's lucky his wife works in a traditional job so that keeps some level of income.....now in our case, *I guess I feel quite able to control the direction* in fact though I don't want you to tell (name) this, I am tired of this training business, it's too detail-heavy and I don't feel that we're in a partnership and I don't feel that our partner really ends us doing as much as we do, and so I'm going to give it up, but I'm just trying to get it to the stage of selling out my portion or..this spring and that's probably \$50,000 a year we get from that company, but and I think it will grow, *but it's not something that I'm interested in doing because it's so detail-heavy and it's one of the businesses that I feel it's most detrimental when we go away and now that the kids are leaving, we want to be able to go away for four months every winter and work from*

*wherever we are in a better climate than this* just January to May, but we'll do that every winter and so...

Behavioural indicators of involvement.

The hours required to manage different work responsibilities is probably more than the general average of 35-40 hours a week, but the hours are acceptable because of a strong affective response to her work. This can be seen as a behavioural indication of involvement with working as a life role. The increased working hours are not met with a significant negative affective response, because of the direct and personal relationship between the individual and the outcomes of her labour.

Yeah probably because I work on the weekends maybe if there were things to catch up... probably more than 40 hours a week on all the various things.....

**Researcher:** You don't mind putting the hours in because you enjoy the type of work?

*Oh yeah I love it.....sometimes I know that we probably work 50-60 hours a week maybe.*

Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

In terms of future intentions regarding work, it is relatively clear that work will not be given the same level of centrality, at least for parts of the year. Work will most certainly be positioned around other life spheres. There is the potential for working, but only it appears, if it fits with travel plans. This is indicative of how the relative importance of work can change through the life course. The independent has the ability to

determine the place of work in their life relative to other sub-spheres, on an ongoing basis.

...now that the kids are leaving, we want to be able to go away for four months every winter and work from wherever we are in a better climate than this....just January to May, but we'll do that every winter and so.....

**Researcher:** So you've developed quite specific plans in your own mind?

Yeah, (her son) is going to go to university next year and then we don't have to be around here in the winter...

**Researcher:** So where do you think you'd be going to?

Oh we're going different places. I think the first we think we'll go to (country) next winter.

**Researcher:** So it's still going to follow a work track, be work-oriented?

*Maybe if we can get (international organisation) contracts that take us where we want we'll do that, otherwise we'll....you know there's e-mail and things can go along.* Our properties will go along in any case, we have someone who does property management and when we're not here she does more of it.

The ability to position work rather than being positioned by it.

P2 spoke more about the transition from organisational work into self-employment, early in her career. Work was necessary for income needs, but a new baby dictated the format of work. Flexibility was a necessity. Fortunately, a good source of contract work existed at the time, making this option more feasible. Independent work could be moulded around family needs.

Actually I don't know....had situations not dictated....*I wanted to work part-time in the job and at that time the government was really not very flexible in terms of part-time work and so I knew I couldn't work, didn't want to work full-time, I had a baby and expecting to have another child, and so you know... it was sort of.....I didn't consciously decide that I was going to go into business for myself, but then that seemed to be the only way to do it and keep working.* At that time, we needed income so there was not a question of not working at all.....*Yeah, and getting used to the whole contract thing.* Luckily I was always working with scientists that I had been working with at the (institute) so...there was already a good rapport developed and they knew me and my background too, *so it wasn't like going knocking on doors asking for work.*

P2 went on to talk about the various responsibilities that need to be managed during a typical day. It was apparent that a portfolio exists of different self-employed activity. This needs to be balanced with volunteer responsibilities and family. The freedom exists within an independent work environment to allocate time to different life roles, according to personal needs, agendas and priorities. How decisions are made on an ongoing basis with regard to the different roles can give some key behavioural insights into work centrality.

I'd have to say in addition to the computer company that I mentioned, about five years ago, four years ago, we went in partnership with another person in a training company and so we do a lot of training and we have about 30..... from 10-30 people depending on contracts and this is where (government organisation) comes in and we do home care and personal care work training through them. So we have that going on too. So there's the computer business, there's this training business plus we have a bunch of revenue properties, apartments around. And so there's that and then there are the kids and then I do a whole lot of volunteer work and work a lot with the immigrant community and so sometimes that takes me during ...*I'm saying all these things so you see that it depends whatever happens on that day, so if there's a problem with one of our immigrant friends like yesterday, she had to move one of our friends, one of our friends had to move so we spent all afternoon to get the people and get the truck and organising.* So, maybe if I tried to say a typical day I might

work from 9:30-1 or 2 - go out and do a visit or two, business or....*then I'd come back and work maybe till 3:30 or 4 when the kids come home, when my son comes home he usually plays piano and I come down and sit while he plays the piano*, and then I get supper and then I usually work just doing paper stuff maybe two hours in the evening.

In terms of balancing various roles and responsibilities, P2 indicated that it doesn't cause that many difficulties in terms of role strains or role conflicts. It appears that the control over the more fluid time space facilitates a greatly extended period, within which work behaviours can be present. The dispersal of the work role over a longer duration will naturally create more opportunity to balance several life roles.

I don't find that causes....*I'm not constantly trying to juggle and wonder how I'll get it all done....there's....No, I don't think so. I guess once in a while when it gets really busy then you know the place....I mean....when there's enough money, you know so I have someone who comes and cleans the house so I don't have to go the house is filthy when am I going to get to that, or I have a courier who runs around and does errands and...Yeah, I mean...I think that maybe when the kids were younger and maybe that was harder then, you couldn't work and have a little baby around and so on, it was really hard, but now it's.... it just balances out, sometimes I work less in the week and do more social things and volunteer stuff and then.....Yeah that's right and then maybe if that happens on the weekend I spend a full eight hours in the office getting all the papers solved and getting the banking ready and you know looking at bank statements and things like that.*

The positioning of work may become more congruent with values.

P2 displays a strong work ethic. In terms of importance however, it is not viewed as more central than family, friends or volunteer work. Financial security

will therefore decrease the instrumental pressure to work, which appears to allow P2 to represent her value hierarchy more appropriately in behavioural terms.

The fact that she does regard herself as financially comfortable, provides strong indication that the meaning of work is not significantly oriented around financial need. This continuance of work can be taken as evidence of her valuation of work as having a value in and of itself, which would suggest a higher work centrality.

*Yes, I think I'm very work oriented, I like to work, I get a lot of satisfaction when things work well, but I don't see it as more important than my family or friends, or volunteer work. I usually.....if I'm doing volunteer work I leave work that I know about to go and do volunteer work because I'm really quite interested in what I'm volunteering in so I think...I think I have such a luxury of having plenty of work that I like to do when I want to do it, yeah I think I'm a hardworking person. Because I like it, not.....you know now I think we're quite financially comfortable, it's not because we have to be working.*

#### Greater integration of life roles.

The inherent control and flexibility in work patterns allows P2 more time off than could be taken in a traditional job. Narrative indicated how work has been integrated with family, travel and vacation. To some extent this could be viewed as evidence of the 'spillover' (Wilensky, 1960) of work into other life roles, which can be indicative of a higher involvement with the work role.

**Researcher:** Would you take a traditional vacation?

Well, yes we take traditional vacations. *We also often take the children along* to wherever we're going in (continent) with these (international organisation) contracts, so we take a lot of vacation actually. *I mean often it's work-related* that.....first I do the contract and then we take three weeks to go to \_\_\_\_\_ or something from there.

**Researcher:** Which you can't do in a job.

Oh no, we take much more. And my husband is from (country) and we go every year to (country) or almost every year...no I take lots and lots of time off. All balanced by a great deal of work getting ready and then when we come back, but it balances out. And sometimes we've travelled for two months with the kids at a time, *and you could never do that in a job.*

Work flow can be a mediating factor.

P2 made reference to varying demands of her work. There are fluctuations. Some of this variation in work volume is a result of seasonal effects, and some is as a result of the volume of contracts that emerge at any specific point in time. In addition to the actual paid labour, there is unpaid work search time. The majority of contract opportunities require a competition between contractors on the basis of proposals or bids. Working on the bids and preparing the associated proposals is time consuming, but it is not paid work. It is simply an accepted feature of the independent lifestyle. Also an extended focus on a particular contract will inevitably lead to a backlog of work on other projects.

Sometimes I know that we probably work 50-60 hours a week maybe....*That's when things are particularly busy and courses are starting or there are bids, I have to write bids for some of the contracts* we get with the computer company, so when those bids have to be done that might mean more.

There is a fair fluctuation through January, February, March because the computer company and (government organisation) are both government

**funded. There's always the big push to spend the money at the end of the year. *Also if I go away on these (international organisation) contracts then there's a huge push before I go away to get everything kind of organised, then I go away for six weeks say and then coming back there's a huge amount of stuff piled up so that's always a lot of work around those.***

In terms of managing workflow, P2 prefers to outsource work to other contractors than increase work time significantly. This again is contingent on the fact that the financial resources exist to do this. This decision could be regarded as indicative of a higher valuation of non-work time over and above a certain work volume. It is perhaps not a question of higher leisure centrality. Rather at a certain point of work volume, the relative importance of non-work time is increased.

***Oh there's plenty, in fact there's too much work and so each time I get completely, no, no this is too much work, I hire someone else and so I try to keep it so it's not completely crazy. ....It is.....I'm not....you know with all the businesses we have we could work 100 hours a week and still everything wouldn't get done so yes stuff does get sourced out.***

#### The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

The issue of work search and cash flow can present major challenges to the independent worker. Therefore, to have a reliable source of work on a regular basis, can take away significant pressures, associated with this lifestyle. A critical advantage of full time jobbed employment, is the consistency and predictability of work flow and income flow. If the independent can achieve this, while maintaining the inherent flexibility and

autonomy of work in this environment, the potential for significant identification, involvement and commitment to working as a life role, becomes very apparent.

Yeah, and getting used to the whole contract thing. Luckily I was always working with scientists that I had been working with at the (institute) so....there was already a good rapport developed and they knew me and my background too, *so it wasn't like going knocking on doors asking for work.*

Furthermore, the significance of reputation is a critical factor in making work search less problematic. A significant advantage can be obtained, if the independent can maintain a core of clients with a regular supply of work, through a consistently high quality work product.

And then about ten, in 1985 I had a chance to do contract work for the (international organisation), for the Food and Agriculture organisation and I did that, one contract in (country), the first one, that was two months. *And as with anything, once you get known by an organisation, if you go and do a reasonable job, since then I've had lots of opportunities to take short-term contracts.*

#### The craftsman's work ethic.

Working from home does not appear to lead to feelings of isolation. In fact, the more flexible, non-organisational social interaction is preferred. These types of interactions were not seen to facilitate or support the quality of the available work time.

Yeah, I don't mind that at all. *Because having worked for five years I know the kind of social interactions there is and it's not always necessarily the best...there's office politics and so on....here I have..... I spend... I have lots of friends and I can go out to tea in the morning if I want and a lot of my friends don't work or work.....yeah a lot do and a lot don't, a lot don't have paying jobs I could say. No I don't mind socially not going to the same group of people everyday and seeing them. And I guess in a way, I do still have that sort of thing, I have these people who work for the computer company that's kind of stable, a number of people. .*

P2 works with various associates on different projects and contracts. They function largely as a virtual organisation, which seems to work well, and allows a sharper work focus. Also, working from home can be more convenient and comfortable. Traditional time consuming work-related behaviors such as grooming and travelling, are not necessities in this work format.

No, no. I work out of home here. In our training company we have a networked computer system so we send e-mail and so on back and forth. I do.....I'm sort of the financial responsibility person, so I would get stuff from the different training offices and pay things and make sure everything is going ok. So I talk to them by phone, I talk to them by e-mail.

**Researcher:** How do you find that?

*l.....Oh, I like it...Yeah and I hate to go into offices actually and there's all the chitchat and nothing gets done.....so I find it much better at home and I sort of run everything from here. I like not having to get dressed up in work clothes and get to somewhere in a panic and 9:00 or 8:30 or whatever.*

### Participant 3

#### Overview.

He is in his late 40's, married with six children. He works in several capacities, as a human resources and organisational development consultant, a facilitator and a trainer. He is based out of a home office in a town in Nova Scotia. He has been working as an independent from home for about 11 years. At the time of his transition to independent work, he also moved from the West Coast of Canada to East Coast of Canada. The earlier years were a struggle financially, and many times the option of returning to an organisational job was considered. However, he was determined to pursue the independent path because of largely intrinsic reasons. He looks for variety, flexibility, freedom and an avoidance of boredom. He also indicates that the purpose and meaning of his work is directly linked to the needs of his family.

He feels very much in control of the direction of his work and how he manages it. Earlier in his independent stage, he invested substantial amounts of time trying to find work, but now he is more established the supply of work comes more readily. He is very philosophical about the flow of work, having come to recognise the ebbs and flows. His religious beliefs underpin his work, and life as a whole.

He has enjoyed the freedom and flexibility to date, but now is prepared to move into a different stage where income is more the focus, and he is prepared to sacrifice some of his freedoms to achieve this. During this next stage he also plans to take more time for himself.

Working background.

**Researcher:** The first thing, can you just sort of give me a brief overview of your working life to date.

First real work...I did some construction foreman work and some mining work and on contract way back when, a good while back in the 70s and toward the end of the 70s when I graduated, when I finished my Masters degree, I worked...I got a job with the federal government actually in the correction service as a designer of educational programs training and developing kinds of things and also delivery programs and design \_\_\_\_\_. And then I got picked up by (an insurance corporation) this is on the West coast, (city)...

**Researcher:** Is that public sector or private sector?

That was crown corporation. Worked with their training and human resources group for a number of years and from there I went into a consulting firm, one of the consulting firms that we were using at the organisation, brought me in to do the training and design, delivery and that kind of stuff. Did that for a few years....

**Researcher:** You were employed in a traditional sense by the consulting agency?

I had a guaranteed minimum and then the rest I had to earn. So they gave me a very, very base, gee I don't think it was that much at all, but anyway that was the first time they gave me something like 50% of what my income needs were and the other 50% I had to generate. So that was...and office support, so on and so forth. After a couple of years with them I decided to go whole hog on my own and that was 11 years ago.

## Core Narrative by Theme

### Personal identification with working as a life role.

P3 shows evidence of a very fundamental attitude toward work. Religion appears to have been the key referent group in the formation of his attitudes toward working as a life role. Work and religious beliefs are closely integrated. This would suggest that P3 views work as having an inherent value, in and of itself. However, there is a degree of confusion as this value does not appear to manifest as a direct internal valuation. He regards the primary motivation for his work as being directly related to sustaining his family, in that he works in order to achieve the income to raise his family. This would suggest a more external valuation of work, as a means to an end. This highlights the complexity in determining intrinsic or extrinsic value orientation.

*I have a belief that's basically what we're here to do.....and my philosophy or religious belief that that's what life is about. Life's about.....it's not sitting around consuming drinks and sucking up rays or ski bunning even if you could afford to do that, it's about work and hopefully doing some good. I'm looking at the work that I do and the only reason I do it, the kind of work I do right now, which is income generating work, you have to like doing it, is one I enjoy and so on, but it actually enables me to raise a family. So if I looked at it in terms of what's the value, what's the reason for it, the only reason for working is to raise the family. If I didn't have a family, then I probably would be doing something else, maybe I wouldn't have to generate as much....I know I wouldn't have to generate as much revenue but I might do other things....but still work, but there has to be a reason for work so....and when the family is not there, then I would probably be doing the work for some other reasons.....there has to be some value to it and value is usually to others, it's not to myself and I enjoy it.*

Control element can develop increased identification with work.

P3 communicated his salient needs in terms of a strong need for variety, and the lack of variety in previous organisational employment was a stimulus to leave that environment. In the independent work environment, he has been increasingly able to achieve an increased congruence with his salient needs. The element of control provides the opportunity to select and exercise greater choice over his direction of work. He has been able to move towards work that 'feels right', which represent the feeling of cognitive consistency.

Absolutely. I've done....in fact I've done more..... *for me variety is the absolute key....I'd rather burn up than rust out, that's what took me out of the corporate world.* That's what keeps me going and motivated right now. I'm not only...when I moved from corporate those were the skills I had, I just said I was a technician and those technical skills would parlay for money...here's my skills, you give me the revenue as a barter, exchange arrangement *but over the years because of the freedom and flexibility I've had to pursue anything I wanted when I wanted it. An opportunity would come up to do this or to team up with somebody or to start this business and I could say yes or no. If it felt right, if I liked the people and I liked the situation, then yes,* so it not only.....it's expanded my skills tremendously.

P3 made the transition from government work to a consulting firm for reasons of boredom. From the consulting firm to independent work appears to have been because of a lack of flexibility and autonomy in working patterns, which did not suit his nature. In effect, the nature of the work was not consistent with his self-concept, and the control element did not exist to be able rectify this situation.

***To make the transition? I was bored.....what took me to the consulting firm was that I was bored and I didn't have enough to do.....so I wasn't..... I didn't have enough variety, I wasn't busy enough, I spent a lot of time twiddling my thumbs and that's what took me to the consulting firm. Why I left the consulting firm to start my own business was just a philosophical clash between myself and my partners. I just....I wanted to have a little bit more variety, a little bit more flexibility and freedom than what they wanted. They wanted to basically have everything driven down their path and.....Looking for a reasonable amount of..... yeah a certain amount of autonomy, a certain amount of flexibility...that's just my nature.***

P3 acknowledged that there were times when things were not good financially, that he considered and was encouraged to consider applying for traditional jobs. However, the fundamental desire to satisfy his salient needs in terms of flexibility and autonomy, proved to be the critical driver in his determination to continue to work as an independent..

Yes, many times, many times.....in fact, my sister-in-law used to throw me job ads in the newspapers and things like this. I did take a contract position actually with a firm here....***they wanted to hire me, I wanted the revenue cause I was starving, and I said no I won't go work for you as an employee cause I still wanted to do my own thing.....***I still have that motivator to not go back and take a corporate job and to not go apply, so what I did is I struck a contract deal with them, I'll work for you on a contract basis and also continue to work some other gigs, cause I had some other clients and we'll see how it plays out. They accepted that so that helped me over that hump. ***But no, there's no question that the desire to be independent and have flexibility and some autonomy, that was the vision, it's what I was going for, even though I was starving....I hadn't gotten to the point where I was that starving....I still had lots of lines of credit that had my cards, and bank loans and all of that not having gone right to the wall yet.***

There are elements of the traditional job that appeal to P3. He suggests a smoother and perhaps easier life in the traditional job than in his world of independent work. It

seems to be the fact that the standard characteristics of the job simply do not suit his nature and personality. The greater stability and security that traditional jobs are perceived to offer do not appear to be consistent with his personal needs from the work role.

Oh yeah, when it gets crazy and you work the day shift and then you work the night shift, and you work 7 days flat for months, upon months, upon months, doing that kind of stuff, you begin to say gee I remember when I used to work 6 hours a day and within that 6 hours a day there was a good slice of it drinking coffee and chatting and hanging over dividers and basically...not a whole lot, there were no great expectations and a few brains and a little politeness and you did fine....*yeah I often think what a holiday that was and every night you were home at 4:30 and weekends you'd never had to take stuff home, rarely on weekends....yeah have vacations, somebody paid you holiday time and you actually took holidays because you had a salary....oh yeah, many, many times, but then again I've worked at it and said to myself when I got to know myself better, that you'd be there a month and you'd be bored to tears.* Unfortunately I've had a few opportunities to go work on some longer contracts with organizations which had me in an office five days a week for a few months on end as a contract position and I quickly came to the realisation that this wasn't for me, cause it was starting to....I was starting to get edgy.

Degree of control and choice is mediated by financial realities.

P3 does acknowledge that the element of choice and the ability to pursue certain work is only viable while there is money coming in. When contracts are not coming up, the choice element is eroded. There are still ups and downs, but his religious beliefs and family support help get him through.

*Oh I've been a prostitute for money, there's no question about that. There are times when you're broke, I mean big time broke and it's not just when I started either, there's ups and downs, you go through cycles of stuff and you wonder where the next....the bank account's drained, the cards are up to their limit, and all this kind of stuff, it's an uphill battle.*

Salient needs can change over time.

P3 indicates that his next plan includes the need to generate more income. His salient needs have changed to some extent. Variety remains key but he is willing to sacrifice some of the freedom and flexibility he has worked for, in order to increase income levels.

*My next ten year plan calls for me to make a lot more money, cause I was never focused on money, money was never a focus for me. I'd never go into this to make buckets and buckets of money.....More of a lifestyle and more freedom and more flexibility, and more of the challenge and more of the stimulation from a variety of work, that's why I got into it.*

So because of my family and the fact that they're growing up and going to university and all these kinds of things. *..I need a higher income level so one of the things I've established, I still want the variety.....I don't necessarily need as much freedom and flexibility, I'm willing....I've had that for ten years* and in some respects I'm more interested these days in building...actually getting back more into corporate, but getting into corporate as an owner rather than as an employee. It's a whole other mind set and it's stimulating and it's challenging for me there, *so I'm getting it that way so I probably wouldn't, won't object to being nailed down to a seat or chair* or....moving into the corporate space. I've also got revenue targets that are much higher than I've had in the past...I'm specifically going into the next ten years to generate revenue and the other thing is I'm going to take those two months off...and I'm going to have that time. So that's absolutely clear in my head.

The potential alienation of organisational employment.

P3 had obviously engaged in some reasonably extensive thought regarding the meaning of work. He agreed that these thoughts might not have transpired, if he had been working in an organisational job rather than as an independent. The personal connection he has developed with his labour has illuminated his personal interpretation of working as a life role. He progressed to outline an example of a car plant, and the alienating nature of employment that existed there.

**Researcher:** Do you think that within the confines of an organisation you wouldn't have had the opportunity to philosophise as much about the meaning of working?

Oh yeah, yeah very much so. Yes, I believe that's absolutely the case because you just...I found in organizations you get into to the proverbial rut...we talked about that, the rat race, that used to be the phrase years and years ago. And you just get into it, *you just go and you do and it's kind of a mindless robotron type of activity.*

He believes that in much organisational employment, division of labour is such that people become disconnected from the overall contribution of their work to the greater outcomes.

And I did a lot of work in years of gone by, manufacturing environments, and I can remember once with the \_\_\_\_\_ organisation, but it was actually one line of vehicles being worked on and you had all these very well educated people, most of them were engineers, *but their whole life was focused on this one little grammit in the back window, with a tilt window in the vehicle. And I just couldn't see it.*

Yeah, I mean this was their life, was this little view plane and sure they made a better lift mechanism or something like this for the back window, maybe it's just my personality, but you could see that.....I just find a lot of people just don't have a whole lot of energy because what's the value of that, they're making a better window, they're making it for the consumer maybe, for the corporations.....*I can see why people get really cynical about organisations, organisational way.....where's the contribution to a greater good, I'm not sure that exists and I think that's why a lot of people are very dissatisfied and I've seen people get connected to causes beyond just making another buck or an improved, the way the wheel turns and if they can see a connection between there's actually something good happening for people as a result of their effort, I've noticed people get a lot more energised.....Well there's a detachment between all the effort they're putting in and the good that it's giving back to the world, society, to individuals. That's been severed to me for the majority of the population and you sever that connection....*

P3 had described a scenario where work was simply a means to an end for the car workers. In Marx's words, the activity of work was *external* to the individual. However, to re-iterate an earlier point, P3 explains how his work behaviour is focused on making money to raise his family. Therefore, similarly to the car worker, work is viewed as a means to an end. His work may well be more intrinsically satisfying, but in terms of motivational orientation, his primary focus appears to be extrinsic.

**Researcher:** The self-employed person, because you are dictating the type of work you can do, then that detachment isn't there?

No certainly not for me.....maybe there are other self-employed people that it is detached. A lot of it has to do with at this stage in my life, I have a family that depends on me for not only.....well for physical survival, and if you looked at it, if it's a straight exchange of money, *I'm making money so that I can raise them and to me that's a worthwhile activity in the overall scope of human activity. When I step....when they're all gone on their own and what not, then I'll have to re-evaluate the work I'm doing, the money I generate and what's it for.* But if I don't find that there is a connection to the greater good, then I won't do the work, I need that connection I think. For me I would say...in my experience,

that's probably a fundamental for everyone. But not everyone has the opportunity, or takes the opportunity to make that connection for themselves. *Because I can work a lot and work long hours and generate revenues and can even sometimes prostitute myself as I said, I've got to get the revenues so on and so forth, and I'm doing it because there's the good.*

Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

It became apparent that P3 had a strong and enduring work ethic. Should he achieve financial security, he indicated that he would continue to work, almost at the same rate, but on more socially useful projects. The key is that he enjoys work and does not like to be bored, which he sees as a personality issue.

*Oh yeah. I'd continue to work probably as much and as often as I do. I wouldn't necessarily work for money though, right now I have to work for money.....but I would probably do much more of the volunteer kinds of work and work with organizations and do different kinds of things and I might not necessarily do it free, because I have this idea that if you do stuff free it's not valued by the customer, I might take some money for personal... that's what I'm tracking towards, but yeah I wouldn't just sit and wind surf and ski.....I enjoy it (work). Like I enjoy.....boredom to me as I said earlier, I'd rather burn out than rust out. Like me doing nothing, and that's personality type, that's style, I was born that way.*

Positioning of work relative to other life spheres can change over time.

While coming to terms with the implications of the transition to independent work, P3 also changed cities in Canada for family reasons. Family needs took priority, which in effect made working more problematic. It meant the

network for supplying work was not in existence, and in many ways this network is fundamental to the independent. These factors contributed to financial difficulties.

Oh until I was....I dug quite a financial hole....I did a couple of things too which hurt me. . .I changed environments.....so while I was also new into my own consulting business, I moved from (city) to (city) within the first year. *And I came back here for personal reasons, for family reasons and what not. But had I stayed in (city) where I had a lot of network contacts and things like this, it wouldn't have been nearly as difficult a transition, but here I found myself not only learning to run it all myself, but I also had to do it in an environment where they didn't know me, where I didn't have a network.....*A reputation and so on and so forth. Fortunately I had a couple of contracts under my arm before I left (city) which I could deliver to...I had the(private company), and I had some work in (city) I was working on at the time...that paid for the basic, well it didn't pay for the basics, *I dug a big financial hole in the first two years....* Well, I don't know....It all depends, a lot of people these days were taking the golden handshake so they've got bigger pensions, I didn't have that...also I incurred the costs of moving from Vancouver, moving a whole household.

P3 clearly acknowledged how the relative importance of different life roles is not a constant, but rather it changes and evolves through the life course. There are certain periods of time, where certain roles require a higher centrality.

Mind you that's also if you read books like "Passages", have you come across that? It talks about life cycle passages, like we all go through things so that when we're in our teens, and then we're in our twenties, and then we're in our thirties, and forties, and fifties and what not...and it's very generic when we go through that. *So in those early years that's what I was doing, I was building a practice, I was building a career, I was building a family, all of that stuff. All that stuff was hitting in those twenties and thirties time frame. So I have a different viewpoint on things now...so as a result of doing that and one works really hard at one's career and puts one's own personal needs to the side, one tends over the*

years of raising a family, puts a lot of family time, and it's not until we get to where I am now, where the family doesn't need as much direct, the career doesn't need as much because you have a certain base...to draw on, and that does free up some energy.

It was suggested that there is a building phase in the independent's career, and the relative inexperience at this stage of life in terms of how to go about working in this way, necessitates more time and energy investments.

*Yeah. You're building a career as well as doing the work around it and also one hasn't learned to do this as efficiently, as smoothly...one doesn't know how to make...and the flow isn't there until you put in a certain amount of time and experience when it comes to that...so the things I'm doing now I don't think I would have done then just because of age.*

The independent worker exerts more control over the positioning of work.

The fluctuations in workflow are very apparent for many independent workers. There are often periods of excessive work volumes, balanced by work famines. P3 suggests that he actually enjoys the slower times. There is a constant need to balance non-work time with potential income, and so he will not always push for more work. He will reduce his marketing efforts and this decreases the likelihood of more work. The critical point is that in the contract to contract scenario, work becomes more temporally defined, and the independent has the ability over time, to exercise personal control over work volumes. In turn, the decisions made can be regarded as indicative of work centrality.

Well the business that I'm in, traditionally the business used to slow down in the summer time and it slows down at Christmas too, there's not a huge, huge going. *. mind you I don't go hunting that hard either.....Well I love that to happen,* in other words I want some of these down times, because I could hustle a lot more, I could market a lot more and I could make a lot more money, but *to me at this point, it's hard enough to get some spare time so I don't.....*I pace myself in that respect.

He goes on to give some insights into how he takes time off from work.

He can use the control and flexibility to take time off. He had hoped to do this at Christmas and during the summer, but has not managed to take the summers off yet.

*Yeah, I used to try to make a lot of money and like they say make hay with sunshine and when it's not take some time off.*

*Usually at Christmas time I'll check out for usually sometimes a few days before Christmas. it's been traditionally a time I just carve right out I rarely work that cycle. I got into business hoping that I'd be able to take every summer off, two months in the summer.* When I first got going and managed to do that cause I didn't have any work....but I haven't been able to do that since. In fact the last few summers I've had to work more time than I care to, so it's interesting because I did a ten year review of my plan, I've been about ten years on my own and I look at what my goals were and I had a number of goals...for example, to do the kind of work I wanted to do, to be autonomous and flexible and knowing I did that, and my financial goals were to...what I call pay the rent, in other words I had enough income to cover home costs and what we needed, certain standard of living, I wanted to write and publish a book and I wanted to take every summer off as well as every Christmas. *The only think I dropped out of that when I look back over ten years is I was not able to take every summer, I call summer two months, like July and August that's it I'm gone.* So out of that whole set of goals, I didn't do too, too badly

P3 perceives that he has very real control over his work pattern. He controls work volumes and how it gets done. He can use this flexibility and element of choice, to position work according to his particular needs at any given point in time.

*Very real. I believe I completely control the type of work I want to do and when I want to do it.* Now when you have a customer and you're working on a project, then you need to be able to meet the customer's schedule and so on and so forth, and within that one needs to. *. you don't have full control but even so I find I control my daytimer, you sit down you have a meeting with a customer and decided well no I'm going skiing this week Mr. Customer, guess what?* or if you don't want to say it in those words you just say I'm booked for that week, and customers know that you've got multiple clients so even if you're just going skiing or goofing off, or whatever you're doing...*so I'm fully in control of my daytimer, I'm fully in control of how many customers that I want to put in the queue at any point in time.* I can say no, or can say I'll put you off, or can say yes. I have to say no, it controls my daytimer.

P3 appears to makes decisions regarding the positioning of family, work etc, using a daytimer approach. He views it as selling time to family and clients. Priorities will be established by determining the critical things that need doing, at a given point in time.

*I like to look at it like a daytimer,* and it is a trade off from a standpoint, you can sell all your time to your clients or you can sell all your time to your family. You go to either extreme and you're going to run into trouble. *It's finding out what are the critical things I need to do for my customers, what are the critical things I need to do for my family and make sure both of those get in the book for sure,* and see what you've got left over.

In terms of his personal leisure time, that has been a lower priority, but one which he plans to give more attention to. He plans to increase its relative importance to other spheres.

*Personal leisure time.....yeah unfortunately in the last ten years that's gotten knocked back, just time for me.....Yeah....it's tended to in the last ten years and that's something I'm starting to change and I've been starting to change that in the last couple of years where I just look at ski week and I just go by myself or I take one of the older kids or something like that. Or I will go wind surfing, I just carve it out for myself, to hell with the customers and everybody else. My philosophy is Malcolm Forbes, the originator of Forbes Magazine, wrote once if you don't enjoy the climb to the top, it won't be worth it when you get there. So that's been my philosophy very much so I've certainly subscribed to that from a standpoint that *if I don't take the time now, there's not going to be any more time later and I know a few people who have died and their in-basket is as full as the day they were working, so I don't think mine is going to be any different. Better take it now.**

Independent work provides the inherent flexibility to de-prioritise or even increase the priority of work at any point. There is greater freedom to allocate more time and energy to other life sphere. Over time the pattern of decisions can be indicative of the individual's evaluation of the relative importance of each life role.

Now if you went out there and you spent an hour out there (in the office), the next thing you know the whole day's gone and you sit around figuring away or (at home) you decide you're going to go down and fix the wood stove or do something. ...like some people I get could get distracted from the work. I'll admit there are times when I'm having.....*when I don't have a lot of pressure on the work, I'll go and get distracted and I've taken a whole day that I was planning to work and I took one recently, the whole day and ended up doing Christmas shopping and seeing my mom, so it was one of those days and I said half way through the day to my*

**wife, I said I better start enjoying this relaxing day versus all worrying about working.**

Work flow can be a mediating factor.

P3 also established a philosophical position, that if there is nothing happening there is a reason for it, so rather than spending additional time and energy pursuing more work, he tends to take the time when it is available. Again it highlights the inherent flexibility and control.

It is a personality type....it's completely personality type and if you take\_\_\_\_\_, we're similar in some personality types but on that one he gets very, very concerned about where's the next customer in the queue. I don't as much and I'll...I had a saying years ago and it's still a saying....if nothing's happening go write a book. ***Part of it is a philosophical position that says if nothing's happening there's a reason for it. And just go with what your intuition says and maybe it's time to relax. Like the other day, it was...I came to the conclusion about 2:00 in the afternoon that this was meant to just be sort of reconnecting with my wife, my mom, do a few things, just relaxing, that's what this day was designed for. So when I finally did get back to my office at 2:30, instead of going working I actually picked up my gym gear and went to the gym.....Said what the hell!*** Enjoy this one and actually I went to work in the evening and I probably put about four hours in in the evening which is fine.

Again though, it appears that this can only happen if there is time in the light of current workflow. The independent can exert some influence on work volumes, but once a work contract has been taken on, there is a responsibility to the organisation and to one's own reputation, to position work more centrally, and fulfil the required obligations.

Every now and then, but it (taking time off during a work period) doesn't happen that often. *It's a direct result of how many customer pressures do I have on me. If I have a whole huge whack of customer pressures on me, no it would be irresponsible and I wouldn't....I'd end up with a bad reputation as a sloucher.*

Technology mediated home office environments can be a mediating factor.

P3 feels very positively about working at home. He feels he is more able to connect and interact with his family during the course of the working day, rather than having it segregated. Independent work from home allows the opportunity to intersperse work with other life roles. The extent to which this opportunity is exercised can again provide behavioural indications of the relative importance of different life roles.

*I've...I love it.....and it's been about 11 years now working at home and in my work in the past I've travel a lot....not so much these days so I'd be away sometimes three weeks in a month. So when I came home the last thing I wanted to do was go into an office building. I find that home I can work, close the doors and....**but then I can be in and out, when the kids come home for lunch and I can interact with my wife, and people come through the office or whatever kids will sometimes come in and sometimes litter up and I'll boot them out and sometimes they'll sit and chat for a little bit**, and my oldest son will come in and he'll sit down and chat and I'll stop what I'm doing. **So you can connect with people in little snippets and you also see the fabric of the day moving by versus when you come to an office building, you check out and this is it**, this is all you see when you go home, you have no idea what's been going on and it's completely separated and divorced. And it's harder that way, much harder....Yeah, it's hard to connect, like you're either here or you're there. . but when you're at home you can do both.*

P3 recognises the difficulties that working at home could cause. In the sense that there is a lot of non-work related stuff going on, and you can get distracted. He believes it is a personality issue, in terms of to what extent a work focus can be maintained. Equally, sometimes the non-work distractions are positive, and P3 has the ability to choose work or non-work activity.

Well see I find that it works for me. One of the things I think . . .an overlay here's a thought, an overlay. . .there are personality types and some people would be absolutely driven crazy by the home environment because it's a little bit like windows, some people like to open one window complete that and close it before they go to the next. Other people, like myself, can keep multiple windows open and enjoy many, many things going on because we'll do a little bit of this, we'll do a little bit of that, and so on...*so for my personality type and I'm not saying I'm better or worse, it's just that's who I am, that environment works very, very well for me....because I can go and do a little work and then I may go and get a cup of coffee so I'll end up in the kitchen, my wife happens to be there or the kids happen to be there and I'll have a little chat while I'm making a cup of coffee then I'll come back whereas if I do the same thing here (office building), it's always work. Whereas there you get a break. So you're doing things, and I think it's a much healthier space....I've always sort of said as soon as I go and close the doors and sit down the computer or I sit down at my desk and that's work and it's very easy for me to go boom and work.....*

The positioning of work may become more congruent with values.

P3 has a very clear hierarchy established for his different life spheres. He recognises the shifts that occur at different life stages, in terms of how priorities adapt, but he appears to have a relatively enduring and constant value hierarchy. It can be assumed that this value hierarchy underlies all decisions regarding the relative importance of life roles.

*...cause at the end of the day is what's important? I've always said that...there's work....for me I have a hierarchy....my values.....one is God comes first, family comes second, work comes third.....that's always been my....so if I have to compromise my religious principles or my faith and belief in God to do anything, then I won't do it. Secondly if I have to give up my family, or compromise my family in some way, then ah ah, then work. So work is third on the list..... Ah yeah the personal time came fourth....but that's a little bit my personality....I'll usually suffocate my own needs to take care of the needs of others around me. And a piece of advice I'd probably give myself is you know building a little bit more on that.*

P3 sees his life as an independent, as highly liberating. He evaluates against his value hierarchy, and how consistent he has been to that. As he has control over his work, there is the ability to set very specific personal goals for his work. For most, it is difficult to plan in this way, because the employer largely dictates future direction.

*Oh for me it's much more, much much more high on liberating. I look back constantly....I'm one of these people who sort of checks well how am I doing here? To do what I want and I use the same criteria and I....have I compromised my religious values, have I compromised my family, am I doing work that I enjoy, am I generating the kinds of revenues that I need to generate, am I having enough flexibility and freedom and so on and autonomy? And I say yes, every time I look back and I start to measure those, do a report card so to speak, I'll say yeah....so I'm very much at the high end of that one. I consider myself very fortunate in that regard....*

#### The nature of portfolio working.

A key observation for this study in general is that traditional interpretations of the self-employed are that they are entrepreneurial small business owners. However, the fastest growing section of the self-employed is the single individual, who does not have a

business that extends beyond the individual. The critical point in respect of this distinction is the greater flexibility that exists in this scenario. An individual's time is far more adaptable, in terms of the direction and pattern of related work, than would be apparent for the owner of a physical business.

No I don't call myself being an entrepreneur - *I wasn't starting a business, I was selling my time.*

The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

Acknowledging the unpredictable flow of work and income, self-marketing and selling one's services is almost a necessity for the independent. This is simply not a factor within traditional jobbed scenarios. This was largely a new experience for P3, but a degree of experience of this within a consulting firm, provided some pretext.

Oh that was probably the most difficult piece of the transition because like a lot of people I know, I call myself a technician, I knew I had technical skills and what not and I was used to delivering those skills. I wasn't used to going and selling the contract and in an organisation I could go and do that. *In fact one of the things in organisational life is that the contract doesn't walk in the front door, you sit and wait....that's culture for the most part. And it doesn't matter cause you're getting paid,* whereas with the firm there was an expectation that we would do some selling and what not, but at the same time there was a significant amount of work that just came through because the partners who were selling the firm had been reasonably established. .. well so, so...it was a small upstart firm, the partners had been around and *when I was on my own it was just me or I starve, so I had to learn to get out and hussle, big time.*

P3 found the early days very tough for several reasons. Becoming a one-person operation with no support staff had several implications for time and energy.

Well tough in that there was no administrative support, there was no....which includes everything from, in those days, those were still the days of secretaries and we're talking what '86 I guess....and I was used to corporate environments and with admin support and telephone systems and people doing your typing and organising things, take messages and all this kind of stuff and I went whole hog on my own, so...I had to buy answering machines and I didn't type so I had to buy a computer and learn computer and do my own stuff. *I had to market and sell as well as deliver.*

It was of interest to determine what proportion of time was allocated to work search, as opposed to the actual activity of working on a project. Time allocated to marketing one's self, appears to be a cyclical effect. Over time, it has become easier, as reputations are established and work comes looking for the individual, but it is still a necessary activity.

You go through different cycles....when I first started when I moved here *it (marketing) was eight hours a day while people were in business and there was other stuff you did in the evenings, actually making contacts, getting on the phone, meeting people through the day and there was organising notes on an every day basis so you're keeping up and all that kind of stuff is done during the evenings and....and being a one-man show I'd have to do all of the administrative stuff as well which includes typing of letters, licking the stamps and you name it, that whole range of stuff which used to consume....there was just months and months of solid...then as one gains a certain amount of notoriety and credibility more stuff starts, they start to call you...*

**Researcher:** That's a critical point.

*There's a critical point where yeah there's...and then you can start.....you have two choices at that point, you can back off on the marketing you do and enjoy and spend time doing some other things, and you can just take the time off if you wanted, or you can market more....now you need to keep a certain amount of marketing going and what I'm finding these days is the most effective marketing approach particularly in this business is networking, just getting up and chatting, meeting people and. .. but still I go through some dips and valleys....because you don't market enough and you end up in a hole and then you really scramble and you market and you get really, really busy and then you don't have enough time to market, that's the cycle. There is a cycle of small business people from myself, if you're selling your time, that.....and I haven't been able to crack out of this one, I know a lot of folks are caught, you market like hell and then you get busy, and you get so busy, you can't market so you drop off, so it goes ebbs and flows and that's been the cycle of the one-person show and two-person shows.*

*.....but because I've been through the cycles a few times, I know that o.k. your debt load is pretty high right now, but you look back and you say well you came out of that in the past and you'll come out of it this time. I know what the cycles look like at this point in time. I just....I don't get worried about that....it doesn't. *I'm not saying it doesn't bother me.....I know it's there, it's like a spectre but it's there, but at the same time I have a lot of faith, a lot of that has to do with my religious beliefs and a lot of it has to do with the fact that I've been through these cycles, and a lot of it has to do with I've got a very supportive spouse, I'd like to say family, but family supports me as long as the revenue is there..... So I have a lot of faith that things are tough now but it will clear up, it's a cycle, it's like the ocean, ebbs and flows.**

P3 has addressed the issue of fluctuating and seasonal work patterns, by increasing the range in his portfolio. It now includes other forms of work that can provide a more consistent and reliable source of income year round. This is a beneficial feature of the portfolio work style.

Yeah, like within the business I used to find January to June...that's when in January were three quarters of my revenues. Although these days I'm finding those fluctuations are changing. Part of it has to do with the fact that I'm no longer just doing training. *I've stepped into consulting and a variety of other kinds of activities which has filled in some of those gaps which might normally*

***exist in the training.*** But even in the training business, you see more business happening in the summers and what not and I've adjusted to those patterns and I fill them in by doing other things.

## Participant 4

### Overview.

P4 is in his 50's, married with grown up children. He had worked for over 20 years within Government before he was offered a buy out package for early retirement. He has been working from home for about the last year and a half as an independent consultant, on contracts with an information technology focus. He has a portfolio of different work, including part-time jobs and contracts, including a current contract with his former government employer.

His last couple of years in government, were a little disenchanting because of various regulations and bureaucracy, and factors beyond his control. He enjoys his current work, and feels that there is a higher sense of accomplishment in the project based contract work. The home working component is viewed favourably, largely because of its convenience.

The critical thing for P4 was that his retirement package provides him with financial security. This greatly affects his working behaviour, as the time and energy that would be consumed looking for and completing work, can be consumed by leisure. Work does not get as high a priority overall, as it did during his government career.

## Core Narrative by Theme

### Personal identification with working as a life role.

Regarding work as an activity, P4 saw an inherent value beyond economic benefits, but also acknowledged that it was a means to an end. Beyond its instrumental value, interestingly, P4 strongly links the role of working to self-identity. Furthermore, it is clear how difficult it is to separate the instrumentality of work from higher order motivations. P4 also served as a key reminder that all traditional jobs are certainly not alienating, and organisational employment can also provide experiences that can bolster work centrality.

**Researcher:** Do you believe work has a value in of itself or do you feel that it is a means to an end?

*Oh I think it's got a value in and of itself...but I think it's both. I don't think it's one or the other. I think it's also a means to an end. I mean a lot of your.....when you've been working career wise for so many years a lot of your identity and your sense of accomplishment and all that comes from that mode, or from work...*

### Control element can develop increased identification with work.

Interestingly, P4 did propose that the sense of accomplishment is greater in his independent work, than it was previously in organisational work. This is largely because project work is more personal and more measurable, than standard day to day work activity. This factor could be seen to increase the level of identification with the work.

**Researcher:** Do you think that this sort of work provides a similar.....more so, less so?

Yes. Probably more so. *Because I think there's more sense of accomplishment in this type of environment than there was before.*

**Researcher:** Why would you say that?

I don't know...just a sense I think that I have but I think that...*it's project-oriented work, project-oriented work usually has a beginning, an execution stage and an end where you finish the thing and once you finish a project you say well it's done. It was either a good job or a terrible job and you learn something from it,* but so that gives you a sense of accomplishment I think more so than having to deal with ongoing administration or management, on a day-to-day basis and maybe well I think the results are less obvious.

**Researcher:** So it's a clear end and a clear evaluation?

The results are clear I think yeah.

#### The potential alienation of organisational employment.

In the final couple of years in his government job, it was apparent that salient needs were being compromised by organisational changes. Control is identified as being the most salient need that was compromised. A loss of control can conceivably lead to a loss of connection between the individual and the outcome of their labour, which in turn can dilute personal identification with working as a life role.

Well in the last couple of years at this job within Government...I was disenchanted to be honest....the main issue was the rules and regulations and the bureaucracy....*I guess the main thing was that I didn't feel in control...We were dealing with too many variables outside of our control....*

In terms of the meaning of work and ways of working, P4 was socialised in an organisational environment. Coming from a background of organisational employment, there would appear to be a need for a relatively large mind shift to independent work. It was apparent that P4 had developed identification with the work format more than identification with the work content. Even though the work content was the same, the work context had shifted.

I worked for over 20 years within Government, predominantly within the (Department)....I was trained as an industrial engineer. I set up an IT dept. within this Dept...and was the lead hand on this up until I was offered a buy out package....early retirement....now I've been working for about the last year and a half as an independent consultant....with a technology focus.

When I first began working as a consultant, I found a short term contract pretty early on and they were very happy with what I did...so this gave me the confidence that I could actually do this...*after working so long in a specific area in the public sector...there was a certain level of doubt that I could make the transition...it was interesting and there were some anxious moments. Even though I was doing the... very much the same kind of work ...it had a different implication as an independent....I wasn't sure if I could do it....*

Positioning of work relative to other life spheres can change over time.

At this stage of his working life, he recognises that his priorities have shifted to a large extent. Noticeably, he refers to his career in the past tense. An interesting note from his narrative was that his current work activity does not appear to be considered as part of his career. However, current work commitments mean that work needs a higher priority, although he sees that this won't last. The fact that project based work has a finite life, appears to be a preferable format for work. He can look to manage work volumes in the

future in order to achieve greater congruence with his valuation of the relative importance of different life roles.

**Researcher:** So at this stage you're saying that time is perhaps more important than work?

*Yeah, time is a really important factor now for sure.*

**Researcher:** Just to have time for yourself.....about your position in work, that's taken a slightly less priority than giving yourself that.....?

*It's taken less priority than what it did during my career.*

**Researcher:** Would you say it takes less time and energy than it did previously?

No probably not, not right now.

**Researcher:** You're saying less time and energy now?

No, probably not less time and energy right now, *but you know you can see down the road that when this phase of the contract is diminishing and you can see the times are going to shift, type of thing. And that's what's different you can see ok. this is has a finite end to it and I can look forward to some other shifts in time down the road.*

The ability to position work rather than being positioned by it.

P4 has developed a portfolio of work, with part-time work combined with contractual work. The implication was that this was the preference, rather than resuming full time employment again. This more portfolio based approach, can result in several different requirements from different employers. There is a need to balance these tasks, but the inherent flexibility of independent work, and particularly working from a home

office, allows a greater timeframe to get things done. Work can be positioned in the day, according to his needs.

It was certainly difficult early on because I was not at all experienced at marketing oneself.....I used an agency/ recruitment consultancy and they found work for me on several occasions....Now I have found myself this part-time role....and I have this current contract back within the (government department).....and occasionally the agency will find something for me.....

I'm scheduled to go at one my part-time job site tomorrow for most of the day but I find out this morning that there's a meeting on this contract that I have to attend tomorrow morning, *so obviously you have to juggle things around.....* Although you always had to do that in a regular job, a regular career as well. But the big thing that you find in doing this I think and *working from a home environment office is that a lot of the work that you're doing can be done from your home office environment. So then you have a longer span of time that you can work at it. I mean if I chose to do some personal things today, this afternoon then I can work at my contract work tonight.*

Work flow can be a mediating factor.

The fluctuations in work flow present significant problems to many independents, largely because of the cash flow implications of this. For P4, who feels he is financially secure, fluctuation in workflow does not have the same meaning. He can effectively separate the issue of workflow from the need for cash flow. When this is removed, a cleaner reflection of work centrality can be more apparent.

**Researcher:** Working in this way, there are peaks and troughs. If you have a trough in the work and there isn't a contract for you, how would you spend your time? Would you just sit back and enjoy the time, or would you think 'I've got to market myself'?

*Probably do a little of both and probably do more of enjoy.....sitting back and enjoying the time.....than marketing.*

**Researcher:** How do you feel it would be different if you didn't have that security there?

*I think it would be a lot different. Because I can go with long stretches without a contract because I've got that financial security. So it takes off an awful lot of stress.....That has a big plus but it also has a negative because when. . because you've got that you tend not to market as aggressively as you would otherwise. I mean I'm sure that if I had.....if I didn't have that other financial security you'd have to market an awful lot more aggressively and then you'd end up with a lot more contract options and a lot more juggling and a lot more stress in between contracts and all that kind of that.....In the back of your mind you don't have to, you probably won't.*

As work is not occupying as central a place in his life, the need for a vacation hasn't emerged yet. Interestingly, he currently regards non-work time as vacation time rather than being underemployed. This is again a reflection of the financial security factor changing the meanings and motivations of independent work. P4 also makes reference to the fact that he has that element of control over whether he works next summer. He can make the choice not to work during these times. This can be seen as reflective of the ability of the independent to decrease the position of work relative to non-work time.

**Researcher:** Would you take a vacation in a traditional sense....now you're working like this?

Now? It's too early in the game to know. . It's just that I haven't needed to yet, you know because for one the part-time job that I'm taking is only about four months old and I had lots of vacation time over the summer....So...*both of these options came towards the end of the summer so I was on vacation basically all summer...*

**Researcher:** Nice time for it to happen

That's right. *Now if you asked me the same question again next fall, and I've been on two contracts all summer then I'd have to reassess that.*

Technology mediated home office environments can be a mediating factor.

P4 favourably welcomes the role of technology in his work from home, as it facilitates his work with outside organizations. Again a key advantage of working from home, and utilising communications technologies, is that it decreases work-related time. Not specific work time, but the time involved in preparing to work. How this residual time is employed can provide behavioural indications of work centrality.

Well, I've got a very modest office set-up in my home, but it's getting there. I've got a pretty decent PC, which obviously you know communication with a modem, access to the Internet, and other communication tools, fax and all of that. And good printers and all that kind of stuff. And you have to use that more and more...*the contract that I'm doing now my remote access to my client site is very important. Cause I'm in constant communication with them through e-mail and voice mail and all those things.*

**Researcher:** If those technologies were removed, how would it affect you?

*Oh, drastically. Well, then you'd be having to work on a client site an awful lot more. You'd have to travel a lot more.* For example, this contract we have a committee, a steering committee that we're working through and *on several occasions we've done the conference call type of meeting rather than travel all over the province* and so you'd end up spending a lot more time on the road and a lot more time at the client site. And for no gain in productivity.

Regarding the home office, it is regarded positively. Particular reference is made to the convenience factor. Parker (1971) spoke of work related behaviors, such as grooming and travel. The home office decreases the need for these behaviors. He does

acknowledge that the home office can have an opposite effect of allowing work to invade into other spheres.

*That's good (home-working)...I enjoy that part of it. I like that. The convenience of going downstairs without having to....and starting to work without having to drive for half an hour or forty five minutes and fighting traffic both ways and that's a big plus. Usually now if I come on site for something it's not during rush hour so....*

He has found it relatively straightforward to get into work mode in his home office, partly he suggests because of his family life stage. With an older family, there is decreased scope for role strains and role conflict.

*Oh yes....I found that fairly good, I haven't had too much trouble getting into work mode at home. It (home office) does (invade somewhat).... and I guess maybe, maybe at this stage in my career, my family mainly grown-up, that it's easier to do that. I think it might be more difficult if you had a young family and so on.*

## Participant 5

### Overview.

P5 is in her 40's, married with older teenage children. She has worked for about twenty years as an independent trainer, in the field of Health Education. She operates out of a home office, although the majority of her work is done on the road, at classroom sites.

She has a very strong value orientation to her work. She believes fully in her approach, and is very committed to it. However, these values may be compromised occasionally for the sake of cash flow. The work she does, requires major investments of time and energy, which she accepts as necessary in order to do what she likes to do. She loves her work, and it appears to be an important part of her identity.

The financial rewards are very much secondary for her, whereas the intrinsic motivation, particularly in terms of making a difference and an important contribution, are key factors. She takes advantage of the flexibility of her work, to work more intensely over a period to allow greater time off from work at a later date.

She is about to begin a job abroad, working as an employee. The acceptance of the job was largely as a result of the 'independent' and autonomous nature of the role, as well as good financial rewards.

Work background.

**Researcher:** If first of all you wouldn't mind just giving a biography of your working life to date. Just a bit of a personal history.

Let's see. I'll just give you some general background. Worked as a counsellor with (government agency) for a number of years and then when I came, I was doing that out West and when I came back there weren't a lot of job opportunities so I had to start creating my own.

**Researcher:** How long ago was this?

Would be probably a little over 20 years now. So, I started to kind of create my own job and I was doing some things in the field of kind of health and fitness and teaching fitness classes and doing some stuff on some teaching with nutrition and fitness and nutrition and then I went back to school and got my Masters and then....

**Researcher:** What was your Masters in?

Health Education...so then I worked in private industry as sort of a wellness coordinator for a place called (private company) and that job was discontinued and then I just went completely on my own and started my own business because that's what I had to do. So I went in partnership with somebody else and created some wellness training programs and were working with the unemployed first and did a lot of work actually at (grocery chain) stores. Training their staff, so it sort of started as health promotion and we kind of extended it to employee development and then went more into working with managers and sort of in performance development. Kind of do whatever people contract us to do.

**Researcher:** When you said when you went self-employed that was something you had to do?

Yeah.

**Researcher:** Can you talk a little bit about that, sort of that transition period? You said....why do you feel it was something you had to do?

Cause I couldn't find anything that I...I was living in (town in Nova Scotia) and there weren't a lot of job opportunities. I actually had my teaching license as well when I came back I did a teaching license, this may not be in chronological order, but there just weren't a lot of job opportunities for what I did and that was with (government agency)- they couldn't switch me from the West to here and so...and

I couldn't get a job teaching, so I started to just look at other options and then that developed into interests that I worked as part of a multi-disciplinary team at a B.C. treatment centre and really liked it and that's when I decided to go back and get my Masters...so, while I was getting my Masters, I was working for this place called (private company). And they were doing some downsizing and they were wonderful to me. They kept me on a contract basis and then I thought well I went back to school full-time, finished that and then still did some contract work with them and then started just developing the business. And got into partnership with somebody else and it was really a tenuous, like we were never sure and she had three kids and she was sort of the sole provider and.....she decided, she went with the government and I just went completely on my own.

### Core Narrative by Theme

#### Control over work can develop increased identification with work.

The significance of the control element in the realm of the independent worker emerged from previous participants. It evolved into a key focal point of enquiry. There was very little question as to whether P5 felt in control of her work, and how she felt about it.

**Researcher:** Do you feel in control of your work?

***Absolutely.***

**Researcher:** Like completely?

Yeah.

**Researcher:** In terms of how you do it, and the way you do it?

Yeah.

**Researcher:** How is that, how do you feel about that?

*I love it.*

**Researcher:** It's important to you?

Oh absolutely, yeah.

**Researcher:** Is that one of the most important features of being self-employed?

Probably, yeah. To me.

**Researcher:** How does that compare to when you were working in organizations?

*Oh, my God it's like night and day.*

P5 expressed a very strong work ethic, implying a fundamental valuation of work as a life role. This was translated into work being a central feature of her self-concept, a key part of her identity. The salient need that her work was able to provide appeared to be the ability to make a worthwhile and important contribution.

*I just....I have a work ethic to kill a horse. So it's....Oh, well I guess it provides value to me as to doing something that's important you know and it's....I don't think what I do is who I am, but it's certainly part of who I am. So it's....it just gives me an opportunity to kind of do something different than what I do in my personal life.*

A further telling comment from P5 identified the great intrinsic motivation and satisfaction her work provides, and how the extrinsic rewards are very much secondary. This would suggest that work would be evaluated as a more preferred life sphere. What was particularly interesting was the relative disregard of the financial outcomes of working. This seriously emphasises work as a means in and of itself, as opposed to work as a means to an end.

***Probably, I'd never see it as failing if I don't get contracts, so how much work I do has very little to do with how successful I am. And I guess I know....I believe in what I do and it's a matter of how much I get to do it.*** I think being able to live under a fair amount of financial stress at times without being buried by it and always willing to just say ok. I'll just cash it all in. It's like houses can be sold, cars can be sold, equipment can be sold and you still have the training skills.

Degree of control and choice is mediated by financial realities.

It was clear that P5 had very strong values attached to her work, in terms of what she believes in. She supports the fact that independents tend to have a larger element of control over their choice of work, but again financial realities can compromise this. When her values are compromised, her work does become more instrumental. The connection between salient needs and work behaviours becomes effectively severed.

***It's somewhat true (ability to control work). I guess it always depends on what the financial situation is and how much work you're getting as to how selective you'll be. And I think it depends a lot on your values as to what you're doing.*** I made a decision several years ago that I wouldn't do any short term training like I wouldn't these hour, two hour, half-day or one-day presentations because I didn't believe in them...There are no outcomes, so...I generally tell people. If someone wants you to go in and...I mean I can go in and do a one-hour or three-hour or one-day session, you'll get really good reviews and ***they'll love the content but the thing is it doesn't make any difference*** so it's....I'm trying to lead people away from looking at short-term training and I've done that for a number of years and I've gotten back into doing some of these. I don't do anything under a day, but I still will go in and do a day cause people just say well that's all we've got and I say well you're wasting your money, you're really wasting your money cause people are not going to change with a one-day session, and they have different reasons for doing the training. ***I always feel as long I've told them that they're wasting their time, that I've answered my commitment then it's just I'll go, I'll take your money and I'll do it.....***as soon as I realized that it wasn't working, that's the road that I went and that started a long time ago. I've backed off...like there was a

point where I just ...I said three days that's the minimum I'll do and the content. .. I get to select it with the group and I've backed off of that a bit because people just say well either you do it or we get someone else to do it and they might get something, so it's difficult. It's just back to I hate seeing organizations take money that they're using poorly. But all you can do is tell them and .....*Yeah and then once they do that it's more a... then it becomes more of a financial thing as opposed to really trying to impact skills.*

In the harder times, when financial income is less predictable, P5 acknowledged that the values and philosophical stances that underpin the meaning of her work may be compromised. Regardless of whether an individual's primary motivations to work are intrinsic or extrinsic, in essence, everyone needs to pay the bills.

**Researcher:** When those times are tight, will you compromise your values a little bit?

*Absolutely.....Well, it's ...you compromise your values in terms of...you know I've gotten off the phone and say I can't believe I didn't take that! I means it's like....it's kind of like well maybe I should call them back and maybe I should do it....yeah I mean sometimes you just have to do stuff that .. and the compromise in the values is doing short-term training things that you know don't have any value but sometimes if they're gonna....you can always say well they're going to get someone to do it anyway, if I can talk them out of a contract, *I talk them out of it, but if they're gonna have it anyway regardless, then I'll usually compromise the value and do it.* So I guess that's where it goes.*

#### The potential alienation of organisational employment.

This interview was timely as P5 was about to leave her independent business behind to take a job abroad. Although she was going back to a job, the key attraction was the independent nature of the work. Therefore, it appears that as long as the potential exists to satisfy salient needs, the job format is acceptable. Control and autonomy were

identified as being central needs. If control is removed and as such, the work follows a less personal direction, the level of identification would be expected to decline.

Well, that's (going back to a job) what I'm going to do now, so...I don't know...I'm hoping that I have enough of an expertise that there won't be people who are going to do this...*say you can't do, you can't do....if I don't have a fairly free reign I would go back to being....running my own business again.*

I don't know (what it will involve) and I think that's what makes it really good. They advertised for a certain type of person and I think I fit the type. I have the background skills and knowledge and training ability that they were looking for.....No, well it's called the (university project initiative) and it's being run by (university) but you're an employee of the (country) government. *From what I understand is they're giving me free reign to develop a health education program or educate (members of the country) in what I've learned about health and you know they didn't give me any guidelines, saying you have to do this and this, it's kind of like come out and you can develop it.*

**Researcher:** So was that the attraction, the autonomy element.

*Yeah, I think if they told me well you'll be working under this person and these are going to be...you're going to have very strict things, I may not have been interested.....Yeah. And I would think even anywhere that I would go in industry that's what I would look for. As long as you have....and all kinds of industries give you complete autonomy. You know, they want you to do your job well and they trust you and your part of a team and they let you go.*

Greater identification with work – greater positive affective response to work.

P5 has a strong positive response to her work, and quite simply enjoys what she does. It appears that the economic motivation of work is very much secondary to the intrinsic rewards that can be gained from her work. There is evidence of significant emotional investments in her work behaviour.

***I mean you get into the classroom and I can never believe that people pay me to do it, because I mean it's really high energy stuff, it's fun and it's great when you know people are learning things that they're going to use. So I think the value isn't so much the financial stuff, it's just when people say it makes a difference.***

In terms of how she got into this way of working, it was apparent that the key thing to P5 was not money, but rather that it was important to be able to do something she liked doing, work she could relate to. This cognitive consistency between work and self feeds identification with the work role. Identification and involvement are viewed very much as mutually reinforcing.

***For me, I was looking for a job that I really liked which I found and I was looking for enough income that I could support myself which I was able to do, so I wasn't that interested in trying to either expand it to use other people or just to go out there and get tons of training. It depends what you're looking for.***

***I guess what the important position was being able to like what I did.....***

In terms of choices between traditional jobs and independent work, the factor of personality was emphasised by P5. A risk taking personality, as opposed to one that requires stability, was seen as more appropriate to independent work. It is interpreted that certain personality type will exhibit different salient needs. A personality that dictates salient needs of security, stability or predictability would be expected to struggle in the independent realm. The element of risk was seen as a necessary pre-cursor to being able to do the work that you love doing.

***I think traditional jobs are wonderful for people who like the stability, who might not be quite as much a risk-taker.***

**Researcher:** So do you think it is personality driven?

***Absolutely I think it's personality driven.*** I've seen all kinds of people try to go into small business and they just...especially to run things on their own and their personality style really wasn't suited to it, it was more stressful to them than it should have been. It's more stressful probably than it's healthy so there are certain people who seem to do really well with it and then there are other people that it can bury them. I mean anybody can do it, if they learn the approaches to use, but you have to be pretty flexible.

***I think it's....I believe that people should do what they love doing and if you're not doing it, you're getting short changed and sometimes the cost of doing what you love to do is that you have to take a fair amount of risk to discover it.***

Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

The degree of commitment to working throughout this study was determined from 'the lottery question', recommended by the MOW International Research Team (1987). This approach serves to separate work behaviours from its inherent economic purpose. This is intended to provide a cleaner concept of work centrality. She indicated that even with the financial needs removed, she would still work, but in a more philanthropic way.

**Researcher:** say if you win the lottery tomorrow and you wouldn't have to work, would you?

***Oh I'd absolutely work.....Yeah, I'd just work differently.....I would probably...I always wanted to be a philanthropist in terms of setting up some kind of....I'd probably work with training people who couldn't get trained otherwise or organizations who couldn't fund training*** and...you know I've learned an awful lot of techniques and skills that work and I'd still share them with people whether I was paid or not wouldn't be that relevant. Or I'd train other people, I would probably do more training other people to go out and train.

***Oh absolutely, cause it's the...the financial thing is just a background thing. It's like every once in a while you say well maybe we should put the per diems up, but it's all irrelevant, it's just you know they send the money but it's got***

***nothing to do with the work. Well if you can find it, I think I was fortunate enough that I found something that I think is really valuable.***

P5 summarised her commitment to continue working by focusing on her ability to continue making a contribution. Therefore, work maintains its relative importance as a life role, for as long as it can serve salient needs.

***Probably to some extent maybe always.*** I think part of the going to (country) is part of a retirement plan that my husband and I are looking at saying o.k. we have some RRSPs but we definitely don't have enough to play the way that we want to play. But we both are committed to doing something work wise so it's....it will just keep....maybe instead of it being full-time it will be part-time or seasonal or something. ***But as long as I figure people will listen or I have something to contribute I'll keep working.***

#### Interpretation of the relative importance of work.

Although work is obviously a key part of P5's life, she expresses little doubt over where work fits in the bigger picture. Although work may be a central part of her life on a day to day basis, it is viewed as 'irrelevant' in comparison to other significant life events.

***Oh yeah, nothing's that important and I've dealt with some real heavy things in my life, like I mean ...I've had family members that I've lost and major health problems with family members and you look at it and that stuff is the important stuff whether you're working or not.... it's all irrelevant*** and especially as you get older and you start retiring. I've seen family members retire who their whole life was their job and I mean they were so good at it and now they're like just another Joe you know and it's just not that important, so it's kind. . I guess it's trying to keep things in perspective on what's important and what's not.

The craftsman's work ethic.

It can be assumed that with the evidently high level of identification and involvement with her work, the quantities of time and energy involved are just seen as necessary investments to complete her work. There is such a degree of personal connection and ownership over work behaviours, that the demands of work are barely questioned.

*It's not....you don't....it's a funny business...you kind of do it because that's what's required to do what you do.* So everything that I do is basically ends up in a classroom and so whatever it takes to be able to be effective in there, whether it takes 5 hours a week or whether it takes 50 hours during the week then you just deal with it and when you're in the classroom, all that other stuff is irrelevant. *It's stuff that you do to do your job.*

The nature and importance of her work, means that her whole lifestyle needs to be shaped around the needs of the work role. This demonstrates the tendency and perhaps the necessity for a higher level of work centrality in the independent work environment.

The big thing....one of the big things though is that there is no pension plan and there is no medical plan and you don't get sick. *And this is one thing you'll notice about people who run their own businesses, you can't get sick* and you can't train sick either. So it's not just a case of you know you go in and do the work when you're sick.....Well yeah and it helps coming from a health education background, so it's like...when I'm on the road and I'm training, then you know, it's not unusual for me to get ten hours sleep a night so that I can train the next day. *That requires discipline and if people in the group say you know, come on we want you to come out, or come out for a beer or whatever, I can't do that and get up and train. So it's....that stuff, you have to really pace yourself. That's all.*

Potential for greater integration of life roles.

P5 has found the balancing of work, family and other responsibilities difficult at times. However, the flexibility of her work allows her to integrate family and other responsibilities with working needs. There is the opportunity to work very hard at one point to create more time off, and she does that often. Work volume and workflow can become more malleable. It can be positioned in effect to reflect the relative importance of different life spheres to the individual.

*Difficult....it was difficult, but I mean it's manageable....you just do what you need to do at the time. Probably...more interwoven and you've got more flexibility so that at March break you can just say O.K.....you don't schedule any training. Blocks in the summer you don't schedule training, Christmas you have you know much better, you have blocks of time when you can really unwind and you don't have to do anything. You should be doing marketing but you don't.*

**Researcher:** So you would take a traditional vacation as such?

*No I never take traditional.....yeah, traditional but spread out. I'd have a lot more vacation time than say your normal employee because where they might get three weeks or whatever, I can take and work double weeks and then take double weeks off. And I can do that at any point during the year.*

**Researcher:** Do you take advantage of that?

*Oh yeah, why else would you be doing it you know?.....It's a main advantage that you have more flexibility with your down time so that you can work really, really hard and then take time off. And then you can do things that....I do a fair amount in professional development and it's.....the company pays for it. Now I'm still, it's my money but it's still...at least I can.... I only have to pay tax on half of it, so. . .you know....so it's kind of like you say alright well I've got to go to (city), I've got to take this training program or whatever, my son's up there and I can do this and...you know so you make it instead of going up for a*

*week...you just plan around it so you're not taking time off work, you are but it's in your plan, you have much more flexibility in planning what you want to do.* As long as you can financially afford it. Some years you can afford it more than others.

This integration of life roles has been taken to a further extent, as the children have been employed within the business from time to time.

Oh one of the big advantages....I've got kids who have pretty well gone through university and stuff and. . .but being able to employ them in the summer, so where a lot of people pay for their kids's education, like my kids had....you know they would put binders together for me, and so they always worked so I've been able to use them in terms of giving them employment which has been really helpful in terms of financial stuff.

#### The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

It was apparent that P5 invests significant time and energy into her work, in order to cover all the tasks that are required. There is uncertainty and finances are less predictable, so when the work is available, there is a need to work hard during these times. She makes an important reference to the need for high quality standards, as reputation is inevitably a key variable in determining the availability of work contracts.

It's not suited to everybody. In doing contract work, *you have to pretty well be able to manage a lot of uncertainty* so that...and you have to be able to try to plan for it financially so that there are blocks of time, especially in the summer, where people do not do training. So you've got to be able to, from fall till spring is a heavy training time, so you try to take in as much money as you can there. You work...it's not unusual to...especially when I was starting to work 80-90 hours a week. In terms of either preparation or training delivery. So you take say community college teachers, their contract that they may teach for ten, fifteen, twenty hours a week and in our heavy season we probably do....maybe a four-day

work week is about all you can handle cause you're training, especially at the level that we're training at. *We're usually working with fairly demanding groups and if we don't do a good job we don't get re-contracted. So it's pretty tiring, so you've got your preparation time, then your delivery time and.....trying to do your marketing time! So it's.... it's interesting.*

The seasonal patterns of work lead to periods where there is little or no work. P5 indicated that she doesn't really take this time as vacation. Work for the independent becomes more pervasive, in a behavioural, cognitive and emotional sense. With the deep personal connection between work behaviours and their outcomes, and the increased demands of the work role for the independent, it apparently becomes more difficult to contain the work role from spilling over into the non-work sphere.

I guess, you know you should be taking advantage of the summer in terms of doing your marketing and making the contacts and trying to set everything up that you can in terms of materials and whatever you're going to need for the coming fall.

*Well, you sort of take it off, but it's like you're off, but you're not really off.* The only thing is, is that you're not making any money at that time and it's risky because what you're doing is, if you really want to use your winter time well, then you should be getting all your materials and stuff and...like we develop and put all our binders and training materials together. But the problem is if the training programs don't go, you're stuck with one hell of a lot of training material. You know we've had a number of contracts that were supposed to go this fall that some went and some didn't go... and we wanted to try to use the summer to get everything ready and we were kind of edging and I'm glad we did, because we would have been stuck with a lot of materials.

P5 recognised the potential for both liberation and trauma in the life of an independent. The control and freedom are great, but when the work isn't there, financial realities hit hard.

***It's a bit of each, like I mean, liberating in that it's great to be working for yourself, it's great to have control over your time and whatever, but stressful. If the work isn't there, and I've gone through periods where you might have two or three months you go holy shit, how do you pay...how are you going to pay...***

It's always been there, you just...it's kind of like...*there's time where there's absolute feast and there are times when there are absolute famines and it's learning how to manage the feast times without putting a damper on it.* Cause if you're worried or you're anxious then you don't continue to develop stuff, so it's kind of like...people used to say to me, like plan for when you're not going to have work and I thought well that's stupid, that's like plan to fail. I mean give me a break here, but there's a line somewhere in between when you're not really thinking that it's not going to work out. It's just there will be times where it's going to be tight and planning better for it.

Technology mediated home office environments can be a mediating factor.

Like the rest of the participants, P5's independent business operates out of a home office. On the whole, she views this very positively, largely because of the flexibility and freedom it provides. It also makes work more accessible, which can be both a positive and a negative effect.

***I have an office, it goes wherever I'm living, there's an office so I have the downstairs has been converted into an office.....It's great...*** When I started I had my own office down at the (building). We actually had a suite of offices and it added a little bit of professionalism to the business but when you look at what this particular business actually does, everything is delivered in the classroom, there's like almost no client contacts and most of the stuff is done over the phone. It was an expense that I didn't need to have, so I looked at it and thought \$600 a month could be going into a house or whatever so I built this originally and then we moved and then we just sold our other house and moved back until I sell this one, but it's....it makes all the sense in the world for people who are running a small operation.....

*It makes it a lot more flexible....when I first started I probably worked a lot more, which was good, because I was trying to get the business to operate. Now it's kind of...I do my normal, I go down around 8:00 in the morning and surface around 4:00-4:30. It just means that I have more flexibility to come and go and if I have other things I want to do, I just go. I don't have to answer to anyone.*

It's not made...not everybody is meant to have like a home office and travel and be on the road, and train and it's something I think if you really like it, you do it. *It seems to work better from having it at home. Especially when you're on the road a lot.....If I need to (work) on weekends, yeah I do. And it's much easier than going out to an office because it's there.*

It was apparent that technology allowed the creation of a virtual office, which facilitated the running of the business. The communications technologies are largely responsible for making this whole way of working feasible.

No, you just call into your phone every day and check and see if there are messages there and...I mean that's regardless of where I am, so let's say I go to....we used to try to go South or visit people somewhere, so if I'm somewhere then I still call into my office every day because you have to maintain the office. It's just a matter, it doesn't bother you and it's not that you're always carrying the office with you, you take 10 minutes, pick up your calls, if anything has to be answered you answer them, if it doesn't you just call again the next day. And you know you might get some really important things that you have to deal with, or you might get nothing. It's the same as if you were in the office *so thank God for phone systems cause they make everything workable now.....*I use e-mail now, but in terms of business stuff it's all by phone.

## Participant 6

### Overview.

P6 is in his late 30's and has two younger children. He works primarily as an organisational development consultant and trainer. He has been working as an independent for the last couple of years. It wasn't a deliberate decision to set up on his own, circumstances and availability of contracts created an opportunity to work in this way.

Earlier in his independent stage, he really questioned his fundamental suitability to the lifestyle of the independent. Over time, the initial anxiety has subsided to a large extent, but he still hasn't ruled out a move back to a more comfortable job scenario.

He very much values the opportunity independent work has given him to pursue his own direction in work. He has found that there is a relationship between work he finds intrinsically rewarding, and the level of extrinsic rewards. He works out of a home office, which he found initially difficult in terms of segregating work and family. He tends to try and pursue a normal 'job' type working day wherever possible, and not let work dominate his life. He suggested that the freedom and flexibility regarding how to manage and position work for the independent, creates additional stress, because it created choices.

Working background.

**Researcher:** First of all if you can sort of give me a brief history of your working life to date... major shifts, and just a general overview.

Sure, where to start? I worked...coming out of university I must have started working for the (outward bound school), outdoor adventure education and I did that for about 5 short of summers/winters and in between there was another thing. Other things that I worked but I did get a teaching degree so then after my teaching degree I taught high school in (town), Ontario and also in (city) briefly. Then I went overseas and worked in....I'm probably forgetting some major thing here.... but I think that's the path. Then I worked overseas in (country) for a year - taught English. And came back and worked for an organisation called (youth organisation) which is development education exchanges.....so the program is split half in Canada/half overseas. So one year I spent half the time in (country) and half the time in Canada and then the next year I spent half the year in (country) and half the...And then I came back to Canada and came to Halifax and I started working for the (organisation), centrally co-ordinating this English language program which is funded by the federal government.

**Researcher:** Is this like a traditional job?

Yeah. So far it's...all those actually on contract if I think about them, they were like (youth organisation) was a contract. But it was a full-time for all intents and purposes,

**Researcher:** Longer-term project?

Yeah.

**Researcher:** What sort of time frames were they?

A year kind of thing, but it would have been.....you know like Outward Bound it would have been, unless you're an absolute disaster you know it would have been renewed kind of thing. The set-up was different but the actually I hadn't thought about that but I think actually almost all of those were contract positions.

**Researcher:** You didn't view it in that way?

No. That was just a job. You know full-time, office, etc. etc., benefits. Then came back from (country), moved to Halifax, worked at (organisation) then slowly...that wasn't going to be....I wasn't keen on that for a long period of time, so I slowly started doing contracts with another consulting firm called (private company). And those contracts sort of grew into or probably in a two year period to where I was working full-time at (private company), doing contracts or working as an associate.

**Researcher:** So when you started working there, how much of your time was occupied with all of that?

Initially, oh well just a small amount. I would have done it around this full-time job I had with (organisation).

**Researcher:** Oh you had a full-time job at the same time?

Yeah...that would have been...I probably would have done one or two contracts that somehow managed to get fit in. But then there also must have been...I don't remember all the details, but over those first couple of years. I left (organisation) at one point and I wouldn't say I was working full-time for (private company) you know there were some contracts and I was probably enjoying myself and trying to find work...and so on and that just slowly grew into where I had enough contracts through this consulting firm and then...so I worked there for perhaps four or five years and then a couple of years ago...I was...for whatever reasons decided to set off on my own. I remember thinking I could start...I could actually send out resumes and try to get a regular, traditional job or I could start my own business and I realised that I actually didn't need to make a choice, I should just do both and see which developed and I didn't get very far on the sending out resumes before I had basically enough and then more than enough contracts to start my own firm.

### Core Narrative by Theme

#### Control element can develop increased identification with work.

In terms of the independent working life, P6 identifies several advantages.

The elements of control and choice were once again predominant, allowing the

diversity and ability to direct himself toward certain types of work. He indicated the ability to gravitate toward work he prefers, and away from work he does not, increasing the degree of cognitive consistency between work and self.

I think the main things would be...I guess for me one is the...if I'm doing something in a sense it's my own fault, but I mean that positively....like I'm not...*I'm doing something because I want to do it and if I end up doing something I realise I don't want to be doing I can change that, there's no one saying you have to do five more of those. If I agree to do something it's because presumably at some level I wanted to or felt I needed to or whatever, so....feeling like I'm the one who made the choice about what I did.....*I think being able to piece together different things and being able to change so *if I had said two years ago I wanted to get a job with a company I would have probably gotten hired as a trainer say whereas now most of what I do is organisational development and I'm not sure it would have been.* . it was just a gradual shift. I'm not sure that would have been possible in a traditional job. . I would have had to be promoted or something. So I can sort of....*and I just recently developed, started doing some work with a software start-up company and so if I choose to, I can spend 10, 20 or 30% of my time and it's just a decision, it's not I have to get time off from my day job to do that.*

In terms of the range of work that he does, he highlighted a relationship between the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with different work. He appears to go through an evaluative process, where he determines whether he is viewing a piece of work instrumentally or whether there is more intrinsic drive there.

*Well sometimes you feel I'm doing this because of the money and I think lots of people actually do feel that although I would still stay I try to be conscious of....am I saying yes to this cause I think I should in order to pay the bills two months from now or because I really want to? And usually it works better if I do it cause I really want to so I try not to say yes to things I really don't want to do.*

He highlighted the ability of the independent to make ongoing decisions to achieve congruence between salient needs and work behaviours. The independent with a portfolio of work can pursue different work contracts to service different needs. It appears to become not simply a question of intrinsically motivated work or extrinsically motivated work, but rather work can be evaluated and selected in respect of both motivational elements.

*Yeah...well I think it's.....maybe it's just a happy coincidence that I can get paid reasonably well for doing what I want to do. I don't think that's entirely true, but I think there is....you know I could choose to do things that got paid a lot less, I just happen to have chosen things where there's....you can get paid quite well for doing it, so it's not, I don't suffer for the decision. I mean it's a risk to do it, to say well I'm not going to do that training course cause I really don't want to do that topic again even though it's well paid, that I would prefer not to work and develop other areas than to.....there's a certain luxury there to be able to do that.*

.....it's a continuous process, like a year ago I would have said ok. what work am I getting? How much did I get paid for different contracts, so of like almost a per hour/per day kind of basis? *So what are the highest ones and which ones am I most interested in doing? I actually find there's a little bit of correlation there, not because I got paid more, but because I think the ones that I actually thought through and did probably and there was adequate time and it was part of a bigger process, I tended to get paid better for it and I tended to enjoy more* and the ones . . . sort of one off can you do a training thing and it's a day, knowing that I have time to do it. . .those would be the less enjoyable, but they would also tend to be the less well paid, but that wasn't a criteria I'd use.

There were indications that for P6, there is a strong identification with the work content he is pursuing, probably more than with the independent way of working. P6 acknowledges that a traditional job would be an easier working life.

He does not have a commitment to working as an independent at the exception of traditional employment. It is more the type of work content he is dealing with. This was somewhat of a departure from other participants whose valuation of the work role was very much connected with the nature of independent work.

And also partly I think...I don't think I'm always...*I wouldn't necessarily describe myself as being cut out for that, I think sometimes it's better.. .it would actually be a lot easier so it's just painful. It would be a lot easier to know ok. two years from now, Monday morning I'm gonna be going off to an office and....*

**Researcher:** do you ever feel that urge to jump back into a secure job scenario where its very predictable?

Oh yeah sure, if someone offered me the right....I'm not wedded to the idea of being.... it's more this is a vehicle for doing things and it seems to work quite well *but if there was another way of doing some of the things that I'm doing now, that I'm interested in and it was a full-time job, that would be fine.*

It was also apparent that extrinsic factors are important to the meanings that P6 attaches to work. He would apparently sacrifice the independent life if it did not provide comparable income to a traditional job. This provides insight into his salient needs.

Well it's one way of measuring success so....if I was self-employed, for me anyway, it's not necessarily the best measure, but it's certainly an easy one and if I know relatively speaking that you work for the provincial government, I'm doing work for the provincial government, I can guess what you're....within 10 or \$20,000 what your salary is, *and if I can say to myself well I'm earning the same or more or less, it gives me a way of gauging would I be better off just going and getting a job like you have? So it's an easy way to gauge success.* I think to a certain extent it becomes an end in and of itself. It's a bit hard... I don't know how to get out of that.....money is important and you start earning money from doing stuff on your own and you realise I can make more money at this, so is the purpose to make more money, or is it to what the money can do, or what you can get from the money? So there's a bit of sorting that out

Regarding the extent to which P6 found independent work liberating or traumatic, he indicated that the trauma stage was very much in the early stages. It brought to question his fundamental suitability for this type of work. Now he feels he is beginning to see the freedom and control benefits.

*Well I think trauma is probably the first, like more towards the trauma starting out and I would have said I wasn't pre-disposed to work this way. It's sort of something that some people would be better at than others and I wouldn't have said I was good at it...I wasn't predisposed to be good at it, although I seem to be managing alright, so I think on that continuum, I feel I've moved away from the trauma. More towards liberation, so I'm sure where I am relative to people who work in organizations, but I definitely feel like I have lots of control and freedom now versus say in the first few months.*

#### Behavioural indicators of involvement.

P6 had an interesting perspective on his work ethic. It was a question of what do you classify as working. The separation between relaxing, learning and working was not clearly defined from his perspective. This has an implicit element of involvement, as work related content may 'spillover' (Wilensky, 1960) into other spheres.

Well I think there's a...for me there's more of a continuum and I would be...someone once said about me that there are things that you do that you would say were learning and other people would say are work. So I think I've got a predisposition to...I think.....my father is an academic and you wouldn't say stop working to him, he doesn't, it just is, like reading...or....Yeah, so a little bit for me and maybe this possibly, at times you wonder about being a workaholic, but I think there is, for me it feels like there's more of a continuum than for a lot of other people where I might be..... I think of it as learning, someone else might say you're working as opposed to just sitting on the couch and watching TV. *There's*

*a bit... it's not clear where the work ends, the learning starts, where the learning stops and the relaxation starts.*

Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

Regarding a longer-term commitment to work, should financial security be achieved, P6 indicated that he would continue some elements of his work, and get more involved in projects with a useful social cause. This was consistent with other participants. It was clear that he would drop the work that he views as instrumental for economic needs, and focus on the more intrinsically motivated work.

**Researcher:** The traditional organisation job you work until you're 60 and retire. Do you think that would be different for you in your situation?

Well, I think probably I'd work....it would be more of a continuum I suspect...if I was wildly successful, I would probably work less, that would be my theory or what I would feel like I had to work less. But I don't see....and maybe it will be different, I don't see at some point saying...actually I see a lot of retired people who even if they did have a regular job, I don't see on my 60th birthday stopping work, so I see it more of a....*at some point I would want to say O.K. I've sorted all this out and I don't need to work anymore for money but there are things I'm still interested in being involved in.*

*I'd probably continue some of my work involvement's* ..... This software company I'd probably....I'd use some of the lottery winnings to invest in that and I would continue to work for whatever... I'd have to think about that. *Cause I think they're committed to this social purpose and because actually it's not clear whether I'm going to get my investment returned anyway, but I still see it as being socially useful.* I think it would probably be hard for me if I won the lottery and then stopped working because work is part of all the network of people and feeling involved and so on....but would I...*I feel like there are contracts I would just say no to... I would probably drop a lot of them, but not all of them.....Training, most of them would be training ones so it's work that I feel like I'm doing because it helps pay the bills.* I don't find it distasteful, but on the other hand, given the choice, I would spend my time reading or whatever.

Interpretation of the relative importance of work.

P6 regards work as the bottom line, which suggests that it needs to occupy a very central place. The financial metaphor is probably appropriate. However, in terms of a hierarchy of his different life spheres, he proposed, family then work and then friends. Earlier in the independent work stage, he found work requires more focus to get things going.

Well I think it's... it's pretty important, *it's the bottom line*, I think it's where I spend....my family and then work and then friends, social stuff would probably be the order there.

**Researcher:** Do you think your positioning of work is different from when you were an employee?

It's probably still more or less the same actually (compared to when in an organisational job). It wouldn't have shifted dramatically there. I'm not out of it yet, but I think there's definitely...*when you start working on your own... there's a phase of I have to work to earn money and I have to do....I have to work as hard as I can to get by*...maybe other people don't have to do that, but that was my sense....so it becomes more important simply because of that. But I think I would always ....I always would have thought of work as being quite important....

The craftsman's work ethic.

P6 proposed that in independent work, he has a clearer sense of contribution and value of his work. Work becomes 'tighter' and more business

like. The opportunities to simply take the income without producing something of value, is largely removed for the independent worker.

Oh yeah, I think...I remember having this discussion with someone...they were sort of an hourly king of labour-type job and they were thinking about going into a supervisory position and having a conversation with the manager and this hourly person, going into the salaried supervisory position was talking about. .. was asking about what happens if you have to work overtime and the manager is like well you don't get paid anymore than that. And they were saying well couldn't you take the next morning off if you had to work in the evening or whatever? and the manager is like well you could, but there would be more work tomorrow morning so. . .And you could just see this person's mind going from o.k. I might have to work more than I'd actually get paid for, *and I was saying yeah and the next step from that is where you don't get paid anything unless you've found a contract and somebody's willing to pay you for it.....just showing up will not actually generate a pay cheque.* So in some ways you get...I think you get a much more catalistic approach to things and....I mean I also feel...and now for me as I start to feel a bit better about...like I know I earned this money and it's worth...someone said this is worth paying for, I don't...*I could imagine having a job where you feel I'm lucky I'm getting away with this for a few months, but I'm certainly not producing very much. So I think you attitude...you become, or I become much more sort of business like, conscious of time and money, and those sorts of things and it's hard to keep the long term focus on it's not about....you're not always doing things to earn the next dollar, some of it's longer term stuff.*

The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

P6 spoke of an emerging recognition of the patterns in the unpredictability of workflow. He seems to see elements of certainty in the overall uncertainty of this way of working. This is seen as part of the learning process of independent work.

***I think well in the consulting business it would take two or three years to build up enough sort of a clientele where it's predictable.*** So I'd actually say in the last 6 or 8 months I haven't thought about where the...there just seems to be more or less a steady stream of work and when I sort of sense there's not, I look on the tender boards and try to find more work and go out to lunch with people. ***I'm not quite sure how it keeps sort of lurching along, but it does.*** In the early...in the first year and a half it was definitely difficult to...sometimes there'd be way too much and other times there'd be almost nothing ***and it would seem like there was going to be almost nothing forever..... Well I think partly if you just go through it a few times you realise stuff's gonna come in somehow.*** Like if...I don't know exactly what I'll do in January but stuff will come, so whereas I would have said I don't have anything to do in January, what am I gonna do, two years ago. But also I think....probably you just get used to it, part of it also is over time, it starts to be.....***it's now more the way it is, that's just the way it is.***

In terms of the issue of selling his time, and marketing himself, he doesn't see that he has a clear marketing plan, it is less tangible than that. The separation of social activity and work search is somewhat blurred. It is simply another activity that is fundamental to the independent.

Well, there's two answers.....yes and no I think. I don't think of myself as a marketer...although other people might say (name) you're good at you know, selling yourself or presenting yourself or whatever so I don't have a coherent...you definitely have to...***I mean being self-employed there's a bunch of things you have to do....administrative things, financial things, marketing things that you wouldn't...so I don't think of myself as doing those consciously and I don't think of myself as going out, running around and making a bunch of cold calls to try and get work, but I think I do probably pay attention, it's sort of in the back of my mind....have I done the things that would be important to do, did I have lunch with that person? Did I follow up with that person?***

**Researcher:** How much time do you think you spend on looking for future work?

I'm trying to think....I actually know that....from the past, but I don't know the current amount. *Maybe....ten or fifteen percent of my time maybe would be actively looking for work* as opposed to....some of these things I see as more of a continuum so...like I was having lunch with someone that was partly social...so whereas I think actually I see what's changed is that there's a bit of a breakdown in whereas if I worked at (private company) or (youth organisation) I would see people.....it would be fun to see them, but it would be because of work, or I would see them because it's to see them and maybe incidentally we chatted about work. *But now it's a bit harder to separate out those pieces.*

The ability to position work rather than being positioned by it.

Surprisingly, P6 said that as opposed to using a more flexible schedule, he is trying to get more routine about his working patterns. So, it appears he is trying to establish parameters around his work, to counteract the pervasive nature of work for the home-working independent. It appears he 'saves' the flexibility from a day to day basis into larger blocks of time.

**Researcher:** Do you find yourself using this flexibility to your own advantage?

*Actually consciously think about trying to be more routine about it, so make it more Monday to Friday, 9 to 5, not Monday evening, not Saturday afternoon kind of thing. But actually the time that comes off, is not so much on a weekly basis but through the summer, over Christmas those sorts of times, I feel I can make a decision about when I work and don't work over those periods, so I actually do consciously try to make so that it's not I only get two weeks holiday a year, but there's six or eight or twelve weeks or whatever where I'm not actually working.*

Work flow can be a mediating factor.

P6 went on to discuss the additional issues associated with being a one-person operation. He has adapted by becoming somewhat of a mini-organisation, outsourcing different tasks to other workers. In this way, he can keep control over work volumes more effectively, which be indicative of the value placed on non-work time. Moreover, this involvement of other individuals can help to combat the isolation of being a one-person operation.

*I think part of it is just having to make all the decisions on your own initially. Now actually about half the time...it's also I look for ways to involve other people. Either in partnerships or by paying people to help me do things.....Well just practical....I'm not interested at being an expert bookkeeper, so.....**given lots of time I could do the bookkeeping but there are other things I would rather do and I get paid more for it than doing bookkeeping, so I'll pay someone to do the bookkeeping. But also I think I look for ways of working with other people, like just making a point of it. If I can involve someone on it, I would rather do that than do something on my own.***

I remember joking with....you were saying it's amazing how many people I have working for me now, but by the time you add it up,....I mean no one's actually working full-time for you, but the number of people who now provide services of some fashion to me, from a lawyer, an accountant, bookkeeper, administrator, you know it starts to add up. *It's sort of a miniaturised organisation* or the co-operation.

Potential for greater integration of life roles.

The issue of the balancing of different roles and responsibilities, within the context of independent work, was discussed. It was implied that the requirements of paid work must get a high priority. However, the ability to control his work allowed him to take blocks of what would be work time, for other roles. This ability to choose was interestingly viewed in a potentially negative light as it can create additional stresses.

*I probably don't take enough time for myself. Although.....It depends on who you're talking to, but you're asking me so I think I actually do ok. at balancing those things, but it's definitely, it becomes a decision that you have to make I think is the bottom line. Like if I had a job and someone said be here at 9:00 and leave at 5:00 or even if they didn't say that, there would probably be some implied understanding of roughly when that would be. But you know on Wednesday I spent the day with my daughters and didn't do any work and so that's a choice that I could actually make that I couldn't make in a lot of other situations, so I actually think I add some stress, it seems great, but it adds stress cause you have to figure all this stuff out from as if you're starting with a blank slate, instead of having someone jump in and say well do this, do that, have lunch roughly at this time. ...*

Technology mediated, home office environments can be a mediating factor.

The opportunity for integration of different life roles with the home office raises additional issues, in terms of the segregation of family and work. In the event, P6 required greater physical separation of his office, from his home. This

gave him a both the segregation of life roles and a greater sense that this was 'real' work.

Well there's good and bad points...I think also it's evolving. *At first, it was quite difficult I think actually because not so much being at home, but I think it was the transition zone or time.* (Wife) and our two kids, (wife) stays home two days a week and so...most people, my impression is, most people they leave their office and then there's a transition to getting to their home. And so...but that wasn't in place for me, in fact, the transition was reversed. *My day would, some days, end when Judy and the kids arrived home and/or I had to go and get the kids and there wasn't sort of a gradual transition there, it was quite abrupt, so that was a bit difficult. And also I think a bunch of separate, creating separate things.* We have a separate phone line...definitely a separate office set-up, all sorts of things, so that was...it was important I think to do that and it was only important in retrospect...I mean I don't know how quickly I did them actually, it's probably over a matter of months, but the more separate I got, the better. So for all intents and purposes, the office is not completely separate, but it is...you know there's a lock on the door, separate phone lines, computers, etc.

Some of the things around creating the separate space, both mentally and physically even if I'm working out of home or...that I am working and it has...there's a sort of distinct entity there and it's just as relevant and it's getting easier I think as more people are doing it...but it's...*this is as real as having an office to go to. It's a lot easier to knock on an office door than your own mental construct, but I think to see it, this is a real...I'm doing a real thing here and creating all those things that are separate, that allow that separateness* - separate phone lines, separate work spaces and stuff...

Despite this separation, the accessibility of the home office means that P6 can continue working over a greater part of the day.

Yes. In fact it's probably a bit too easy to...I think if I was in an organisation, if I had a separate office at five o'clock, I'd have to make sure I had the stuff for 9:00 tomorrow morning or 8:30 tomorrow morning if I was going off to meet someone whereas I can actually go and get it at 8:00

the next morning or at 9:00 at night, *so it's all too easy actually to switch back into work mode as opposed to switching off it.*

Technology and working from home, has meant that work behaviour and activities are more focused. There is less time that is wasted on the non-work related behaviours that may be more evident in a traditional organisational job.

Yeah trying to separate is that just me or....I use email a lot and...I guess actually, say when I left (private company) and started working on my own, the amount of time I spent at meetings...now if I go to a meeting, it's with a purpose and I don't spend a lot of time, just you know let's talk about this for the...*for whatever reason, it would be a meeting with a client, you know it's a very deliberate thing you know, so I probably have more specific contact with people and less just sort of social, chatting.*

## Overview of Themes

There now follows an overview of the central themes identified from the narratives, which related to work centrality. There has been no attempt in this section, to categorise themes under the value component or the decision making component. This was deemed to be a premature step in the understanding of the issues, as many themes are not solely applicable to one component or the other. This will be addressed in the discussion section.

### Personal interpretation of the relative importance of work.

Paullay, Stone-Romero and Alliger (1994) described how work centrality is seen as being shaped by the socialization of the individual. People learn to value work from their families, friends, religion or culture. Kanungo (1982) posited that socialization with the Protestant Work Ethic is one way in which individual's learn to value work, but it is not the only way. Individuals may come to believe through their own experiences, that work is to them a central component of their life. Therefore, a personal interpretation of the relative importance of work is seen to represent both normative influences and personal experience.

Control over work can develop increased identification with work.

Theories of human motivation suggest that human behaviour is purposive, it has directionality, and it is initiated by need states. Behaviour will always be instrumental in satisfying those need states. An individual's work behaviour therefore, will also be purposive, in that it is aimed at both intrinsic and extrinsic need states of the individual (Lawler, 1973).

Interestingly, authors on the subject of work centrality tend not to single out any a priori explanation for why working should be important in an individual's life. For one individual it may be financial, for another it may be socio-psychological factors. Subsequently, measures of work centrality do not represent any specific rationale.

However, Lawler and Hall (1970), assume that intrinsic needs are central to the self-concept of the individual. It is assumed that if work is pursued as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, then work will not be as central to the individual's self-concept. Therefore work may be viewed as important because of extrinsic needs, but the identification with the activity of working itself, will not be as high as if intrinsic needs are the key motivational factors.

The theme that emerged was that participants identified the ability to have much greater control over the direction and content of their work. They are more able to pursue particular projects and contracts that have the potential to satisfy their salient needs. On the whole, the salient needs identified were intrinsic. Moreover, they are able to work on these projects in a work format that is preferred. Therefore, the work content and the

work context may combine to differing degrees to provide a strong source of identification with working as an activity.

Work can be more tailored to personal needs, and as such, there is a greater cognitive consistency between the activity of working and self. This is very different from an organisational employment scenario, where the institution dictates the nature and content of work.

Salient needs can change over time.

It can be assumed that the salient needs to be sought through work will undergo some adaptations over time. Changing needs may not mean changing centrality. As Kanungo suggested, work can be instrumental in achieving intrinsic goals as well as extrinsic goals. Therefore centrality of work may remain constant, but the motivational factors that are underlying may shift.

Degree of control and choice is mediated by financial realities.

Marx proposed that a state of work involvement will result when the work situation elicits behaviour that is perceived to be; voluntary, not instrumental for physical needs, instrumental for higher order needs including self-realisation, and conducive to developing individual abilities to their fullest potential. Theoretically this proposal has merit. However, economic realities dictate that only very few people are able to pursue wholly self-actualising work. People must eat to survive, and the opportunity for

subsistence in modern economies is almost non-existent. Therefore paid work is the requirement. Unfortunately, this means that the extent of choice in work activity is bounded by financial need.

Therefore, it was apparent from the participants that although there is greater opportunity to pursue more self-fulfilling work, this opportunity is constantly mediated by shorter-term financial need. As a direct result of this, it is inevitable that work is to some extent a means to an end.

In fact, the MOW International Research Team (1987) found that the income-producing function of working is perceived as the most important function by the labour force in every country of an international study. One cannot expect therefore to separate the economic meaning of work from higher order meanings.

#### The alienation of organisational employment.

To understand the meanings attached to independent work, it is purposeful to use the comparative context of organisational employment. Marx looked at psychological involvement as being on a continuum. With alienation and involvement being the two extremes. Alienation in work is the condition where work becomes external to the worker, and there is little or no psychological identification with the work, but it is simply a means to an end.

In the industrial age, where the predominant form of work has been as an employee, individuals rarely have had the opportunity to pursue their salient needs in

work. Subsequently, the majority has focused on the economic significance of working, with work becoming more of a means to an end.

Participants' narrative frequently gave alienated perspectives on organisational jobs. The experiences they have had, and the subsequent meanings they have attached to traditional jobs, provided a clear contrast to their feelings about independent work. The lack of control and autonomy over their personal work in previous jobs underpinned these feelings of alienation.

Greater identification with work – greater positive affective response to work.

As the MOW International Research Team suggested identification with work and involvement with work is mutually reinforcing. With the increased potential for cognitive consistency between perceptions of work and perceptions of self, it is unsurprising that this translated into participants indicating a positive affective response to their work. Greater positive affect toward working as an activity will naturally increase the predisposition to place work as a more central feature of one's life.

Behavioural indicators of involvement.

The Meaning of Work International Research Team, suggested that involvement with work may be inferred from behavioural measures, mainly in terms of the number of hours spent working. Although involvement may partially explain the behavioural element, it was clear from the participants' narratives that independent work by its nature

often has a fundamental requirement for long hours to fulfil various work obligations. The division between wanting to work additional hours, and 'having to' is not a clear one.

In many ways, there are features of independent home working that can act as indicators of involvement. When work is contained within the parameters of an organisation, work time is largely prescribed. However, in a home working environment, the individual can dictate the level of work activity. How the individual utilises this, can provide a behavioural indication of involvement. Similarly, technology can make work more accessible today, and the extent to which the individual takes advantage of this, can provide an indication of involvement.

#### Long term commitment to working in the independent realm.

With independent work, the duration of an individual's working becomes a personal decision, as there is no organisation dictating age limitations. One would assume, that as independent workers appear more able to pursue work that has the potential to satisfy salient needs, leading to greater psychological identification and stronger positive affective responses, this would translate into a stronger commitment to keep working, regardless of economic need. A greater level of commitment to working as an activity can be taken as evidence of a greater centrality of work.

The narratives produced, strongly supported this hypothesis. There was a strong commitment to working longer term, largely because of the potential of work to continue to satisfy salient intrinsic needs. An interesting observation is that almost all participants

indicated that they would still like to work, but on more socially fulfilling tasks. Once the need to work for money is removed, working for the general good emerged strongly.

Work can become a more preferred life sphere.

Marx spoke about the alienated worker, who cannot find satisfaction in his work, and subsequently prefers other life spheres. "The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless." This results when work is seen as *external* to the worker. If the independent worker can pursue work that is *internal*, the potential emerges for the work sphere to satisfy salient needs. The research narratives did suggest that work could become a more preferred life sphere, rather than a mode that is pursued for purely instrumental reasons.

The nature of independent work requires a higher work centrality.

There are numerous features of independent work that would seem to lead to a need for a greater work focus. Primarily, the fact that the independent worker who operates on a contract to contract basis, is potentially unemployed on a regular basis. Therefore, there is a need to continually search for future work, while maintaining high quality standards on current work.

### The nature of portfolio working.

The nature of portfolio working often dictates the need to concentrate on several different projects for several different employers. The mental and physical demands of this are significant. It is harder to compartmentalise work. It sprawls, and permeates life to a greater extreme. A traditional job, in many ways can maintain work in a more contained manner.

### The necessity for a craftsman's work ethic.

Evidence would suggest that the re-emergence of a true personal work ethic is a real possibility. For many years, organisational jobs have in many ways bred an overly complacent environment, where personal work standards are weakened by a secure and stable employment situation. Employees in effect are frequently paid for their position, rather than the quality of the work they produce. Certain realities became apparent from the narratives, regarding the nature of independent work. Reputation is central to the amount of work that is obtained, therefore the individual must be 'at the top of their game' day in day out. This need for high quality standards would seem to necessitate a more disciplined, almost 'craftsman' like work ethic

The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

It was apparent that independent workers are faced with the major challenge of constantly finding work. This is not a concern for an employee, as work is provided, and even during slower times, an income is provided. For the most part, the independent must continually look to generate work. That is a reality for survival. Requirement for income on a month to month basis appears to necessitate greater work related activity.

The independent worker can position work rather than being positioned by it.

Independent workers can have significant control over the direction of their work, but in addition, they can have significant control over how they carry out their work. Respondents indicated substantial flexibility in how they positioned their work. Possession of a more flexible work schedule allows the independent worker to position work according to their needs at a specific point in time. In organisational work, the decision regarding where work is positioned is largely taken out of the individual's hands. The independent worker can often exercise a level of choice. It could be argued that this introduction of choice has the potential to increase or decrease work centrality, depending upon the individual.

Work flow can be a mediating factor.

There is also the issue of workflow, and managing fluctuations in work volumes. Work volumes will always vary, even in organisational employment, but the fluctuations are often more extreme for the independent. The ebbs and flows of work volumes will inevitably have a subsequent effect on the positioning of work relative to other life roles.

The positioning of work behaviour may become more congruent with values.

The whole decision process regarding how work is positioned, will be strongly influenced by an underlying value system, which may dictate very specifically, the relative 'big picture' importance of each role. This value hierarchy, determining the centrality of work, is seen as being largely determined by a socialization process. The centrality of work for an individual will be shaped at some level by normative influences referent groups, which would indicate how work *should* be positioned. Unfortunately, the majority of organisational jobs dictate the place of work in a person's life. There was evidence from this research, that this new way of working with greater flexibility and control allows these hierarchies to be more reflected in behaviour patterns.

Potential for greater integration of life roles.

The inherent flexibility in independent work, terms of time management, allowed greater integration of work with other life roles. It was apparent from the narratives, that there was the potential for various roles to become more interwoven than segregated. Work became more malleable, and could be shaped to accommodate the requirements of different roles. This element introduces a significant element of confusion into the question of centrality of work. Clear boundaries are no longer in evidence, as different roles 'spillover' into each other

The general notion of multiple role theorists is that the commitment to different roles can result in role strains and even role overload (Mannheim & Schiffrin, 1984). When role overload occurs, coping may necessitate a reduction in the centrality of certain roles and adaptations in the others. In fact, the narratives seemed to suggest that the malleable nature of their working patterns allowed centrality of work without creating an anticipated level of role conflict.

In general this ability to integrate different roles was regarded positively, but interestingly it was also suggested that the element of choice creates additional stresses. Working from a home office holds particular implications for the overlapping of various roles. There is the potential for various roles to become more interwoven than segregated. This element introduces a significant element of confusion into the question of centrality of work. Clear boundaries are no longer in evidence, as different roles 'spillover' into each other.

Technology mediated home office can impact the positioning of work.

The home office can be beneficial to the independent worker, in terms of reducing traditional work-related activities (Parker, 1971), such as travel and grooming. However, this is largely offset by the increased accessibility to work that the home office provides. Participants made reference to the expanded working hours the home office can create. In this way, it would appear that the home office would increase work-related activity. In terms of work centrality, as work is effectively 'on tap' at home, a clearer behavioural perspective can be obtained.

In a similar vein, technology was viewed both positively and negatively. In one sense it allows the independent worker to function effectively, allowing them communications, without which even a decade ago, would have made their working lives substantially more difficult. However, again, technology can mean that work becomes almost ubiquitous. Work related information and communication is now available around the clock.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

#### Overview

Participant's narratives generated numerous insights into the nature and meaning of independent work at the dawn of the post-industrial era. This emerging way of working fundamentally alters many traditional interpretations and meanings of working as a life role.

It is recognised that this sample of participants were of comparable ages, they are all successful knowledge workers, and in large measure made a pro-active decision to work in this manner. It is further acknowledged that this pro-active decision to work independently could be seen as indicative of an already higher level of work centrality. Their narratives clearly outlined that their motivations for working as an independent related to factors that highlighted their valuation of work as an end in itself, rather than an instrumental activity. These factors combined to elicit narratives that were mostly positive in direction. However, it was very clear that the world beyond jobs has its pros and cons. Participants described features and characteristics of this way of working, which seemed to create opportunities for an almost utopian world of work. This was counterbalanced by several 'dystopian' (Rifkin, 1995) characteristics of this work form. Narratives successfully communicated the potential range of positive and negative experiences in this environment, which all independent workers could be exposed to. This range of experience will be examined in the context of the work centrality construct.

There are two major theoretical components of the work centrality construct, each with its particular properties (Meaning of Work International Research Team, 1986). The first component involves a value orientation toward working as a life role, and the second component relates to a decision-making orientation regarding preferred life spheres for one's behaviour. It emerged strongly from participants' narratives, that working as an independent can have a significant impact on both components of work centrality.

The belief or value component has two elements, identification with working and involvement or commitment to working. The critical factor that appears to impact the value component, can be viewed simply in terms of control. Control over the nature, content and structure of one's work. The independent can maximise their inherent autonomy and control, in two key ways. Primarily, they are able to dictate the content and direction of their work choices, depending upon their salient needs. Secondly, their flexibility and control over work patterns allows the independent to more opportunity to position work according to personal values, needs and desires on a day to day basis. In short, there is a much greater sense of ownership and personal relationship with their work behaviors. This can lead to greater cognitive consistency, and identification between perceptions of work and self. In turn this tends to increase the emotional investments and involvement with working as a life role, and can create a longer-term commitment to working as a life role.

In terms of the decision-making component of work centrality, it needs to be recognised that life experience is segmented into different sub-spheres or life roles, such as work, family, community, leisure or friends. These sub-spheres and the associated behaviors are preferred differentially. The decision component relates to these sub-

spheres, and has itself, two elements. The first element relates to sphere preference, in terms of the significance attached to behaviors that take place in particular life spheres. Self-identification will be closely related to sphere preference, and therefore this element of the decision-making component is closely linked to the value component. With increased identification, involvement and commitment to work, it would suggest that work becomes a more preferred life sphere in the decision-making context. The second element of the decision making component is the actual choice element, in terms of the extent to which the individual actually chooses the preferred life sphere and the associated behaviors. In respect of this element, independent work can provide a more transparent vessel, providing a more accurate reflection of work centrality relative to other life spheres. In traditional employment scenarios, behavioural indicators of work centrality are de-valued by the lack of personal control. Without any directives from an employer, the independent can consistently position work in accordance with personal value structures, and in this way, independent work provides a more accurate behavioural indication of work centrality. There is the freedom and flexibility to tailor one's work to the centrality of other spheres, not necessarily at the expense of others, but the malleable nature of work in this environment can be moulded to demonstrate higher leisure centrality or family centrality for example.

However, it emerged that the degree of positive effect independent work can have in terms of the value component and the decision-making component, is largely dependent on financial security, and the power balance between the individual and the market. In recent centuries, there has been the progression from master to slave, lord to serf, employer to employee, and now it is suggested that society is moving toward a

further stage of equality, with self-organised independent work. Control appears to be the critical factor, as work moves outside of the organisation, the perception of freedom is strong. However, participants' narratives indicated that there is a new master in the world beyond jobs. This master is less tangible, and has the potential to be more fickle than the standard employer. What strongly emerged is that in an employer deficient scenario, the new master is the marketplace. The marketplace can be seen to represent the body of potential employers, with unpredictable needs and differential requirements for an individual's services. The key point is that an individual's experience of independent portfolio working is heavily dependent on their market success, at any specific point in time. A strong market position can provide the financial security, a good range of options for work, and more opportunity to position work as desired relative to other life spheres. A weaker market position can provide a precarious financial status, a limited range of options for work, and reduced ability to position work in the life space. This market position can be relatively constant, but the narratives indicated that it is more in a constant state of change. Thus, the environment becomes "more of a seesaw" (participant 6). Previously, it was outlined how the independent is able to choose both the content and pattern of their work. Due to economic realities however, the degree of choice in work direction is severely undermined by what the market requires and will pay for, at any given point in time. Furthermore, the ability to position work as desired can be severely affected by the fluctuations in workflow. There may be increased demands on work time and work related time, with work becoming more pervasive and sprawling. Alternatively, work may be entirely missing when the independent is caught between projects, in a state of temporary unemployment.

### Research Objective

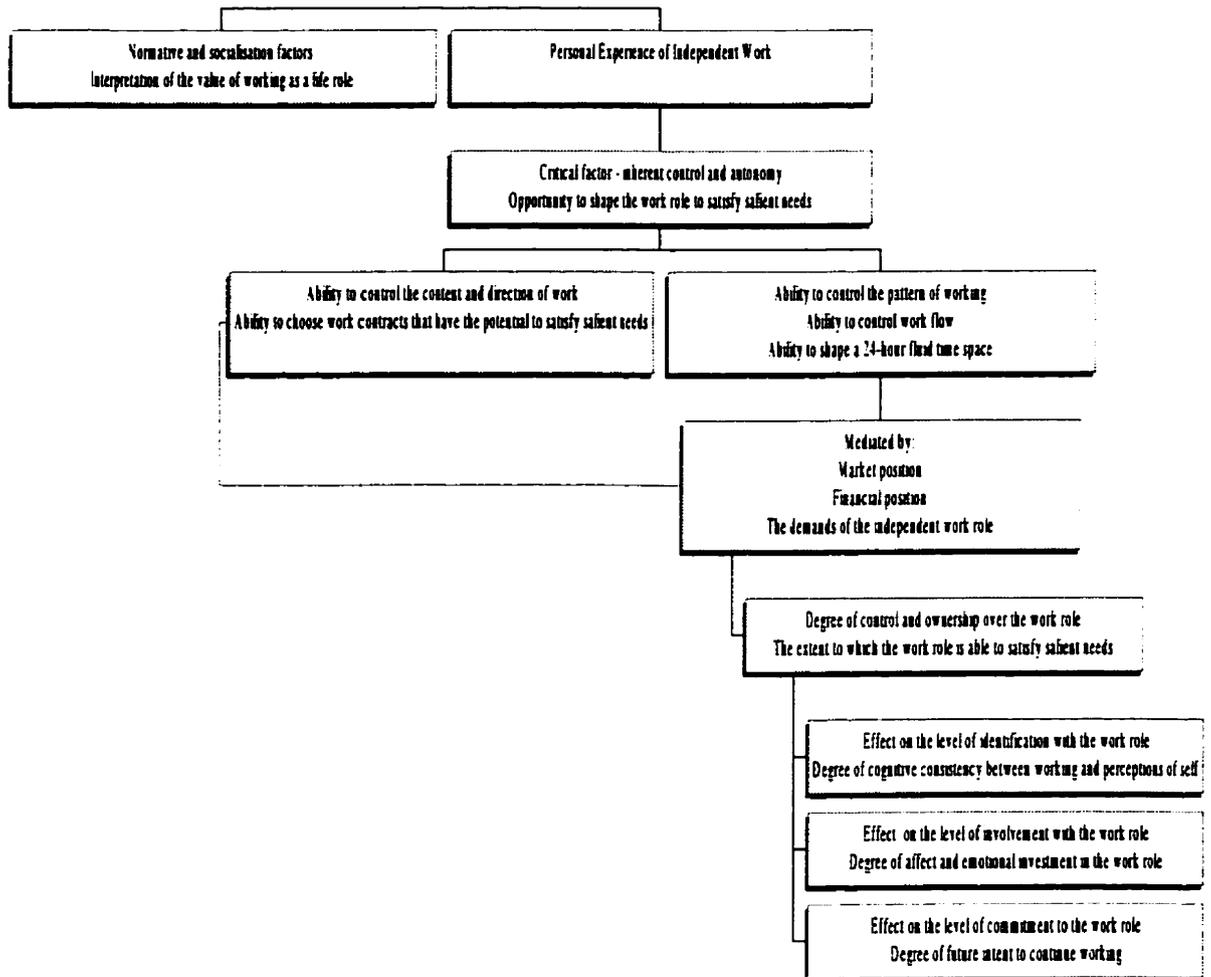
To develop a model that will identify the key issues and factors that can determine work centrality in this world of independent work. It is intended that this model will highlight the decision-making processes involved in how work is positioned in the life of the individual.

There are a few caveats that must be acknowledged in reference to the following models. Firstly, the models are not intended to indicate any causality in the strictest sense. They represent the researcher's interpretations of the participants' narratives, in the context of work centrality. Relationships are proposed, but these relationships are neither definitive nor directly generalisable to wider populations. They could serve however as a platform for further research, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

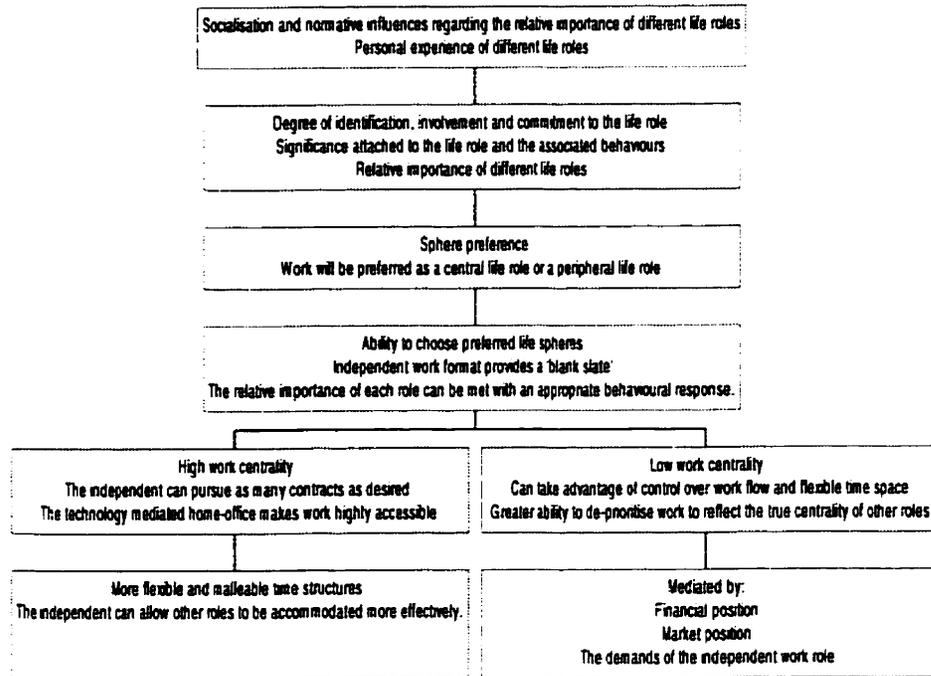
Secondly, it is acknowledged that the relationships identified in the model appear to be static. It was difficult to represent the dynamics of the proposed relationships. Work centrality is not fixed throughout the life course. Work centrality indicates to a large extent an enduring set of beliefs and behaviours, but these beliefs and behaviours are constantly under the influence of changing personal experience and socialisation factors.

Finally, in the context of the decision making model, the model is ultimately divided into high and low work centrality. It is critical to recognise that work centrality is continuum based, and this visual division is purely for the purposes of a more clear presentation of conclusions.

## Value Component Model



## Decision Component Model



### The Value Component of Work Centrality

All individuals have some sense of the relative importance that work occupies in their lives. Paullay, Stone-Romero and Alliger (1994) described how work centrality is seen as being shaped by the socialization of the individual. Work centrality is seen to be determined at some level by normative influences. People can learn to value work from various referent groups such as their families, friends, religion or culture. These referent groups propagate values that can be seen as supportive of the Protestant Work Ethic. For participant three, the key referent appears to be religion.

*I have a belief that's basically what we're here to do.....and my philosophy or religious belief that that's what life is about. Life's about.....it's not sitting around consuming drinks and sucking up rays or ski bunnying even if you could afford to do that, it's about work and hopefully doing some good. (Participant 3)*

Participant one, indicated how family experiences of independent work have instilled very positive work values. He has been socialised in an environment where significant value has been placed on working as a life role.

*I think their culture, their family culture has shown them the options, has shown them that work is a rich, satisfying.....or can be a rich, satisfying love affair and not a depressing, agonising prison. (Participant 1)*

Kanungo (1982) posited that socialization with the Protestant Work Ethic is one way in which individual's learn to value work, but it is not the only way.

Individuals may come to believe through their own experiences, that work is to them a central component of their life. Therefore, a personal interpretation of the relative importance of work is seen to represent both normative influences and personal experience. The critical point in reference to independent workers is that the nature and meaning of work is frequently very different from the traditional employee. In respect of this thesis, the concern is to a greater degree with the personal experience element, in terms of how participant's experiences of independent work impacted their valuation of work as a life role, relative to other spheres. Thus, the key to this discussion, are the personal experiences of participants, as communicated through their narratives. Participants clearly highlighted how independent work can provide the opportunities to develop a higher level of identification, involvement and commitment to working. This can lead to a more positive evaluation of working as a life role. However, this is not a given.

Participants' narratives were very consistent in identifying the critical strength of the independent, as the ability to exercise control, autonomy and choice in their environment. The individual is not being allocated work from above, and there are no directives as such. The independent portfolio worker has a great deal more flexibility to constantly change direction, focus, and work patterns as they progress from project to project. Rather, independent workers are more able to examine the available work, and their personal agendas, and make decisions accordingly on an ongoing basis, in terms of what work to undertake and how they wish to complete this. This control feeds a stronger and more personal connection between the individual and the outcomes of their labour.

*I would rather do that, I would rather have no benefits, I would rather be 100% responsible for me and my family and have the sense of satisfaction that comes from that, from being however perversely it may be the case in control of my life so that I feel some....I feel the satisfaction of getting through, I feel the satisfaction of actually paying the light bill and putting food on the table. I also feel the terror that comes when that may not be working, but that's the stimulant in life that I need...(Participant 1)*

Control provides ownership, and as such the independent has greater opportunity to tailor their work to achieve increased congruence with their salient needs, which can further feed the personal relationship with the work role. An individual's self-concept will dictate salient needs, that the individual will seek to satisfy through their work. Participants mostly communicated and explained their salient needs in terms of their personality. In this context, it can be assumed that perceptions of personality relate strongly to self-concept.

*I don't think it was just the first crack at it, I think it was more of a personality style thing. One pattern which has emerged late in my working life is that I'm much more...this has only recently occurred to me as I've probably said to you before, I'm much more frightened of boredom than I am of not having money. And that's the sort of thing that needs literally decades of data before you can reach these conclusions, and that's absolutely true. (Participant 1)*

Although self-organised work has always existed, work in the industrial era has been overwhelmingly dominated by a structure of jobs, with employees servicing the needs of an employer. The employer-employee relationship has largely involved a directive allocation of tasks, and subsequently the degree of perceived ownership of personal labour has been diminished.

***but I'll tell you that I'm much, much happier working a 100 hours a week in my little office here where I feel some.....I feel that I'm going to no meetings that I don't chose to go to, I am wasting nobody's time and nobody's wasting mine. I'm either being paid to do the work or attend the meetings or I am choosing to do the work and attend the meetings because I chose to do it. (Participant 1)***

Marxist philosophy would examine this relationship in terms of alienation. The lack of autonomy and control over one's work creates conditions for a cognitive state of separation between the individual and their personal labour. Work becomes external to the worker, and the cognitive consistency between working as a life role and perceptions of self can be compromised.

This separation between the worker and his labour has led to many workers becoming focused on work as an instrumental activity, to be valued mostly at an extrinsic level. A key observation from the study was the overwhelming emphasis on intrinsic factors when explaining the personal significance of their work.

***My next ten year plan calls for me to make a lot more money, cause I was never focused on money, money was never a focus for me. I'd never go into this to make buckets and buckets of money.....More of a lifestyle and more freedom and more flexibility, and more of the challenge and more of the stimulation from a variety of work, that's why I got into it. (Participant 3)***

The ability to control the content and direction of their work, creates the opportunity to encourage a work path which focuses more on psychological growth and self-fulfilment, and less on purely instrumental needs.

***My old boss at \_\_\_\_\_, for example, who is rich by virtue of being with the company 20+ years, doing well, investing well, he's got millions literally, he keeps telling me how much he envies me.....the freedom, independence, and the***

***ability to say I don't want to do that project, or I'm out of town, or I'm going to go to my cottage for a month and whatnot. What does it mean to him...so in his state of mind he's an entrepreneur at heart that spent his entire working life selling out to the company for money. That result, I'm sitting here worried about next month's forecast in terms of where will my money be, but if you ask me in my heart am I happy, I'm blissfully happy. Here's a guy who just grinds his teeth every night, he's got millions in the bank, but he grinds his teeth because he's depressed that he sold himself to the company (Participant 1)***

The empowerment that independent work brings, allows individuals to work on their own account to meet their own needs, to achieve their own purposes (Robertson, 1985). There is significant potential that the portfolio lifestyle could increase the opportunity for self-actualisation through work. Self-actualisation is the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model (Kelly, 1990), and it relates to a realisation of human potential, specific to the individual. Increasingly, with an society of independent workers, with more individualism and fewer employees, we could well see a societal shift toward a more holistic view of work and non-work. Kelly (1990) referred to work by Murphy (1975), who in his definition of holism, spoke of clear demarcation of work and leisure as being inappropriate, as there is the potential for human fulfilment in each.

The assumption is that an individual who focuses more on the intrinsic rewards of work, and sees it as having a value in and of itself, will have greater psychological identification with work, and will position work more centrally in their lives, relative to other roles. The individual, who views work as external, as a means to an end, will marginalise work in their lives relative to other roles.

***Oh absolutely, cause it's the.....the financial thing is just a background thing. It's like every once in a while you say well maybe we should put the per diems up, but it's all irrelevant, it's just you know they send the money but it's got nothing***

***to do with the work.*** Well if you can find it, I think I was fortunate enough that I found something that I think is really valuable. (Participant 5)

However, for most individuals, money is not just a background thing. The relationship between intrinsically motivated work and extrinsically motivated work is complex. Theories of human motivation suggest that human behaviour is purposive, it has directionality, and it is initiated by need states. Behaviour will always be instrumental in satisfying those need states. An individual work behaviour therefore, will also be purposive, in that it is aimed at both intrinsic and extrinsic need states of the individual (Lawler, 1973). Interestingly, authors on the subject of work centrality tend not to single out any a priori explanation for why working should be important in an individual's life. For one individual it may be financial, for another it may be socio-psychological factors. Subsequently, measures of work centrality do not represent any specific rationale (Paullay et al, 1994).

The key point is that control and ownership provides the individual with the opportunity to evaluate opportunities and make choices about work direction, based on salient needs. This can be done on a consistent basis. In terms of portfolio working, the reality is that there is often a combination of instrumental work, intrinsically motivated work and work where there is some degree of overlap.

.....it's a continuous process, like a year ago I would have said o.k. what work am I getting? How much did I get paid for different contracts, so of like almost a per hour/per day kind of basis? ***So what are the highest ones and which ones am I most interested in doing? I actually find there's a little bit of correlation there, not because I got paid more, but because I think the ones that I actually thought through and did probably and there was adequate time and it was part of a bigger process, I tended to get paid better for it and I tended to enjoy more***

and the ones....sort of one off can you do a training thing and it's a day, knowing that I have time to do it....those would be the less enjoyable, but they would also tend to be the less well paid, but that wasn't a criteria I'd use. (Participant 6)

The ability to pursue work that is more aligned with salient needs is effectively a function of two critical areas of control. Firstly, control over the nature and content of work undertaken. Secondly, control over the flow and pattern of working.

#### Control over work content.

Marx proposed that a state of work involvement will result when the work situation elicits behaviour that is perceived to be; voluntary, not instrumental for physical needs, instrumental for higher order needs including self-realisation, and conducive to developing individual abilities to their fullest potential. Participants clearly indicated an inherent freedom and ability to control the nature and content of work projects undertaken.

*but over the years because of the freedom and flexibility I've had to pursue anything I wanted when I wanted it. An opportunity would come up to do this or to team up with somebody or to start this business and I could say yes or no. If it felt right, if I liked the people and I liked the situation, then yes.....(Participant 3)*

This control would seem to allow individuals to pursue work that is more consistent with their own self-concept. The nature of work undertaken becomes more malleable and can be tailored to become more congruent with the worker's salient needs.

In this way, the element of separation is minimised and the degree of connection with personal labour is enhanced.

*I'm doing something because I want to do it and if I end up doing something I realise I don't want to be doing, I can change that, there's no one saying you have to do five more of those. If I agree to do something it's because presumably at some level I wanted to or felt I needed to or whatever, so....feeling like I'm the one who made the choice about what I did.* (Participant 6)

Of particular note, is that because of the project or contract nature of working in this way, at any time during the working life, should the salient needs that are sought from working change, the nature of work pursued can be adjusted to maintain the same degree of connection. In a job scenario, circumstances are largely fixed over time, and the opportunity to pursue salient need satisfaction is largely controlled by the employer.

For example, the self-employed person is only ever doing projects. *So a project has a start and an end. If you hated it, you don't do it again. If you love it, you can steer your way towards more of those projects. That flexibility is often reduced or even missing for most people who are imprisoned by jobs.* (Participant 1)

#### The ability to control the positioning of work.

It strongly emerged from participants that it is not only the freedom and ability to control work content that can provide a greater identification with working as an independent. Participants indicated a strong identification with the ability to work to a schedule and pattern which is largely self-determined. To a large extent, this could be viewed as identification with the lifestyle that this facilitates.

In the industrial era, the temporal boundaries of the work role have been defined by the employer, which has meant that the decision regarding where work is positioned is largely taken out of the individual's hands. Traditionally, there is a prescribed amount of hours that one must work annually, with the allowed time away from work being specifically defined. This standard working pattern with monthly, weekly and hourly divisions has effectively served as a control mechanism. Once work is moved outside of an organisation, the defined space in the day for work time is removed, and the control is returned to the individual.

Control over work volume.

Work volumes will always vary, even in organisational employment, but the critical difference is that the independent worker is more able to exhibit control and exercise choice over work volumes. It has been illustrated how participants work on a constantly changing body of work, composed of a series of projects. These projects all tend to have a start and a finish date, and therefore work volumes become more controlled and defined, as opposed to ongoing and indefinite administration, clerical or management tasks. Thus, the individual is able to constantly make decisions regarding the amount of work to pursue and undertake at any specific point in time.

*you sit down you have a meeting with a customer and decided well no I'm going skiing this week Mr. Customer, guess what? ...so I'm fully in control of my daytimer, I'm fully in control of how many customers that I want to put in the queue at any point in time. (Participant 3)*

Participant five, highlighted the ability to manipulate work flow in the independent arena. She has been able to concentrate a high volume of work into a shorter period of time, in order to allow non-work time or very low volume work at a later date. Again, the key is that it is a personal decision, there is a direct connection with her work activity and her own personal agenda.

**Researcher:** So you would take a traditional vacation as such?

*No I never take traditional.....yeah, traditional but spread out. I'd have a lot more vacation time than say your normal employee because where they might get three weeks or whatever, I can take and work double weeks and then take double weeks off. And I can do that at any point during the year*

**Researcher:** Do you take advantage of that?

*Oh yeah, why else would you be doing it you know? (Participant 5)*

Narrative from participant four, illuminated how financial security and life stage can impact the whole equation of work centrality. Following a buy-out package at early retirement, he didn't have to work, but chose to continue working as an independent at a reduced level. The project nature of his newly independent working status, allowed him to have more management over the incoming work flow. In a job scenario, you're expected to work on an ongoing basis, whether this is full or part time.

*You know because for one the part-time job that I'm taking is only about four months old and I had lots of vacation time over the summer....So...both of these options came towards the end of the summer so I was on vacation basically all summer....Now if you asked me the same question again next fall, and I've been on two contracts all summer then I'd have to reassess that. (Participant 4)*

Control over a fluid 24-hour day.

The old single shift factory schedule, is still the basis of the overall societal timetable, but this is changing rapidly. For years, work hours were inflexible as the machines stood waiting for the next shift. There is still a significant carry over from this period. Public schools, restaurants, public transport, human services and recreation are all organised around the standard working day. Evidence from participants strongly indicated how personal rather than societal schedules dictate, in the independent environment.

*I just can't imagine myself ever being....First of all, working for anyone else because I'm very used to determining what I'm going to do and so on. And being somewhere at a set time every day, whether you feel like working or not. ...Until now I've been...it's been very nice with kids, been around, been here after school.....any time I want to do anything I just take the time to do it. I like to work according to my rhythm.... (Participant 2)*

No longer does work have to occupy a specified time space as traditional time structures are disassembled. The result is a 24 hour fluid time space. How and where work is done, becomes far more amorphous, as individuals dictate their own personal patterns.

Therefore, within this time space, the independent worker can exercise a greater level of choice. As Handy (1994) suggested, portfolio workers have more freedom to chunk their time in any different way they choose. When you can manipulate and use time to your own ends, it becomes a form of freedom. It effectively allows the independent worker to position work according to their needs at a specific point in time.

A critical factor that facilitates much of the flexibility available to the independent is the re-emergence of home-working, which has in turn been facilitated by the significant advances in synchronous and asynchronous communications technology. The ability to take advantage of the more fluid time space, is largely due to the ability to work from home. That segregation of work time by location is no longer evident, which immediately increases the span of time over which work can be present.

But the big thing that you find in doing this I think and working from a home environment office is that a lot of the work that you're doing can be done from your home office environment. *So then you have a longer span of time that you can work at it. I mean if I chose to do some personal things today, this afternoon then I can work at my contract work tonight.* (Participant 4)

#### Greater identification with work.

Therefore, the participants narratives clearly indicated that the independent worker has an inherent control and flexibility over their working life. They are more able to tailor their work to achieve greater congruence with their salient needs. This increased congruence can stimulate a stronger sense of identification with working as a life role. In terms of control over work content and direction, the independent worker can mould their working role to achieve greater cognitive consistency between the perceptions of working and self. Conditions exist to create a more direct and personal relationship with their labour. The tendency was that participants exercised this control to focus more on the intrinsic rewards of work. They tended to pursue projects that were perceived to have a value in of themselves, rather than the projects that would be undertaken more as a means

to an end. This intrinsic need satisfaction appeared to develop greater psychological identification with work, resulting in work being valued more centrally in their lives.

I do not take boring assignments. I may do some boring or less interesting things within an assignment, *but I rarely do entire assignments that are boring or "not right for me"*. (Participant 3)

It strongly emerged from participants that it is not only the freedom and ability to control work content that can provide a greater identification with working as an independent. Participants indicated a strong identification with the ability to work to a schedule and pattern which is largely self-determined. To a large extent, this could be viewed as identification with the lifestyle that this facilitates.

I might have to work like that, but I would rather trade the impulsive task management and swim and Tuesday afternoon sail, for working 6 hours on a Saturday. *In other words I construct my work patterns precisely the way I construct it.* (Participant 1)

Greater identification with work can lead to greater involvement with working.

The Meaning of Work International Research Team (1987) defined work involvement as an affective response to working as a part of one's life. It may include behavioural elements in terms of work duration. Identification and involvement are seen as mutually reinforcing. With the increased potential for cognitive consistency between perceptions of work and perceptions of self, it is unsurprising that this translated into participants indicating a positive affective response to their work. This again relates to the ownership of personal labour. Independents have both the opportunities to pursue work

that satisfies salient needs, and the opportunity to complete the work to a very personal work pattern.

***Work is vitally important. I love to work, and love to work when I want to, so working independently is ideal.*** (Participant 3)

There is a clear and direct connection between personal work and personal agendas. Participants indicated high levels of emotional investment in their work, which is often missing for the majority of jobbed employees. If the work is devoid of enjoyment and satisfaction, they can steer themselves away from that type of project in the future.

***I think it's....I believe that people should do what they love doing and if you're not doing it, you're getting short changed and sometimes the cost of doing what you love to do is that you have to take a fair amount of risk to discover it....I mean you get into the classroom and I can never believe that people pay me to do it...So I think the value isn't so much the financial stuff, it's just when people say it makes a difference.*** (Participant 5)

If one considers the pervasive attitudes to working in the industrial era, the overwhelming tendency has been a degree of dissatisfaction. Evidence from participants would suggest that the re-emergence of a true personal work ethic is a real possibility. For many years, the separation between individuals and their labour has frequently led to a decreased emotional investment in work, which in turn has weakened personal work standards. In simple terms, “their heart is not in it?”

***you just go and you do and it's kind of a mindless robotron type of activity.***  
(Participant 3)

***...because I actually find organisational life to be de-motivating with reference to the quality of....I found it to be de-motivating with reference to the quality of***

***my work. Because what were the signals or impressions? Do it right or do it wrong? Doesn't matter much.*** (Participant 1)

Certain realities became apparent from the narratives regarding the nature of independent work. Reputation is central, and the need for high quality standards would seem to stimulate a more disciplined, almost 'craftsman' like work ethic. Vroom (1962) emphasised that with higher autonomy and control, there is higher ego involvement, which in turn increases work involvement.

***You are the product and you are only as good as your last piece of work....You become obsessive about the quality of your work. There is no co worker or boss layer to hide behind.*** (Participant 1)

Therefore, there is more pride taken in personal work, and a natural extension of this is a greater sense of personal achievement. One's contribution is not lost, as is often the case in a large organisation. The impact and contribution of an individual's work is more direct and clear, which can further stimulate involvement with work.

**Researcher:** Do you feel an emotional involvement with your work?

***Of course I am involved emotionally with my work, since these are my own companies, so I want them to be successful.....One is more involved working as an independent in the feelings of responsibility and accomplishments, I think.***

These feelings of accomplishment are accentuated by the standard project nature of independent work, with its specifically defined tasks and deadlines. Participant four found this to be the case in comparison with his years in government.

*Because I think there's more sense of accomplishment in this type of environment than there was before.....I don't know...just a sense I think that I have but I think that...it's project-oriented work, project-oriented work usually has a beginning, an execution stage and an end where you finish the thing and once you finish a project you say well it's done. It was either a good job or a terrible job and you learn something from it, but so that gives you a sense of accomplishment I think more so than having to deal with ongoing administration or management, on a day-to-day basis and maybe well I think the results are less obvious. (Participant 4)*

It is perhaps a logical and natural extension of this high work involvement, that the participants exhibited a significant degree of spillover of their work into other life spheres (Wilensky,1960). Participants all exhibited a high degree of involvement and identification with their work, which led to a tendency for it to permeate into other spheres. As a greater connection between self and the work role develops, work can become fused with other life spheres.

*There's a bit... it's not clear where the work ends, the learning starts, where the learning stops and the relaxation starts. (Participant 6)*

Moreover, whereas traditionally work is relatively fixed geographically and temporally, the independent can use the inherent fluidity to accommodate more than one life role concurrently. Therefore, rather than an either or scenario, the independent is able to mould their work to meet the needs of non-work life spheres. Without any clear segmentation between roles, it becomes difficult to determine centrality of life roles.

**Researcher:** Would you take a traditional vacation?

Well, yes we take traditional vacations. We also often take the children along to wherever we're going in Africa with these (international organisation) contracts, so we take a lot of vacation actually. *I mean often it's work-related...*(Participant 2)

Participant one used the farmer analogy to describe the involvement with working. Compare the following narrative with traditional attitudes to work. Whereas many workers in the traditional jobbed environment seek their satisfying interactions outside of work in their leisure, participant one is connected with work while at leisure.

***Are you a farmer by nature or are you not? I am a farmer by nature even when I'm at leisure I'm constantly fascinated with the business opportunities ...And I find it a fascinating, endless puzzle so I'm never off duty in that regard.*** (Participant 1)

What can emerge is that there is such cognitive consistency between self and the working self, that self-identification can be almost wholly related to work. Work becomes so personal with such a high degree of ego involvement, it can take over.

***You can run the danger of becoming your work i.e. the workaholic track.***  
(Participant 1)

**Long term commitment to working.**

With independent work, the length of the working life becomes a completely personal decision. Reference has been made to the evidence of greater psychological identification and stronger positive affective responses to working as a life role for the independent. Work centrality theory (MOW International Research Team, 1986) would suggest that these factors would translate into a stronger commitment to keep working,

regardless of economic need. A greater level of commitment to working as an activity, can be taken as evidence of a greater centrality of work.

Participants' narratives strongly supported this hypothesis. There was a strong commitment to working longer term, largely because of the potential of work to continue to satisfy salient intrinsic needs. It became clear that participants valued the actual process of working. An interesting observation is that almost all participants indicated that they would still like to work, but on more socially fulfilling tasks. Once the need to work for money is removed, working for the general good emerged strongly.

*But I would still work and what would I be doing? I'd probably....the mix would probably shift.....I'd probably be doing a lot more with every it as much passion and every bit as much fascination and every bit as much determination I would be doing project work but suddenly a lot less of it would be paying me..*  
(Participant 1)

'The lottery question' is frequently used in work centrality studies, in order to separate the importance of work from its economic significance. It became clear from participants commitment to work, that they viewed work as an end in itself, and not as a means to an end.

**Researcher:** say if you win the lottery tomorrow and you wouldn't have to work, would you?

*Oh I'd absolutely work.....Yeah, I'd just work differently.....I would probably...I always wanted to be a philanthropist in terms of setting up some kind of....I'd probably work with training people who couldn't get trained otherwise or organizations who couldn't fund training.* (Participant 5)

In traditional job environments, you have 'one egg in the basket.' Once an individual has completed their job term, in the sense of reaching a certain age,

work is removed as a life sphere and leisure dominates, whether this is desired or not. A key point is that the independent portfolio worker has, as the name would imply, a number of different working activities and projects. Within the portfolio, there will be work items that are viewed more as a means to an end, and others that are viewed more as ends in themselves. Therefore, at a certain stage, it becomes not a question of working or not working, but rather, which elements of the working portfolio to concentrate on.

*I'd probably continue some of my work involvement's...I feel like there are contracts I would just say no to... I would probably drop a lot of them, but not all of them.....Training, most of them would be training ones so it's work that I feel like I'm doing because it helps pay the bills. I don't find it distasteful, but on the other hand, given the choice, I would spend my time reading or whatever. (Participant 6)*

In short, independent workers are perhaps more committed to work in the longer term, because work has very different and probably more positive meanings and implications, than would be prevalent in a traditional job environment. In addition, a critical factor in the commitment to working is that there is no organisation determining the duration of your working life.

**Researcher:** To what extent are you committed to continue working in the longer term?

*I'll die working and love every minute....this is my character.*

**Researcher:** How does working as an independent affect this?

*No one can retire me. (Participant 3)*

## Dystopian Elements of Independent Work can Mediate the Value Component

### Control over work content.

This ability to exercise control over the nature and content of work is often compromised by the economic realities that dictate that only very few people are able to pursue wholly self-actualising work. People must eat to survive, and the opportunity for agricultural subsistence in modern economies is almost non-existent. Therefore paid work is the requirement. In fact, the MOW International Research Team (1987) found that the income-producing function of working is perceived as the most important function by the labour force in every country of an international study. One cannot expect therefore to separate the economic meaning of work from higher order meanings. Unfortunately, this means that the nature of work activity is bounded by financial need.

Participants' narratives indicated that they are more able to choose work that is more a means in and of itself, servicing intrinsic needs, as opposed to a path of instrumental work. However, it was apparent that although there is greater opportunity to pursue more self-fulfilling work, this opportunity is constantly mediated by shorter-term financial need. As a direct result of this, it is inevitable that work is to some extent a means to an end. There appears to be the situation whereby, because the individual has the ability to choose what work to pursue, there is the automatic presumption that they control the whole equation. However, in reality, the market for an individual's services can be incredibly unpredictable and difficult to manage.

David Foot (1996) described the independent worker who follows the transitory career path, which frequently necessitates the adoption of whatever occupation is necessary to get work. The individual could be hired to work on a temporary project, or be a member of a virtual organisation, consisting of different specialists. This individual would offer a range of services within a broad speciality. For transitory workers, the only constant is change. The ability to choose more intrinsically motivating work is constantly mediated by what the market requires and personal cash flow requirements.

*....it's a little bit like the artist who says well I would really rather do fine china but the only thing the market will pay me for is this crude, crappy porcelain stuff that I whip up and I think that a lot of that is true. (Participant 1)*

Simple economics dictates that only financial independence can free the individual to discard instrumental work, and pursue more self-actualising work. Like any aspiring actor, the portfolio working independent is able to work in the near term on instrumental work, in order to allow the continuing pursuit of intrinsically satisfying work further down the track.

A key point to note is that currently, the nature of employment is still dominated by jobs. This would suggest that although the numbers are growing rapidly, there is yet to be a large volume of independents seeking projects and contracts in the contingent world outside of the organizations. This obviously has significant implications for the competitiveness of the market. The more competitive the market, the more difficult it becomes to establish a strong base, from which an individual can dictate their own work. A highly competitive market would further inhibit the ability to pursue more self-

actualising work, mediating the element of control and choice. Participant three uses the prostitute metaphor to emphasise that at times of scarce work and real financial need, the ability to be selective over the nature of work you would prefer to do is effectively removed.

*Oh I've been a prostitute for money, there's no question about that....the bank account's drained, the cards are up to their limit, and all this kind of stuff, it's an uphill battle. (Participant 3).*

One individual's narrative referred to the independent being able to steer oneself toward the type of work that is desired. The reality appears to be that the degree to which you can steer toward more desirable work, is constantly determined by market position. The more established one becomes, the more one is able to exercise a greater level of choice over the type of work undertaken. However, all participants were very successful people, and even within the longer-term market success, there remains a constant shifting on a short-term basis, whereby the individual steers for a while, and then the market steers. Market position at any given point will to a large extent dictate the nature of an individual's portfolio, in terms of the comparative amounts of instrumental work and intrinsically motivated work.

*And as I've said to \_\_\_\_ I keep getting pulled back into these marketing planning things, as I've said to \_\_\_\_ the truth of the matter is that my life to marketing is the same as the life of a plumber to plumbing. It's my trade, I've done it for a long time and it bores the shit out of me, it really does. (Participant 1)*

The ability to control the positioning of work.

The more utopian section of this discussion highlighted the ability of independent workers to position work relative to other life roles as dictated by personal needs. Work can be tailored or moulded around the requirements of other life roles. However, narratives suggested that this ability to position work is once again heavily mediated by market forces and the very nature of the single person operation.

There are numerous features of independent work that would seem to lead to a need for a greater work focus. It would almost appear that work centrality becomes almost a fundamental necessity for survival. There are several factors that determine this. Firstly, that the independent worker who operates on a contract to contract basis, is in an almost permanent state of temporary employment. Therefore, there is commonly a need to continually allocate time to search for future work, while attending to the current workload. Once work is found, the challenges of operating as a single person enterprise, are magnified by the ongoing necessity for high quality standards. Narratives of participants indicated that far from work becoming more controllable and confinable in one's life, in reality it can be even more pervasive, even more sprawling. Subsequently, it becomes very challenging to exercise the opportunity to choose a non-work life sphere and the behaviors associated with it.

*That results 7 days a week, anywhere from 14-16 hours a day, except on weekends when he might shrink to 8-10 hours. My point on this is I read this and I thought this is massively depressing and completely untrue and then I actually stood back from it and said it may be massively depressing but it is completely true. That is exactly the way I live, but I'm happy and anyone who is reading*

*this article would find it depressing beyond words, they would find it revolting.*  
(Participant 1)

Stanley Parker (1971) in his work-leisure analysis of the life space, identified five main categories of time use. Primarily there is work, which is usually identified as subsistence time or with earning a living. Secondly, work related time, which relates to work obligations such as travel and grooming. Some work related time may be intertwined with leisure, such as time spent reading newspapers and listening to music (but still in a work context). Also, there is spillover leisure, where for example an individual would read work-related material out of interest. Parker suggests that overtime and even a second job can be regarded as related to the main working time, rather than being a part of it. Thirdly, there is existence time, which involves meeting physiological needs, such as eating and sleeping. Fourthly, there are the non-work obligations, also described as semi leisure. Finally, there is leisure, which tends to be viewed as free or discretionary time.

What becomes interesting in respect of Parker's analysis, is how this applies to the more amorphous and changeable life space of the independent. Participants' narrative seemed to suggest that in this environment, both work time and work related time can become greatly expanded, which has obvious implications for the remaining components of the life space. In terms of increased work time, independents frequently need to manage numerous work projects on an ongoing basis, which can lead to work becoming more omnipresent. Further, the independent appears to invest time over and above normal due diligence regarding work quality. Finally the nature of the home office tends to have a catalytic effect on this whole process. In terms of work related time, the definitions are a

little more imprecise. Into this category, have been included those elements which are obviously part of the work process, but which are separated from the paid element of the work. This includes the support services around the paid work role. The independent, as a single person operation, often ends up doing significant amounts of tasks that would traditionally be completed by a staff member. Furthermore, the whole issue of work search requires significant attention and energy for most, but is not a part of the paid work component.

Increased work time – multiple projects.

It was identified earlier that the potential exists for the independent to dictate the level of workflow, allowing increased control over the position of work in their lives. However, the extent to which one can control personal workflow, will be heavily dependent upon income needs. Despite the inherent flexibility to dictate workflow, a consistent income flow often requires multiple projects, which in turn makes it more difficult to compartmentalise work. It sprawls, and permeates life to a greater extreme.

*a far better way of living would be to only ever have three files at any one time that you were working on. Absolutely it would be a better way of living, but if you have a \$7,000 monthly overhead and three files over time would equate to \$3,000 a month, you're short a huge amount of money so you've got to stuff it and maybe it's 13 open files at any one time that nets you at the end of the day the \$7,000 that you need to keep going. (Participant 1)*

A traditional job, with a singular focus, in many ways allows work to be maintained in a more contained manner. Work for the independent, with multiple points of focus, can overflow in a behavioural and cognitive sense.

*when you're an entrepreneur and a self-employed person you really never do switch it off, it's like the farmer. You're driving from here to Ontario in your car and you're thinking you know those nine projects and you're moving them around in your mind. (Participant 1)*

Increased work time – the necessity for high quality standards.

Furthermore, the independent is often totally self-reliant. Success or failure of the entire operation is dependent upon their work performance. This can lead to significant time investments of time and energy to try and ensure that work produced is of sufficient quality. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) when examining the job involvement construct, looked at the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work, or the importance of work in his total self image. They operationalised job involvement as the degree to which a person's work performance affects self-esteem. Self-esteem is certainly a factor in this striving for personal work quality, as is the reality of the market, in terms of reputation. These factors contribute to the further expansion of the working hours of the independent.

*Why did I get up at 5:30 this morning and spend hours fussing over a report, which I was not paid to do...Because I think that at the end of the day all you've got is your reputation and your own sense of what is your threshold for quality? For the quality of your personal work. Is it high, is it low, do you care at all? (Participant 1)*

### Increased work time – The home office.

It became apparent that independent workers who operate in a virtual office environment, need to pay careful attention to their work style and its relationship with lifestyle. One would assume that the time and energy associated with getting to and from a physical work place, could be re-invested into other life roles, whether that be personal leisure or family for example. Narratives indicated that to a large extent the opposite is true. As has been mentioned, the average work load of the independent tends to be more expansive. With today's technologies, work is often just a phone call, fax or e-mail away. Therefore, work becomes far more accessible, physically and psychologically. The opportunity exists to continue to 'chip away' at the body of work at any hour of the day (or night).

Narratives indicated that the more people get connected, the more difficult it can become to disconnect. The boundaries between work and personal life blur, which can in turn create a lot of stress. Work becomes omnipresent, blurring home and work life.

*There are a number of physical things that are discoveries. One is I sleep less than 30 feet from this office. Convenient one would think. What I've discovered about this at-home office environment is the reverse of what I expected to discover. Most people would say wow there's no commute time, you know that's two hours back in your day. The reverse is actually true. The work-at-home office means that you work a lot longer hours if you are motivated by your work or pressured by your work. (Participant 1)*

In reality, what the home office creates is an environment that can serve as a behavioural yardstick of work centrality, because the opportunity is always there to work.

The extent to which this opportunity to work is utilised, can in many ways be seen as indicative of involvement and work centrality. In a traditional office or factory setting, an organisation's expectations and culture largely dictate work parameters. In the home office, decisions are purely personal.

*Yes. In fact it's probably a bit too easy to....I think if I was in an organisation,...if I had a separate office at five o'clock, I'd have to make sure I had the stuff for 9:00 tomorrow morning or 8:30 tomorrow morning if I was going off to meet someone whereas I can actually go and get it at 8:00 the next morning or at 9:00 at night, so it's all too easy actually to switch back into work mode as opposed to switching off it.*

Increased work related time– no more “handle it people.”

Moreover, there are inherent pressures and additional work loads associated with working as a single person operation. The individual is effectively a mini-business, with a need to pay attention to all the processes a larger business would need to attend to. There is the administration, the finances, the marketing and sales, the customer service, supplies, support services etc. etc. In a traditional organisation, the individual functions as piece of the overall process. In the independent world, the individual is the whole process.

*...there are no more "Handle it" people ...but you're probably doing four hours a day of work that somebody else used to do and nobody's paying you for that. So by definition your day expands to 12-14 hours immediately. (Participant 1)*

There is of course the opportunity for the independent to further outsource some elements of the workload, just as a large organisation would. Willingness to do this could

depend on a whole range of factors. Participant six, indicated that prime reasons were that he would prefer to involve more people, which may suggest a degree of alienation often felt by independent workers. Also, the fact that it allows specialisation on his core competencies, while getting specialists to look after different tasks. Whether work is outsourced to focus on other work, or whether it is outsourced to focus on non-work activities, can provide some indication of work centrality.

*...given lots of time I could do the bookkeeping but there are other things I would rather do and I get paid more for it than doing bookkeeping, so I'll pay someone to do the bookkeeping. But also I think I look for ways of working with other people, like just making a point of it...It's sort of a miniaturised organisation or the co-operation.*  
(Participant 6)

Increased work related time - The ongoing work search/ cash flow issue.

It was apparent that independent workers are faced with the major challenge of constantly finding work. This is not a concern for an employee, as work is provided, and even during slower times, an income is provided.

*In fact one of the things in organisational life is that if the contract doesn't walk in the front door, you sit and wait...that's culture for the most part. And it doesn't matter cause you're getting paid.* (Participant 3)

For the most part, the independent must continually look to generate work. This is a reality for survival. Independent workers are effectively in a constant state of temporary employment. Therefore, while working on current projects there is a need to be seeking future work.

And you could just see this person's mind going from ok. I might have to work more than I'd actually get paid for, *and I was saying yeah and the next step from that is where you don't get paid anything unless you've found a contract and somebody's willing to pay you for it....just showing up will not actually generate a pay cheque.* (Participant 6)

Work flow and cash flow management is a constant burden to freelancers. For people making the transition from full-time salaried employee to independent contractor, dealing with more irregular and often smaller incomes is a major concern. Maintaining a consistent flow of work and money may become the key task in the 'portfolio working' environment, and potentially the most stressful.

The majority of work opportunities for independents often involve a competition between contractors on the basis of proposals or bids. Working on the bids and preparing the associated proposals is time consuming, but it is not paid work. It is simply an accepted feature of the independent lifestyle.

Sometimes I know that we probably work 50-60 hours a week maybe....*That's when things are particularly busy and courses are starting or there are bids, I have to write bids for some of the contracts we get with the computer company, so when those bids have to be done that might mean more.* (Participant 2)

Even for the successful portfolio worker, maintaining a relatively consistent flow of work, is a major challenge. Independent work requires a certain selling and marketing component that can stretch already long working days.

**Researcher:** How much of your time do you think you spend looking for future work compared to actually working on current projects?

I'm trying to think...I actually know that...from the past, but I don't know the current amount. *Maybe...ten or fifteen percent of my time maybe would be actively looking for work...* (Participant 6)

This figure will vary considerably from person to person, and it is largely dependent upon their market position at any given point in time. Some individuals enjoy the significant advantage of having reliable sources of contract work. Having a consistent source of work, greatly decreases the need for significant time investments in work search.

*Yeah, and getting used to the whole contract thing.* Luckily I was always working with scientists that I had been working with at the Bedford Institute so...there was already a good rapport developed and they knew me and my background too, *so it wasn't like going knocking on doors asking for work.* (Participant 2)

Several participants made reference to the fact that in the earlier days, when they were trying to establish themselves, the reality became greater work search time and less time involving actual paid labour. The establishment of a reputation increases the two-way flow of work, in the sense that work is coming in as well as being sought out. The incoming flow of work creates more of a decision making environment, which in turn can more accurately reflect work centrality.

**Researcher:** what proportion of your time in general is taken looking for future work as opposed to working on current work?

*You go through different cycles....when I first started when I moved here it was eight hours a day while people were in business and there was other stuff you did in the evenings, actually making contacts, getting on the phone, meeting people through the day and there was organising notes on an every day basis...there was just months and*

***months of solid...then as one gains a certain amount of notoriety and credibility more stuff starts, they start to call you....*** (Participant 3)

With the necessity for increased work-related time for work search, the time available for non-work inevitably gets squeezed. By some definitions, the time between work has been defined in terms of physiological time, obligations or semi-leisure, and discretionary time or leisure (Parker, 1971). Non-work spheres have been traditionally confined to residual time after work, which has occupied a standard slot of evenings, weekends and vacations. However, many boundaries between work and non-work are evolving away from a simple dichotomy of work and leisure to more complex and fragmented arrangements. It was apparent from the narratives, that the nature of leisure undergoes a fundamental change in this new working environment.

Acknowledging the increased work time and increased work related time, it would be anticipated that discretionary or leisure time would be squeezed. Primarily, reference has been made to the frequently large fluctuations in workflow patterns experienced by independents.

***It's always been there, you just...it's kind of like...there's time where there's absolute feast and there are times when there are absolute famines.*** (Participant 5)

Bridges (1994) argues that without the job in the traditional sense, time off from work becomes not something taken out of job time but something that occurs in larger segments between projects, or during the 'famines.'. However, time between projects for the independent is rarely viewed as simply non-work time.

***Well, you sort of take it off, but it's like you're off, but you're not really off.***  
(Participant 5)

In reality, rather than time between projects being viewed as leisure, it is often viewed as a period of unemployment. Leisure is usually seen as the antithesis of work, so that if you do not have work, then you do not have leisure either. Therefore to say the unemployed have ample leisure time would be an inaccurate statement. What tends to happen, is that time between projects does not become perceived as discretionary time. Rather this time may need to be absorbed by work related time, for marketing and work search purposes.

***I've had months where I had \$7,000 of expenses and no money. I'm two weeks away from those expenses and I have no money and I'm sitting here, so it would be a great idea to take a few days off, right go golfing, I think that's a pretty courageous person who would do that. And then the other flip side of it is that when you're having a good run, three or four months *and you say wow I've got some cash built up well maybe I should go golfing, well wait a minute maybe that cash will go away, maybe my lucky streak will turn to bad times.....Keep it going, keep looking for more business.**** (Participant 1)

How the individual deals with the "famines" is effectively a combination of several factors. Work centrality, personality, and current financial needs appear to be key dimensions, but there are numerous other variables. In terms of work centrality, the choice to pursue additional work, even when economic circumstances do not necessitate additional work, can provide some indication of work centrality.

Well the business that I'm in, traditionally the business used to slow down in the summer time and it slows down at Christmas too, there's not a huge, huge going...***mind you I don't go hunting that hard either.....Well I love that to happen***, in other words I want some of these down times, because I could hustle a lot more, I could market a lot more and I could make a lot more money, but ***to me***

***at this point, it's hard enough to get some spare time so I don't.....I pace myself in that respect.*** (Participant 3)

The critical point remains however, that for the independent worker, non-work time may be absorbed by work-related time, because of the ongoing state of temporary employment. Under certain circumstances, time off from work may lose its purpose as recreation, to be replaced by a work search function. Some individuals are more able to resist the temptation to use non-work time as work search time, but there is some degree of need for all.

***but still I go through some dips and valleys...because you don't market enough and you end up in a hole and then you really scramble and you market and you get really, really busy and then you don't have enough time to market, that's the cycle.*** (Participant 3)

#### Summary: Value Component of Work Centrality

Work is facing a paradigm shift. There is the potential for significant discontinuity as the economy increasingly takes the job outside of the organisation. As a direct result of this development, individuals are able to take greater ownership of their work, and exert an unprecedented degree of control over when and how work is done. It has been shown how this control and flexibility can lead to greater identification with working, and greater involvement and commitment to work as a life role. In short, for these participants, work is an 'internal' activity to be highly valued rather than 'external' activity to be tolerated for its economic benefit. Work therefore becomes a more preferred life sphere, more of a central life interest (Dubin, 1956).

Acknowledging this possibility, the independent work environment presents unique challenges to the individual. It has been highlighted how the specific demands of the single person operation in terms of greatly increased time and energy investments, is exacerbated by the ongoing challenges presented by the marketplace for the independent's services. These factors can significantly undermine the ability of the independent worker to achieve congruency with salient needs. As participant one proposed, the sense of control can be very subjective, and in reality the independent frequently has less control over their working life, than the traditional jobbed employee.

With a reduced sense of control, the connection between the individual and their work can be severely weakened. In turn, it could be assumed that the degree of identification, involvement and commitment to working as a life role would be diminished, forcing work and its associated behaviors into a more peripheral position in the individual's value system. However, the critical factor is that despite all the challenges and obstacles that can undermine the control element, it remains an inherent feature of this form of working. This feature effectively sustains the cognitive consistency between working and self, and in turn sustains the individual's valuation of work as a meaningful life role.

*I loved the sense of control I had over...although it's pure perception, because in practical objective terms you have less control...So it's a little bit perverse, it's a little bit unrealistic, it's massively subjective, this whole concept of me controlling my world... I think I'm controlling my world because I ultimately have the ability to say yes or no to any of this... other observers looking in would say here's a guy who's working himself to death... (Participant 1).*

## The Decision Component of Work Centrality

### Sphere preference component.

It has been mentioned that, in terms of the decision-making component of work centrality, it needs to be recognised that life experience is segmented into different sub-spheres or life roles, such as work, family, community, leisure or friends. These sub-spheres and the associated behaviors are preferred differentially. The decision component relates to these sub-spheres, and has itself, two elements. The first element relates to sphere preference, in terms of the significance attached to behaviors that take place in particular life spheres. Self-identification will be closely related to sphere preference, and therefore this element of the decision-making component is closely linked to the value component. The discussion regarding the value component indicated the potential for increased identification, involvement and commitment to work. Subsequently, it would be anticipated that work would become a more preferred life sphere in the decision-making context.

Therefore, the decision process regarding the relative importance of work will be largely determined by an underlying value system, which has been moulded by the socialization process, and ongoing personal experiences with work. Several participants were able to verbalise their value system very specifically, indicating the relative 'big picture' importance of each role to the individual.

***Well I think it's... it's pretty important, it's the bottom line, I think it's where I spend....my family and then work and then friends, social stuff would probably be the order there. (Participant 6)***

It began to emerge that although work frequently becomes a more preferred life role in the independent work environment, this wasn't reflected by any dramatic alteration of the relative position of work in the value hierarchy of participants. Participant two indicated that work, although valued highly, does not take precedence over family, social interaction or community involvement.

*Yes, I think I'm very work oriented, I like to work, I get a lot of satisfaction when things work well, but I don't see it as more important than my family or friends, or volunteer work. I usually....if I'm doing volunteer work I leave work that I know about to go and do volunteer work because I'm really quite interested in what I'm volunteering in so I think....(Participant 2)*

Friedlander (cited in Kelly, 1990) examined the issue of the central life interest, first proposed by Dubin (1956). Friedlander indicated that the family and leisure aspects of non-work should be regarded separately. He viewed family as a primary group and leisure should be viewed on a different, more secondary level. Seen in this light leisure is the true competitor of work for the individual's main source of satisfying interactions. Therefore, perhaps in respect of evaluations of work centrality, the key indication would be decisions made regarding the allocation of time to work or leisure. Noticeably, work and its associated behaviors did consistently predominate over leisure and its associated behaviors. For participant three, religion, family and work all predominated over personal time (perceived as personal leisure time) in his value hierarchy.

*...cause at the end of the day is what's important? I've always said that...there's work...for me I have a hierarchy...my values.....one is God comes first, family comes second, work comes third.....that's always been my....so if I have to compromise my religious principles or my faith and belief in God to do anything, then I won't do it. Secondly if I have to give up my family, or compromise my family in some way, then ah ah, then work. So work is third on the list..... Ah yeah the personal time came fourth....but that's a little bit my personality....I'll usually suffocate my own needs to take care of the needs of others around me. And a piece of advice I'd probably give myself is you know building a little bit more on that. (Participant 3)*

Dubin proposed that individuals in western society would not find work and the workplace, an overall central life interest (CLI). The construct, CLI, being operationally defined as 'an expressed preference for a given locale or situation in carrying out an activity.' Dubin looked at work involvement as a Central Life Interest. A job involved person is one who considers work to be the most important part of their lives and engages in it as an end in itself. Participant one, had communicated on numerous occasions the high level of identification, involvement and commitment he has with the work role. However, this did not position work as his central life interest.

**Researcher:** Do you find....you mentioned that (his wife) had said a few things about work dominating your life...would you say that work is your central life interest?

*Oh no...god no. I think...that's a little bit unkind. (Participant 1)*

Therefore, it can be deduced that although work becomes a more preferred life sphere, this tends to be represented in terms of greater centrality relative to the personal leisure sphere. It is implicit that Dubin's work was done in reference to the traditional employment scenario of organisational jobs. In the autonomous, more intrinsically

motivated, and flexible world of the independent, work is elevated in its relative importance to leisure. However, participants' narratives suggested that work does not come to override family in particular. This may relate to the inherent element of instrumentality associated with the majority of paid labour.

This certainly would appear to support Friedlander's assertion that, seen in this light, leisure is the true competitor of work for the individual's main source of satisfying interactions.

The actual choice element of the decision-making component.

The second element of the decision making component is the actual choice element, in terms of the extent to which the individual actually chooses the preferred life sphere and the associated behaviors. The Meaning of Work International Research Team, suggested that involvement with work may be inferred from behavioural measures, mainly in terms of the number of hours spent working. Although involvement may partially explain the behavioural element, it understates the control element of traditional employment. In a job scenario, the division between wanting to work additional hours, and 'having to' is not a clear one.

In many ways, there are features of independent home working that can act as indicators of involvement. Acknowledging that an independent worker is more able to dictate the level of work activity, how the individual utilises this opportunity and freedom, can provide a clearer and more reliable behavioural indication of involvement with work, and subsequently, work centrality. Reference has been made to this on two planes. In terms of the control over work volumes, and the day to day positioning of work

relative to other life roles. What may emerge is a scenario where an individual's working life is a more accurate reflection of their value hierarchies with respect to life roles.

**But you know on Wednesday I spent the day with my daughters and didn't do any work and so that's a choice that I could actually make that I couldn't make in a lot of other situations, so I actually think I add some stress, it seems great, but it adds stress *cause you have to figure all this stuff out from as if you're starting with a blank slate, instead of having someone jump in and say well do this, do that, have lunch roughly at this time.* (Participant 6)**

It is precisely this 'blank slate' that may provide the key behavioural insights into the work centrality of individuals. The key point is that although most people have a clear concept of the importance of work relative to other roles in their lives, traditional employment scenarios have effectively prevented individuals from mirroring their value hierarchies. Unfortunately, the majority of organisational jobs dictate the position of work in a person's life. There is little true decision making component, in respect of personal values. Blauner (1964) proposed that work is often central in terms of time and energy, but not in terms of personal values. There was evidence from this research, that this new way of working with greater flexibility and control allows the individual to utilise their 'blank slate' to achieve greater congruence between value hierarchies and actual work behaviour patterns.

As has been outlined, in the world of the independent, how and where work is done, becomes far more amorphous, as individuals dictate their own personal patterns. Participants indicated that once the traditional barriers and segmentation between life roles is removed, a fusion effect inevitably occurs. Work no longer occupies a specific time slot, around which family, friends, leisure and community roles are organised.

Rather, life roles become more inter-woven, and less segregated. As work continues to move outside of organizations and back into homes and communities, further fusion can be anticipated in society. This fusion provides the opportunity and authority to make choices on an ongoing basis regarding life role priorities.

An individual can focus more time on work, family, leisure, religion, friends or community. The frequency with which, or the willingness to exercise this opportunity for a particular role, can give key insight into true role centrality. Subsequently, this work format can present a more transparent view of an individual's true work centrality. Family and community interactions for example, have had to 'live' in the residual time before and after work, regardless of specific requirements these roles may have demanded during work hours. In this environment, participant two highlighted how she is able to allocate time according to need rather than at an available hour of the day.

*I'm saying all these things so you see that it depends whatever happens on that day, so if there's a problem with one of our immigrant friends like yesterday, she had to move one of our friends, one of our friends had to move so we spent all afternoon to get the people and get the truck and organising. So, maybe if I tried to say a typical day I might work from 9:30-1 or 2 - go out and do a visit or two, business or.....then I'd come back and work maybe till 3:30 or 4 when the kids come home, when my son comes home he usually plays piano and I come down and sit while he plays the piano, and then I get supper and then I usually work just doing paper stuff maybe two hours in the evening. (Participant 2)*

Therefore, the independent is able to control how, when and where they do their work. From the perspective of a different role, this control creates the opportunity to greatly affect the time allocated to particular life spheres. The frequency, with which this opportunity is exercised, can give key insight into true role centrality. For example, in

terms of personal leisure, there is scope to greatly increase personal leisure time, and the extent to which this opportunity is utilised can provide an indication of leisure centrality.

*and I remember riding on a Tuesday afternoon with this actor friend of mine saying there is no amount of money in the world that could ever replace my ability to spontaneously go sailing with you on a Tuesday afternoon when everybody else, many people with many, many, many times more money than I will ever have in my life, who absolutely must be in their three-piece suit in their office this Tuesday afternoon and I am sailing because I chose to do that.*  
(Participant 1)

What may occur therefore, is not necessarily any significant change in the centrality of life roles, but that the relative importance of each role can be met with an appropriate behavioural response. Dubin (1956) developed the 'central life interest' (CLI) construct. Dubin proposed that individuals in western society would not find work and the workplace, an overall central life interest. However, in the independent working scenario, narratives indicated the significant potential to enjoy work as a means in and of itself. Therefore, with a greater work centrality, the general notion of multiple role theorists would be that the greater commitment to the work role would result in role strains or even role overload (Mannheim & Schiffrin, 1984). When role overload occurs, coping may necessitate a reduction in the centrality of certain roles and adaptations in the others.

However, a key observation was that the inherent flexibility to shape work to meet individual agendas, can greatly decrease role strains. Different life roles are more able to co-exist, when the hard edges of enforced time structures are removed.

***I don't find that causes...I'm not constantly trying to juggle and wonder how I'll get it all done...there's.....it just balances out, sometimes I work less in the week and do more social things and volunteer stuff...and then maybe if that happens on the weekend I spend a full eight hours in the office getting all the papers solved and getting the banking ready and you know looking at bank statements and things like that. (Participant 2)***

Individuals are fortunate to have the potential for rich and satisfying interactions in several spheres, including work. Rather than viewing an individual as having high work centrality, high family centrality or high leisure centrality, it became apparent that it is possible to reflect the importance of each, facilitated by the fluidity of working as an independent. Participant one provided an excellent metaphor, for how this operates.

***the best metaphor I can think of is the farmer metaphor. Which is that there's always work to do, seven days a week and there's always little opportunities for relaxation within that work environment. This whole notion that human beings segment work and recreation and draw this massive, this curtain crashes down between the two so that we work, work, work, so that we can relax and then over here we can't think of working, just relax, relax, relax I mean that's basically a construct of the last 100 years of human life. (Participant 1)***

Participant three made a similar point. The independent is frequently able to intersperse their work with “little opportunities” or “little snippets” of time and energy for other life roles. This is especially true from the home office environment that can allow greater family interactions, which would be mostly unavailable in a traditional workplace.

I find that home I can work, close the doors and....but then I can be in and out, when the kids come home for lunch and I can interact with my wife, and people come through the office or whatever kids will sometimes come in and sometimes litter up and I'll boot them out and sometimes they'll sit and chat for a little bit, and my oldest son will come in and he'll sit down and chat and I'll stop what I'm doing. ***So you can connect with people in little snippets and you also see the***

*fabric of the day moving by versus when you come to an office building, you check out and this is it, this is all you see when you go home, you have no idea what's been going on and it's completely separated and divorced. And it's harder that way, much harder.....Yeah, it's hard to connect, like you're either here or you're there...but when you're at home you can do both.* (Participant 3)

A key point of interest occurred when it became apparent that the opportunity provided to behaviourally exhibit the relative importance of other spheres, directly feeds the levels of identification and involvement with work as a life role. Therefore, paradoxically, work becomes a more preferred life sphere because it provides the opportunity to focus on alternative preferred life spheres. Independent work is not seen as an obstacle to fulfilment in other life roles, but rather it is seen as somewhat of a gateway. This was clearly illustrated by participant two.

*generally working independently is also a large part of my identity, since I can do whatever I feel like in my volunteer or social life any day I feel, without worrying about work-time off.* (Participant 2)

Similarly, participant one describes a scenario where he is able to enjoy opportunities for family and leisure interactions, because of his ability to construct his working patterns. This in turn, reinforces his identification and involvement with working in this way.

*So I'm enormously lucky in that regard I think, but again I'm choosing to construct my work and my working life according to my definition of it* (Participant 1).

Therefore, to re-iterate, the decision-making component of work centrality has two elements. The preference for a particular life sphere and its associated behaviors, and

the extent to which the individual actually chooses preferred life spheres. Handy (1989) made reference to the opportunity in the new work environment to shape work to the way we live rather than our lives to fit our work. While this may be true for a proportion of independent workers, there are certain realities that can preclude this. In many ways, this is not a free decision scenario. Regardless of value centrality, as Blauner (1964) suggested, work occupies a central position in terms of time and energy. This is frequently, in large measure, an economic reality that challenges the reality of the 'blank slate' approach to role centrality. There is of course, by its very nature, a degree of instrumentality to all paid labour.

*I think money is the master in the sense that at the end of the day money is what you put on the counter in Sobeys. That's a given whether you're the prisoner of a bureaucratic job or whether you're the prisoner of an independent life, that's at the end of the day what it is. O.K. fine. Now how you choose to work is the next dimension and my choice will always be independent work. (Participant 1)*

This is certainly of greater significance in an independent work environment. It was clearly apparent from participants' narratives that 'earning the daily bread' requires more significant investments of time and energy than would be necessary in the traditional job environment. Reasons for this were discussed previously, including the need for high quality standards, the multiple projects, the effects of the home office, the need for ongoing work search, and the realities of being a one-person operation.

**Researcher:** Are there any elements of a traditional job that appeal to you?

*Oh yeah, when it gets crazy and you work the day shift and then you work the night shift, and you work 7 days flat for months, upon months, upon months,*

***doing that kind of stuff, you begin to say gee I remember when I used to work 6 hours a day and within that 6 hours a day there was a good slice of it drinking coffee and chatting and hanging over ...yeah I often think what a holiday that was. (Participant 3)***

As a direct result of the sprawling nature of work in the independent work environment, there is perhaps a tendency to overstate work centrality from a behavioural perspective. Narratives have demonstrated how independent work can be a more preferred life sphere with a higher degree of involvement, due to the perception of ownership and the more direct connection between the independent and the product of their labour. Even so, it can be argued that the nature of work in the independent environment can distort the true desired balance between life spheres. Consider the role strains described by participant one. The degree of time occupied by the work role could be viewed as an indicator of work involvement and centrality.

***It's just a finding in my life that working at home has created a natural tendency to work longer hours which is reverse which I thought it would, and the other part of it is that it requires a lot of thoughtful work to try to keep that in balance with family life, with other pressures. For example, my wife has told me recently, all you ever do is work, that's all you ever do. And in large measure I think she's probably right, it's too easy to walk by the door and say I'll just check the e-mail and when you're an entrepreneur and a self-employed person you really never do switch it off, it's like the farmer. (Participant 1)***

However, these outcomes are not consistent with value hierarchies, in terms of the relative preference of life roles. Rather, the challenging demands of the independent work role can necessitate a higher work focus, which can make the balance between different life roles very difficult.

**Researcher:** How would work compare in terms of being a preferred life role? Where would you most like to spend your time given a choice?

I'd most like to spend my time on a *50/50 mix of family related activity and business projects of interest*....its a battle to keep the balance. People with pay checks get paid holidays, even 6 weeks in Europe...*so they get the family opportunity in their salary*. I am more like a farmer. There is work to do every day to stay alive, but its still my preference. (Participant 1)

It is questionable therefore, whether the independent worker is able to consistently de-prioritise work to make way for family, leisure, or any other non-work sphere. Narratives would suggest that this would tend to be more the exception than the rule. There remain strong requirements for commitment and responsibility, to clients and the market as a whole.

So when I finally did get back to my office at 2:30, instead of going working I actually picked up my gym gear and went to the gym.....Said what the hell! .....*Every now and then, but it doesn't happen that often. It's a direct result of how many customer pressures do I have on me. If I have a whole huge whack of customer pressures on me, no it would be irresponsible and I wouldn't....I'd end up with a bad reputation as a sloucher*. (Participant 3)

Although in overall terms, work is a preferred life role, some of the behaviors associated with it are less preferred. It is proposed that these less preferred behaviors are the more instrumental elements, where work behaviour is focused on the financial outcome, rather than the inherent value of the work itself. It is the instrumental component of work that can preclude true representation of value hierarchies, in terms of relative preference for different life spheres and their associated behaviors. If work is pursued for purely instrumental reasons, it can be assumed that it is peripheral to the individual. In behavioural terms, long hours spent working for instrumental reasons will

not provide an accurate behavioural representation of true work centrality. Instrumental work denies the individual the opportunity to achieve the desired balance in their life roles. Work in itself may be a more preferred life role, but this is likely only if this work is intrinsically motivated as opposed to a means to an end.

Independent work can afford the individual the flexibility to take advantage of more leisure time or more family time, but commonly, this is only when the demands of the work role are not excessive. The key again appears to be market position and financial need, which in turn dictate the degree of control over the demands of the work role. Where the real measure of work centrality can be determined is once financial need has been reduced, or where market position is reliably strong. Only then will the real element of choice emerge, regarding the relative preference for the work role.

Then as one gains a certain amount of notoriety and credibility more stuff starts, they start to call you...

**Researcher:** That's a critical point?

There's a critical point where yeah there's.....and then you can start.....*you have two choices at that point, you can back off on the marketing you do and enjoy and spend time doing some other things, and you can just take the time off if you wanted, or you can market more.* (Participant 3)

### Summary: Decision Component of Work Centrality

Decisions regarding the positioning of work, have to be made in consideration of both sphere preference, the ability to actually choose preferred life spheres, and the varying demands of the various life roles. The inherent flexibility in the independent work realm does appear to facilitate greater opportunities to reflect preferred life spheres in a behavioural sense. Certainly, to a greater extent than would be possible in a standard organisational job scenario. In terms of sphere preference, participants' narratives indicated that work became a more preferred life sphere, and in relative terms, work and its associated behaviors appeared to carry greater significance compared to personal leisure time. In particular, family and associated behaviors were described as a more preferred life sphere for all participants, and this work form can allow this to be reflected on a consistent basis.

In fact, the decision process would still appear to be oriented around the needs of work, whether work is more central or more peripheral to the individual. Participants' narratives indicated that the decision component is a question of examining the requirements of different life roles and making decisions accordingly. The control and flexibility of the independent can allow greater congruence with value hierarchies, but economic necessities can effectively undermine this.

*I like to look at it like a daytimer, and it is a trade off from a standpoint, you can sell all your time to your clients or you can sell all your time to your family. You go to either extreme and you're going to run into trouble. It's finding out what are the critical things I need to do for my customers, what are the critical things I need to do for my family and make sure both of those get in the book for sure, and see what you've got left over. (Participant 3)*

Participant three spoke of the decision-making scenario on a day to day basis. However, similar decisions can be made on a project to project basis. Earlier in the discussion it was highlighted how the independent is able to manage workflow according to personal needs. This creates a further decision-making environment regarding the positioning of work relative to other life roles.

*Yeah I guess the work gets a certain higher priority than some of my volunteer stuff because if somebody's paying me to do a job then I consider that it requires a higher priority. But still, I factor in the family commitments and the volunteer commitments that I've got, I factor those in trying to decide whether or not I want to take a contract or I want to take a part-time job.* (Participant 4)

The independent worker does undoubtedly have a greater degree of choice and control over how, where and when work is undertaken. Life for the independent therefore, can become more of a mosaic of role interactions, and the involvement with several roles can be reflected more appropriately in behavioural terms. Although work centrality may be high, the fluid nature of the independent working life can create conditions that can minimise role strains and role conflict. However, this ability is constantly mediated by the significant time investments required by the independent to fulfil the economic role of working.

It depends on who you're talking to, but you're asking me so I think I actually do o.k. at balancing those things, but it's definitely, *it becomes the decision that you have to make I think is the bottom line.* (Participant 6)

The healthier the 'bottom line', the more financially independent one becomes, the more the necessity for instrumental work declines. This creates a more realistic

decision scenario to determine the individual's relative preference for different life spheres. The opportunity is created to pursue work that is more intrinsically motivating, and creates less dependence on work that would normally be viewed as instrumental, or a means to an end.

**Researcher:** To what extent are you committed to continue working in the longer term?

*Always will - on projects that turn me on. The hope would be that financial independence would allow that flexibility.*

This proposition is further supported by narrative from participant two, who had clearly indicated that she was financially comfortable. The decision to continue working provides a strong indication of higher work centrality, as it is clearly valued as an end in and of itself.

*I think I have such a luxury of having plenty of work that I like to do when I want to do it, yeah I think I'm a hardworking person. Because I like it, not...you know now I think we're quite financially comfortable, it's not because we have to be working. (Participant 2)*

This emphasis on financial independence can to some extent explain the ability to position work in accordance with personal needs to a much greater extent. A weaker financial position would create a very different decision-making environment, where the demands of work would be more predominant.

### Implications for Future Research

This study specifically looked at the participant group as 'independent workers' and did not attempt to undertake analysis on further sub-divisions of this group. Even though the sample only comprised of six individuals, there were many noticeable mediating variables on work centrality, such as gender, family background, family life cycle, age, income status, industry sector, reputation and years of experience of independent work. Previous research has established relationships between work centrality and several factors including demographic and socialisation variables, such as age, sex and education (Lindsay and Knox, 1984; Mannheim, 1993; MOW International Team, 1987). However, there is a need for additional qualitative research that would examine the impact of these additional variables on work centrality in an independent work environment. Gender is perhaps most noteworthy, because of the inter-relationships of work, home and family and the associated role expectations attributed to males and females.

On a related point, it would be of interest to repeat a similar study from the perspective of the family members, with particular focus on role conflict and role strains. There were suggestions in the narratives that the participants rationalised negative family reactions to their chosen way of working.

The participants in this study have made strong reference to the positive interpretations of independent working. It was acknowledged that for the most part, the participants had made a proactive decision to work in this way, they tended to like the work format, and were all relatively successful in their own right. Increasingly however,

as independent work becomes more of a necessity as traditional jobs disappear, the typical independent worker may enter this world as a reactive step to downsizing for example, and could find it even more challenging. The change in attitudes toward working and the subsequent impact on work centrality could be significant. Further research could focus wholly on unhappy or 'struggling' independent workers, or alternatively the sample could include individuals who had worked as independents and chose to return to organisational employment.

A further potential research direction could examine the effects of ongoing socialisation experiences on work centrality. The stimulus for this proposal is that although this study focused on the participants' personal experiences of working as opposed to their socialisation experiences, it was clear that independent workers tend to congregate and interact with other independents on a professional and personal level. Inevitably therefore, there are ongoing socialisation effects occurring. An examination of the prevalent group attitudes to working and the impact on individual work centrality would be an interesting research thrust.

Finally, reference has been made to the fundamental difference between the growing number of portfolio based, independent contract workers, and the traditional small business owner. For the most part, the independents in this study are selling their time, and nothing exists as an enterprise beyond them.

It would be very interesting to examine the differences in working lifestyle and attitudes between these two groups, and the subsequent effects on work centrality.

## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Outline**

#### Preliminary information:

**Biography:** A brief overview of the subject's working life to date. With particular focus on the timing and circumstances of the transition to 'portfolio working.' In order to provide context to subsequent enquiry, there is a need to determine how the individual came to be working in this way. It is also important to determine how long the individual has been working in this way, and whether it was a pro-active or re-active decision to make the transition.

**Personal & demographic information:** For the purposes of background, data will be requested on the following; age, education, marital status, immediate family composition, and parental occupation.

#### Main question areas

Reissman (1993) expressed a preference for less structure in interview instruments, in the interest of giving greater control to the respondents. She suggested developing 5-7 broad questions about the topic of enquiry, supplemented by probe questions. These guidelines will be followed. The broad question areas are based largely

on the components of the work centrality construct identified by the Meaning of Working International Research Team (1987).

I Decision Orientation regarding preferred life spheres.

**Broad intro:** What are the main areas of your life that you divide your time between? How do you balance them?

**Probes:**

What would you say is your central life interest?

What would be your most preferred life sphere?

Where does work fit?

To what extent do your different roles conflict?

How central is work in your life - why?

Do you feel the balance between your different life spheres has changed as compared to being organizationally employed? Family, leisure, work, community - more or less central?

II Identification with work in a freelance economy: The opportunity for a self-actualized workforce?

**Broad intro:** To what extent are you able to do the type of work you want to do, and determine how you do it?

**Probes:**

How consistent is the type of work you do with your perception of what you should be doing?

How does this compare to your most recent experience of organizational employment?

How real is the autonomy and choice in your work sphere?

To what extent can you control the type of work you want to do, and how you do it?

Do you feel truly independent and in control?

How real is this potential for self-actualization?

### III The issue of a work ethic and commitment to work.

**Broad intro:** Tell me about the personal values and beliefs you hold about work, generally?

#### **Probes:**

To what extent do you have a traditional work ethic?

Has this changed since you were organisationally employed?

To what extent does your hours of work reflect an affective response to your work?

And to what extent does it represent the instrumental benefits, work provides?

How do you value time as a possession as opposed to financial rewards?

To what extent do you value other non-economic benefits of work? E.g. social, status etc.

Does this form of work satisfy these?

Given a choice, would you prefer less hours of work and less income, same hours of work & same income, more hours and more income?

If you won the lottery tomorrow and had enough money never to have to work again - would you?

IV Flexible working patterns: Implications of a 'fluid time space.'

**Broad intro:** How do you manage your working time?

**Probes:**

What is your typical work pattern?

How do you use the greater flexibility in your time?

Do you use time flexibility to allow you to accommodate other life dimensions?

How effectively can you do this?

What factors determine how you will structure your time?

Does the flexibility compensate for increased hours?

How do you manage your leisure time?

How do these compare or differ from your organizational work experiences?

How do you use your time when you are not working at full capacity? Work related activity or other spheres?

How would you take time off? Traditional sense - in a block?

V Living on a contract basis: The unique nature of 'portfolio working.'

**Broad intro:** Talk about living on a contract to contract basis? What issues does that create?

**Probes:**

How does it compare to organizational employment?

What do think about the traditional job?

Main advantages and disadvantages to both lifestyles?

What implications does contract living have for your time?

How do you deal with the irregular and unpredictable flow of work and income.

VI Unique nature of independent work, home-working and virtual work.

**Broad intro:** Working alone, at home and collaborating with people in virtual working environments, is obviously a very different working environment. What issues does it create?

**Probes:**

Talk about the time of transition to this style of work - what was your experience?

How do you find working at home?

How do you find working as essentially, a one person operation?

Talk about the role of technology in your working environment.

What are your experiences of virtual working environments? Observations? Evaluation?

How have your experiences in this working environment, affected your attitude to work in general?

Overall, would you say you find working in this way liberating or traumatic?

## **Appendix B**

### **Follow Up Questions**

Dear participant,

To assist with the clarification and refinement of conclusions, I would be very grateful if you took a little time to answer some follow up questions. Your narrative is key to this process. Please be as expansive as your time and inclination permits. If you have any questions or difficulties, please don't hesitate to contact me.

NB\* You can just reply in the body of this email message.

What are the beliefs you hold about the general importance of work in your life?

How does working as an independent affect this?

What influences do you feel have shaped these beliefs through your life?

To what extent is work an important part of your identity?

How does working as an independent affect this?

To what extent do you feel an emotional involvement with your work?

How does working as an independent affect this?

To what extent are you committed to continue working in the longer term?

How does working as an independent affect this?

If you think of other life roles, such as family, personal leisure, social, community, religion etc. How would work compare in terms of being a preferred life role? Where would you most like to spend your time given a choice.

How does working as an independent affect this?

Many thanks once again for your participation,

Paul English.

## **Appendix C**

### **Application for Human Ethics Review**

**Thesis Title:** Work centrality in the freelance economy of post-industrial society.

**Researcher:** Paul Jonathan English (95088340)

**Degree:** Master of Arts.

#### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

- In the last decade, the nature of employment has undergone a fundamental and progressive shift. A multiplicity of factors have begun to erode traditional and standard forms of work, and in its place, non-standard work is flourishing.
- Several observers, including Foot (1996), Handy (1984), Robertson (1985), Bridges (1994) and Toffler (1980) have pointed toward the emergence of a freelance economy in post-industrial society. Increasingly, individuals are expected to work as independent, self-employed service providers, rather than being employed in jobs.
- The transition from a culture dominated by organisational employees to one dominated by independent workers will naturally have a major impact on how society views the primary meaning and importance of work. In relation to this study, the critical question relates to the centrality of work in such an environment. From an individual perspective, how and where will work be positioned in a freelance economy?

- A qualitative research approach will be adopted to develop a deeper and richer understanding of individuals' perceptions and experiences in relation to work centrality in the working environment outlined. The methodological approach will be narrative analysis, which takes as the object of investigation the individual's story itself. Personal narratives will be drawn from individuals who already work by 'the rhythms of tomorrow', i.e. their working patterns already display the features of the predicted working patterns of the future.

### **PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT**

- To determine whether the changing work patterns of the post-industrial world, will lead to a fundamental re-evaluation of work's salience in society.
- The intention is to develop an explanatory model that will identify the key determining factors, decision making criteria and the decision making processes that can determine work centrality in the world of independent work.

Paul Jonathan English

6201 Allan St.

Halifax

Nova Scotia

B3L 1G7

**Supervisor:** Dr. A. Richards, School of Health and Human Performance.

### HOW THE RESEARCH INVOLVES HUMAN SUBJECTS.

- The study will involve seven individuals. The sampling methodology to be adopted is essentially a 'chain sampling' approach. Subjects will be sought through referral on the basis of the the following criteria; they are an independent knowledge worker, operating on a 'contract to contract' basis; they have been organisationally employed; Moreover, representation will be sought from the following sub-groups; it was a re-active move to work in this way (e.g. downsized); the individual made a pro-active decision to leave traditional employment to work in this way; they have found the transition liberating; they have found the transition traumatic.
- Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Individuals may refuse to answer any particular questions, and withdraw from the study at any time. The subjects will be asked to participate in in-depth interviews, lasting between one and two hours. There will be follow up contact, in the form of 'member checks' at a later date, which will take approximately one hour.
- The subjects participation in this study will be completely confidential. During the interview, I will be tape recording the discussion. After the interview is over, I will transcribe the tape recordings and will then erase them. The written transcription of the individual's interview will be identified by a research number only. The subjects name will not be used in association with this project.

**Appendix D**  
**Consent Form**

**Work centrality in the freelance economy of post-industrial society.**

Paul English

Dear Participant,

I am embarking on a research study relating to the significant changes in the nature of work and employment towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, the focus is on the rapidly expanding group of self-employed service providers, who work independently on a contract basis, often from home and in ‘virtual environments.’

The purpose of this study is to develop further understanding of how individuals like yourself, manage and position work in your life, in the context of this way of working. Broad areas of enquiry will include; how and why you position work in your life, relative to other roles; your experiences of independent work, home-working and virtual work; your experiences of living on a contract to contract basis; the implications of flexible working patterns; the issue of a work ethic and your commitment to work; the extent to which you identify with your work, and where your motivation comes from to work.

If you agree to be involved in this study, I will make an appointment with you, at your convenience, to spend one to two hours, talking to you about your work patterns,

lifestyle and working environment. I will contact you again to clarify and confirm that my interpretations of your comments are accurate from your perspective.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any particular questions, and withdraw from the study at any time.

Your participation in this study will be completely confidential. During the interview, I will be tape recording our discussion. After the interview is over, I will transcribe the tape recordings and will then erase them. The written transcription of your comments will be identified by a research number only. Your name will not be used in association with this project, unless you expressly wish it to be. The information gained from this study may be used in conference presentations, journal publications, and future research projects.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 492-1166, or email to [pjenglis@is2.dal.ca](mailto:pjenglis@is2.dal.ca). Alternatively, you can contact my academic advisor, Dr. Tony Richards at 494-1160.

Sincerely,

Paul English, Dalhousie University.

---

Declaration:

I ..... have read this consent form. I understand the nature of this study, my rights, and the researcher's expectations. I hereby consent to be a subject.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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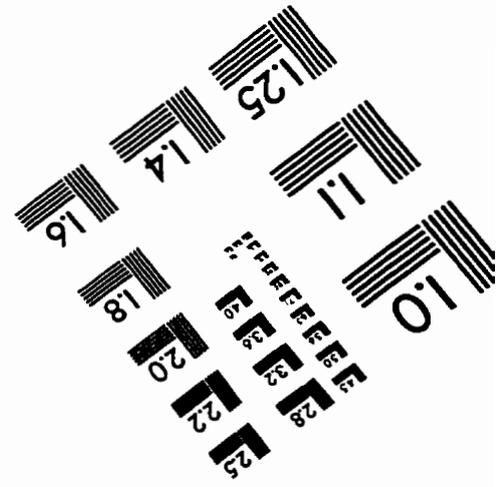
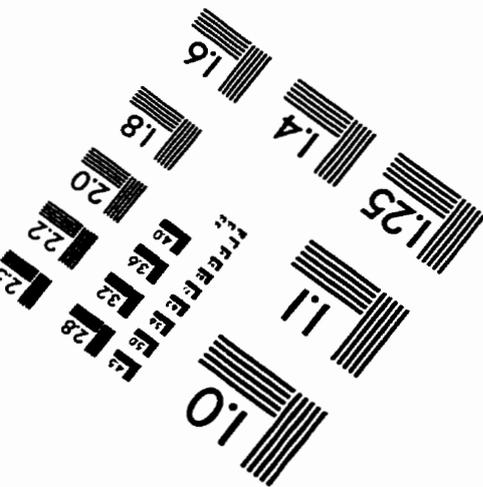
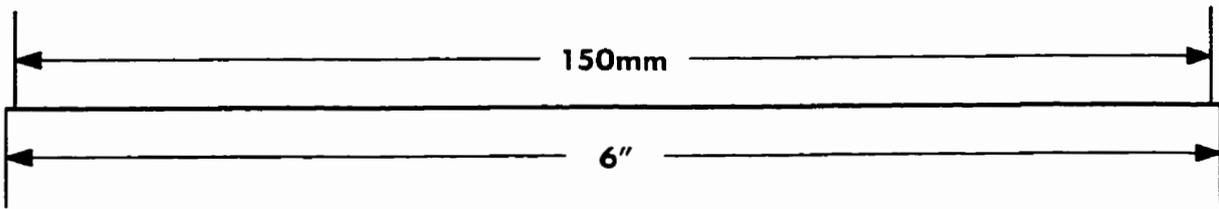
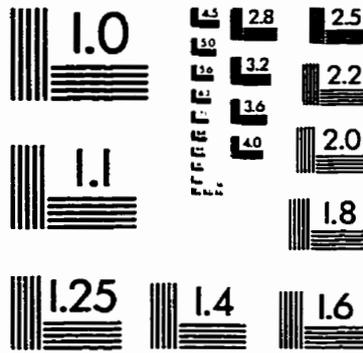
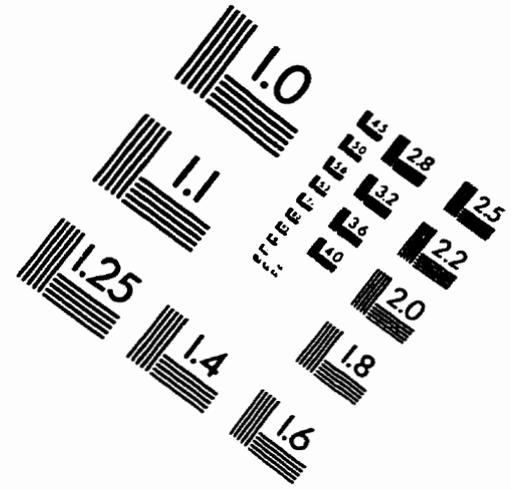
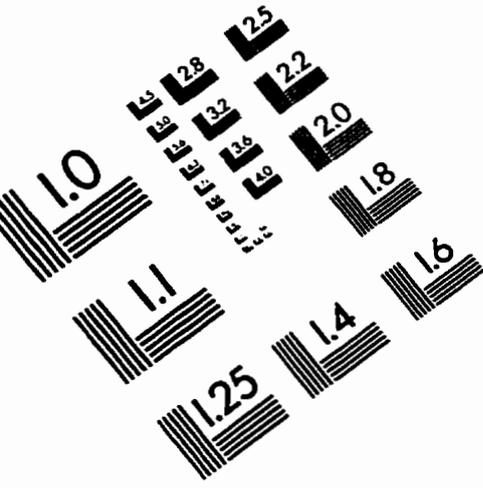
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