Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker

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Abstract

This study asks: what are the internal rewards associated with amateur making, and how do they offer satisfaction and fulfilment to those who participate in the activity? People considered in this research make furniture, jewellery, model engineering projects, canoes and cars. They all maintain and make use of an amateur workshop of some kind, and use a variety of tools, machines and materials in their constructions, carrying out work-like activity as a form of leisure. The research aims to understand amateur making not purely as a form of symbolic production – as the fabrication of signs and symbols that have a life after the making process is complete – but to focus instead on the experience of making, and the material interaction that occurs as part of practice.

The research utilises methods associated with the tradition of case-study based qualitative research, including long semi-structured depth interviews with individual makers, site visits, and photography. Drawing on this fieldwork, a series of themes are developed that move in progressively from a wider cultural and sociological perspective, towards a closer understanding of the individual experiences of the maker, and resulting in a detailed account of the intrinsic and personal rewards that amateur makers derive from their pursuit.

These themes consider the relation between work and leisure, the costs and benefits associated with amateur making, and the ways in which the material elements of the workspace operate in conjunction with the embodied competence of the maker. Drawing upon Csikszentmihalyi’s Flow Theory and Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory, the thesis concludes that amateur making is motivated by a set of rewards that are internal to the activity.

This research finds that, above all, it is the aesthetic interaction with their material environment that allows the serious amateur maker to achieve intrinsically rewarding and psychologically fulfilling feelings of competence and autonomy, offering them satisfactions that cannot be had from their paid employment.
Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker

Contents

Abstract 2
Table of Figures 6
Acknowledgements 9
Author’s Declaration 10

1: Introduction 11

2: Research Question 17

3: Locating Amateur Making 21
   Starting points 21
   Amateur making in post-war Britain 22

4: Literature Review 38
   Disciplinary location 38
   Professional versus amateur 40
   Customisation and user intervention 43
   Making and gender 47
   Summary 50

5: Methodology 52
   Introduction 52
   The methodological implications of the research question 52
   Design research methods 53
   Qualitative and quantitative approaches 56
   Ethnography and case studies 58
   Analytic induction and grounded theory 61
   Data analysis 64

6: Research Design 67
   Sampling method 67
   Sampling criteria 68
   Semi-structured in-depth interviews 71
   Computer aided qualitative data analysis software 73
7: The Place of Making in the Lives of Amateurs

Introduction 77
Field notes 78
Growing up with making 92
Work and leisure 98
Pro-ams 106
The ‘new amateurs’ 108
Professional partners 114
Conclusions 118

8: Serious Making

Introduction 120
Serious leisure 120
Moving between amateur and professional 127
Conclusions 132

9: Costs and Benefits

Introduction 134
Costs 134
Benefits 138
Social Rewards 143
Conclusions 145

10: The Nature of Work

Introduction 147
Work and time 147
The division of labour 153
Species being 156
The instinct of workmanship 158
Conclusions 160

11: Materiality and Process

Introduction 162
Material capital 162
Situated cognition 170
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Details of the Mirror Dinghy published in the Uffa Fox Book of Sailing................................................................. 11

Figure 2: *The Red Sails of Freedom* exhibition mounted by the author to support the publication of a *Journal of Design History* article................................. 12

Figure 3: Barry Bucknell’s DIY home improvement book published in 1963........................................................................ 25

Figure 4: *Practical Householder*, September 1956, p 743................................................................................................. 27

Figure 5: Plans for the construction of a table lamp, *Practical Householder* August 1961, p. 821.................................................. 29

Figure 6: One of a series of plans for items of furniture that were included in the *Practical Householder* from the early 1960s.......................... 30

Figure 7: An editorial feature in the *Do-It-Yourself Annual* (1959) promoting the contemporaneous ‘Light Craft’ magazine................................. 32

Figure 8: The ‘iterative dance’, adapted from Warburton (2005).............................. 62

Figure 9: One of Greg’s completed sea kayaks.................................................................................................................. 69

Figure 10: Greg’s improvised ‘warm-cabinet’ that he uses to keep his resins at a working temperature in the winter ................................. 80

Figure 11: Detail of Cherry’s work bench.......................................................................................................................... 83

Figure 12: James’ hot-rod, custom car show, June 2008.......................................................... 85

Figure 13: Fibreglass body shells and moulds also spill out of Eric’s workshop into the nearby offices that accommodate his wife’s business................................................................. 86

Figure 14: Brian’s locomotive chassis set out on his work bench.................................................. 87

Figure 15: The board outside Smith and Jones Turning Co advertises their products and services.................................................................. 88

Figure 16: Simon’s newly established workshop in drafty ‘borrowed’ barn................................................................. 89
Figures 17 and 18: One of Eric's sets of research and planning files

Figure 19: Detail of Brian's completed traction engine with part of the
technical drawing he is using to build his locomotive

Figure 20: The cover of the first issue of *Make: Technology on Your Time*
(Frauenfelder, 2005)

Figure 21: Hideo Tekano's G4 to G5 computer case upgrade featured in
*MAKE* magazine (Parks, 2006: 50)

Figure 22: *Craft: Transforming Traditional Crafts* volume 2 magazine
cover (Drieu, 2007)

Figure 23: Simon's wooden motorbike headlight

Figure 24: A radio controlled model retailer in North London that was
visited as part of the research

Figures 25 and 26: Suppliers of hot rod parts at a custom car and hot rod
show, Faversham, Kent, 2007

Figure 27: Jenny's woodwork shop

Figure 28: Some of Donald's power tools

Figure 29: Brian working with AutoCAD

Figure 30: Jenny's empty chicken coop

Figure 31: Jenny's outbuilding, a former fruit picker's accommodation

Figure 32: Jenny's storage system for small tools and furniture

components, and pieces of scrap timber saved for future projects

Figure 33: 'She's dead, but she lives on in the sewing machine'. Rose's
sewing machine, which had belonged to her husband's late wife

Figure 34: Brian built his brick and tile workshop from scratch

Figure 35: Greg rents a lockup garage that he has converted into a
workshop

Figure 36: Brian's lathe and tool storage system

Figure 37: Eric's purpose-built car building shop

Figure 38: Brian's brick-built purpose designed workshop
Figure 39: Cherry's workspace................................................................. 172
Figure 40: Jenny's woodwork shop......................................................... 173
Figure 41: Simon's 'toolboard'................................................................. 174
Figure 42: Eric's storage system.............................................................. 175
Figure 43: Simon using a 'parting chisel' to finish off a job on his lathe........ 177
Figure 44: Greg fitting strips of timber to his kayak.................................. 179
Figure 45: Donald's plane is 'ready-to-hand'............................................ 197
Figure 46: Jenny's block plane and slip stone......................................... 200
Figure 47: A reproduction writing desk made by Jenny's father-in-law........ 212
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Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:

Dated: 31/10/11
1: Introduction

In 1963 the *Daily Mirror* newspaper sponsored the launch of the Mirror Dinghy. Designed by Barry Bucknell, who was an early presenter of televised do-it-yourself programmes, and Jack Holt, an established designer of small boats, the Mirror Dinghy project was part of the *Daily Mirror's* attempts to connect with a younger readership, and engage with their changing lifestyles. The Mirror Dinghy was conceived as a dinghy that could be built by amateur woodworkers; users could order a kit boat that was then assembled at home in garages, or even living rooms, and could be sailed within weeks of starting the project (see figure 1). Over the subsequent forty years 70,000 of these boats were built, and they are now distributed worldwide.

Figure 1: Details of the Mirror Dinghy published in the *Uffa Fox Book of Sailing* (Mills, 1963: 146-147). Bucknell is shown helming the boat in the photograph.
The work for this PhD was preceded by an investigation of the Mirror Dinghy, which was later published in the *Journal of Design History* (Jackson, 2006a) (see figure 2). The research found that the success of the Mirror dinghy coincided with a moment in the history of Great Britain that saw general increases in discretionary income, a greater availability of leisure time, and the growing importance of mass-media in the development of consumer aspirations. Above all, it was the rise in the popular interest in do-it-yourself and home improvement, and the general increases in the levels of skill and ambition of domestic householders, which made it possible for thousands of Briton’s to become amateur boat builders in their domestic garages and sheds. The kinds of skills needed to make a Mirror Dinghy in the 1960s could have been acquired by undertaking basic house maintenance; the ability to carry out simple woodworking, the assembly of kit furniture, basic plumbing, and painting and decorating was a necessary pre-requisite for the home owner wishing to maintain their own house without the aid of tradesmen. These activities would also have led to the accumulation of a basic toolkit, and in some cases a small home workshop.
As part of the literature review for the Mirror Dinghy project I came across Steven Gelber’s work on hobbies and handicrafts in twentieth century America (Gelber, 1999). Taking into account the motivation for engaging with practical hobbies, Gelber briefly considered the work of the American psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. During the 1970s Csikszentmihalyi had developed the widely accepted concept of flow, an attempt to define a state of consciousness that he considered to be a powerful motivator in human action (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]). Ultimately, Gelber had rejected the explanatory power of the flow concept in relation to home craft activity, claiming that most leisure activities in our culture are non-challenging, and that it was doubtful that flow would be a motivating factor, because flow states depend on an optimal relationship between challenge and skill (Gelber, 1999: 9).

It seemed to me, however, that Gelber was mistaken in this assertion. This belief was based on two main arguments: firstly, that many of the tasks discussed in literature relating to do-it-yourself and home craft activity did pose the kind of challenge that, according to Csikszentmihalyi’s model, could generate the circumstances under which flow experiences could occur. Secondly, I was able to strongly identify with the idea of flow when recalling my own experiences, initially as an amateur maker, and later as a professional. This triggered an interest that subsequently developed and grew into a full doctoral research project. My thesis, which is developed more fully in the next chapter, is that people who make things at home do not do it because they are looking for separable, instrumental outcomes, but simply because they enjoy the activity in and of itself. This is a simple thing to observe, but a difficult thing to explain, and it is this explanation which is the aim of the thesis.

1 A fuller exploration of the flow concept can be found in chapter 12 of this thesis.

2 The extent to which autobiographical evidence can be used to answer a research question poses an interesting epistemological dilemma. This issue is explored more fully in the methodology section of the thesis, but suffice to say that the qualitative paradigm adopted by this work assumes that the personal experiences of the researcher should not, and indeed, cannot be divorced from the research findings – as though the researcher were a naive and detached onlooker. Therefore, as well as using data generated by a series of case studies and interviews with amateur makers, this research also draws upon my own experiences. Although, in relation to the other primary data gathered during this research, they make only a limited contribution to the argument, they are nevertheless included at various points in the thesis, where their origin is acknowledged.
My own interest in making had been sparked by my father, a man who had a passion for constructing and fixing things. Indeed, he had built a Mirror Dinghy in the late 1960’s, through which, as a child, I was introduced to sailing. Subsequently, my family moved to a seaside town, and my teenage years were spent mucking around in boats, building, fixing and improving them, both as a form of maintenance, and in the pursuit of greater speed and efficiency. As I also had a strong aptitude for drawing, I decided at the age of sixteen to reject the academic career path that had been planned for me by my grammar school teachers in favour of attending art college. This was a chance to experience what I now understand to be flow states all day, every day, and in an environment where this seemed to be an unspoken aim. After graduating from a London Polytechnic I began a career as a designer and maker of furniture, owning and running my own commercial studio and workshop in the old Docklands area of London’s East End.

Many of the concerns of this thesis are a reflection of this journey from the enthusiasms of a hobby maker to the applied activities of professional craftsman, and then on to the largely theoretical concerns of life as an academic. This research project involved meeting and interviewing a range of amateur makers, who kindly showed me their workshops, together with the things they had made. They allowed me to record their experiences, both through their spoken words and through photographs of them and their workshops. I often identified with the experiences and feelings of these people, because I have felt them myself. Their accounts tell us that although a number of rational explanations for the engagement of amateurs making activities have been proposed, they have generally failed to acknowledge or question the intrinsically motivating nature of the making things; material, rational and symbolic outcomes do not wholly account for why people make for pleasure.

So, driven by these concerns, this research is about the experience of people who make things at home. I refer to these people as amateur makers. They exist outside the public realm of the professions, often working in private, domestic spaces, and frequently escape the scrutiny of those interested in understanding
the nature of design and craft activity. Falling between categories, they make uneasy subject matter. They carry out work-like activity as a form of leisure, and they are simultaneously both consumers and producers, occasionally even being referred to by the portmanteau noun ‘prosumer’ (Toffler, 1981). Although operating within the boundaries of craft and design, their work is seldom legitimated by the attention of the academy, or inclusion in the exhibitions or publications that sustain the discourse of these fields. Furthermore, in the world of professional design and craft, the work of the amateur has historically been the object of scorn (Kirkham, 1995 [1989]: 175).

This study aims to overcome these barriers by utilizing methods associated with the social sciences – fieldwork, case studies and ethnography – in order to reach a deeper understanding of amateur making, and to make visible that which is frequently overlooked. Rather than dealing with them in the abstract, the study makes use of a series of case studies and empirical examples that, in combination, allows the central concerns of the research question to be addressed. In effect, I borrow my methods from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, who take a more inclusive approach to their subject matter. In the introduction to his Design Culture Reader, the cultural theorist Ben Highmore describes how he wants to:

...promote the expansion of what counts as a design object or practice, an expansion already being pursued by researchers who might want to include air, manners, movement, recipes, plumbing and medicine as part of the designed environment. What makes design culture such a

3 For the sake of simplicity, throughout this thesis I will refer to the paid equivalent of the work of amateur makers as ‘professional”. The use of this word however, is not without its own difficulties. In the UK at least, the word professional can have a restricted use, often referring to white-collar occupations that are founded upon specialized educational training, such as law, accountancy, architecture, and so on. Strictly speaking, most of the paid equivalents to the work considered in this research are ‘trades’, which are blue-collar occupations requiring a particular manual skill or craft.

4 Jo Turney notes how within many studies of art and design practice ‘any discussion of home-crafted objects is marginalized to the level of all that is ‘bad’ in art, design and craft’ (Turney, 2004: 268). A recent example of this was Glen Adamson’s scathing dismissal of amateur craftspeople as being engaged in purposeless acts of self-gratification, whose only function is to unconsciously service the economy by buying commodities in the form of materials and tools (Adamson, 2007: 140).
productive area for general social and cultural research is that it can supply the objects that demonstrate the thoroughly entangled nature of our interactions in the material world, the way in which bodies, emotions, world trade and aesthetics, for instance, interweave at the most everyday level (2009: 2).

It is in the spirit of this inclusive approach to design and culture that this study is undertaken. As a consequence of this approach, the work necessarily engages with a range of issues that are situated at the intersection of different disciplines. My data analysis is supported by the ideas of a number of key theorists, whose work is cited and developed in relation to my research throughout the thesis. Given the starting point of the project, it is unsurprising that the social psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas on flow feature strongly in the work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). However, his work joined later in my argument by the ideas of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985), also social psychologists, whose work focuses on the nature of motivation and self-determination. A foundation for understanding the nature of the activities I consider in the thesis is provided by the work on serious leisure by the Canadian sociologist Robert Stebbins (Stebbins, 1992), and his ideas are supported by the more recent research carried out by Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller in the UK, into Pro-Ams (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004).

Throughout the period of the project I have also published work drawn from the research as part of a peer reviewed book (Jackson, 2011), a refereed journal (Jackson, 2010), and presented my ideas at a number of peer-reviewed international conferences and seminars, including the 2007 European Academy of Design conference in Izmir, Turkey; the 2007 New Craft, Future Voices International Conference at the Duncan of Jordanstone College, University of Dundee; and the 2008 Networks of Design Conference of the Design History Society at Falmouth University College.
2: Research Question

Although amateur making\(^5\) is under-theorised in comparison to professionally oriented designing and making, there is nevertheless a small but growing body of academic literature that addresses the topic.\(^6\) Papers and books have appeared intermittently, particularly in the period since 2004, when there have been a number of published research projects, one of which even speculates on the ‘decline’ of DIY (Powell, 2009). Because it has been such a dominant part of everyday life over the past fifty years, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States, do-it-yourself and home crafts are subjects with which many people can identify. This, combined with the rich, nostalgic imagery that accompanies it, has also led to a number of popular accounts being developed for television programmes and in the form of illustrated books (see, for example Dent, 1997; Goldstein, 1998; Thompson, 2007; Thorburn, 2002).

The review of this published work reveals a gap in the way that amateur making has been considered. In their discussion of the incentives for amateur making, existing studies have tended to concentrate on the instrumental benefits offered by the outcomes of the activity. There are discussions of the rational utilitarian and economic benefits associated with do-it-yourself and home crafts, including the saving of money that would otherwise be spent on hiring tradespeople and buying ready-made goods, the opportunity to implement home improvement schemes that would otherwise be out of the economic reach of the householder, and growing the resale value of a house (Atkinson, 2006; Dent, 1997; Edwards, 2006; Hackney, 2006; Jackson, 2006a; Rosenberg, 2011). Other studies focus on the rewarding social qualities of the experience, such as the material expression and objectification of cultural

\(^5\) These activities are commonly referred to as ‘do-it-yourself’ or ‘hobbies and home crafts’. However, as the literature review reveals, these terms carry a number of associations that tend to hamper a clear understanding of the research question. In order to avoid these pre-conceptions I have chosen to use the more neutral term ‘amateur making’ when referring directly to my research topic.

\(^6\) The literature review chapter, which follows later in the thesis, demonstrates the diversity of the area under consideration, and the variety of approaches that have been taken in its analysis.
identity, gender and class (Gelber, 1997, 1999; Miller, 1990; Moorhouse, 1991; Putnam & Newton, 1990; Triggs, 2006). Finally, a number of studies consider the representational and symbolic qualities of the outcomes of the activity, for example through conspicuous displays of wealth and cultural capital (Attfield, 2000; Clarke, 2001; Featherstone, 1991; Turney, 2004).

This research departs from these precedents by considering those activities for which the extrinsic rewards are minimal, and which are therefore largely motivated by rewards that are intrinsic to the practice\(^7\). Although utilising many of the same aptitudes and material resources that are enabling factors in house maintenance and home improvement, the people I have chosen to interview for this study have deliberately moved on from these activities to the making of discrete objects – many of which have value only to the makers themselves. This is not to say that these activities do not contribute to the self-identity of makers, or that they are reluctant to display the results of their achievements, but rather that the over-riding motivation can be found in rewards that are intrinsic to the practice, and which are largely internal to the makers themselves.

The aim of the study, therefore, was to answer the question:

*What are the internal rewards associated with amateur making, and how do they offer satisfaction and fulfilment to those who participate in the activity?*

The research aims to understand amateur making not purely as a form of symbolic production – as the fabrication of signs and symbols that have a life after the making process is complete – but to focus instead on the experience of making and the material interaction that occurs as part of a practice. Drawing upon the fieldwork, the analysis aims to generate an account that locates and defines the various aspects of the practice of amateur making that work in combination to generate the pleasurable experience associated with making things. This aim prompts questions about the ways in which the

\(^7\) The use of the terms ‘intrinsic’ and ‘practice’ has important implications for this thesis. Whilst they can initially be understood in the senses implied by their everyday usage, it should be noted that the data analysis section later in the thesis will fully unpack the theoretical implications of the use of these terms, and discuss the implications of this understanding in relation to the research question.
practice is constituted, the individual experience of the makers, the nature of intrinsically motivating pursuits and the rewards found therein. This central research question therefore has five associated research questions:

- How does amateur making fit into the lives of people whose employment and income and is not derived from this pursuit?
- What are the costs incurred by amateur makers, and what motivates them to continue, even in the absence of separable, instrumental outcomes?
- How do makers mobilise the material resources necessary to carry out their making activities and what role do these this play in generating intrinsic rewards?
- What are the characteristics of the pleasurable experience and satisfaction associated with making things, and how is this experience constituted?
- What is the wider significance of these kinds of pursuits, and what can they tell us about the ways people live in the alienating conditions of late modernity?

Each of these areas of enquiry contributes in some way to our understanding of the gratification that amateur makers experience through their activities. Whilst acknowledging the contribution that the extant literature on amateur making cited above has made to our understanding of the subject area, this thesis adds to this range of literature in a number of new ways.

It draws upon a methodology that allows us to more closely interrogate the actual experience of making than previous approaches have allowed; it focuses on a more tightly defined group of subjects; and it asks questions about experience rather than just outcomes. It aims to contribute to the growing understanding of the ways in which well-being can be achieved through active and autonomous leisure pursuits, and offers insights into the nature of rewarding social and cultural environments, within both the realms of work, and of leisure. The work also has the potential to inform social and
economic policy in these areas. As well as this wider significance, the work also contributes to the growing body of craft theory that addresses the experience of making, and the ways in which this can be understood. The following section opens the thesis by developing a starting point for the study, and begins to delineate the topic more precisely.

\[\text{At the time of writing Age Concern Cheshire was running a project called Men and Sheds: \&quot;that will see older men meeting up in a community shed to learn new skills, share existing skills and knowledge, and generally put the world to rights over a cup of tea\&quot; (http://www.ageconcerncheshire.org.uk/shed.htm, accessed 10/08/10).}

\[\text{See for example the work of the Design Research Society Experiential Knowledge Special Interest Group. The research presented by members of this research group has a strong orientation towards the understanding of craft activities – see for example Nicola Wood's work on the dissemination of the tacit knowledge of Sheffield knife makers (Fisher, Keyte, & Wood, 2009; Wood & Rust, 2009).}\]
3: Locating Amateur Making

Starting points

In any study of culture and society a decision has to be taken about the historical starting point of the research. I open this chapter by arguing that the most useful starting point for this study is the period after the end of the Second World War. Whilst this thesis does not set out to be an historical account, I argue that a consideration of primary material from this period demonstrates the changing attitudes and practices of amateur makers and shows the precedents for the case studies that were carried out as part of this research.

The bulk of the primary historical material consulted was made up of magazines, books, journals and newspaper coverage from the period between the 1940s and 1980s, supplemented by secondary sources, such as television documentaries and published survey histories. Two strands of amateur making are identified in this period – ‘do-it-yourself/house maintenance’, and ‘home crafts/hobbies’.

The significance of this material, much of which was gathered as part of the work for my *Journal of Design History* Mirror Dinghy article cited earlier, is threefold. Firstly it represents the ways in which media coverage planted do-it-yourself and home crafts as part of the popular consciousness. Secondly it shows that the media coverage establishes these practices as voluntary activities that are not necessarily disseminated by formal training or employment; and thirdly, it indicates a changing engagement of participants with the practice that evolves from a concern with utilitarian and instrumental outcomes to one that embraces making as an intrinsically rewarding leisure activity. Finally in this chapter, I consider the ways in which these practices can be categorised and considered, review the disciplinary location of previous studies, and establish and delimit the scope of this thesis. This
necessarily links forward to the later methodology chapter, which firmly locates the approach that has been taken in the research design.\footnote{The later Literature Review chapter, which follows this background material, addresses those academic secondary sources that have specifically tackled the definition and location of amateur making, do-it-yourself, and home crafts activity.}

**Amateur making in post-war Britain**

The maintenance and improvement of the domestic house by the householders themselves, and the construction of objects such as furniture and accessories in home workshops, has come to be known in the United Kingdom and the United States as do-it-yourself (DIY).\footnote{In Britain this has become shortened to DIY though, as Shove, Watson and Ingram discovered, this abbreviation is rarely used in America (2007: 45). In the early stages of the project I referred to my subject with the shorthand of do-it-yourself, or DIY. As the investigation has become more detailed, I have tended to adopt the term ‘making’, which is broader and has less pre-conceptions attached to it. The problem of definition is explored more fully later in the thesis.} The historical background to the emergence of DIY, has been relatively well documented over the past decade by studies originating in the UK, USA and Australia (Atkinson, 2006; Dent, 1997; Gelber, 1997; Goldstein, 1998; Jackson, 2006a; Rosenberg, 2011). Publications dealing with woodworking DIY projects have appeared in book form since before the Second World War. *Charles Hayward's Carpentry Book*, first published in 1938, was aimed at: ‘...two classes of men (...) the beginner with little experience, and the man who, whilst not professional, has practiced woodwork long enough to have acquired a mastery in the use of tools’ (Hayward, 1953 [1938]: v). The post-war edition notes the popularity of woodwork as a 'home craft', citing the furniture shortage\footnote{The only furniture made available in Britain between 1941 and 1951 was through the government’s Utility Scheme, which was initiated in response to war-time shortages of raw materials (Dover, 1991).} and the urge of men returning home from the forces after years of absence during which they had been unable to practice any constructive craft. Peter Hunot's 1946 publication *Man About the House* aims to attract ‘...the newly married, the bombed out, the returning serviceman and all the other types of 'displaced person' who spend their days off tramping from house agent to house agent...’

\footnote{The historical background to the emergence of DIY, has been relatively well documented over the past decade by studies originating in the UK, USA and Australia (Atkinson, 2006; Dent, 1997; Gelber, 1997; Goldstein, 1998; Jackson, 2006a; Rosenberg, 2011). Publications dealing with woodworking DIY projects have appeared in book form since before the Second World War. *Charles Hayward's Carpentry Book*, first published in 1938, was aimed at: ‘...two classes of men (...) the beginner with little experience, and the man who, whilst not professional, has practiced woodwork long enough to have acquired a mastery in the use of tools’ (Hayward, 1953 [1938]: v). The post-war edition notes the popularity of woodwork as a 'home craft', citing the furniture shortage and the urge of men returning home from the forces after years of absence during which they had been unable to practice any constructive craft. Peter Hunot's 1946 publication *Man About the House* aims to attract ‘...the newly married, the bombed out, the returning serviceman and all the other types of 'displaced person' who spend their days off tramping from house agent to house agent...'}
The reason for the dissatisfaction of Hunot's readership is cited as the post war housing shortage and the shortage of labour, and the book is therefore aimed at those who wish to renovate derelict houses in their spare time in order to make them habitable.

James Wheeler in his 1940’s publication *The Practical Man’s Book of Things to Make and Do* places a spiritual emphasis on the necessity of DIY:

> It does not matter very much what particular form the pastime may take – whether it be woodworking, metalworking, household decoration, gardening or any other of the numerous spare time occupations – the man with a hobby is generally happier, more resourceful and better able to think things out for himself than one who has no interest in anything other than his usual routine of work, meals and sleep (Wheeler, 1940: dust jacket).

The tenor of these mid-century publications not only refers to the necessity of making do in times of shortage and crisis, but also has a strong moral overtone. Working with one’s hands, and filling the spare time available outside work are seen as desirable activities for men in this period, thus avoiding the possibility of ‘the devil making work for idle hands’ (Gelber, 1997).

The experience of war for both men and women had led to an unprecedented level of self-help and resourcefulness, and the large numbers of handymen who emerged in response to the shortages and deprivations of the post-war period were generally well equipped to take on the demands of house repairs and maintenance. Furthermore, other social and economic changes in the post war period began to alter people’s attitudes to their home. Encouraged by building societies and banks, large sections of the population looked towards buying their own house. The Building Societies Association placed advertisements in the national press encouraging readers to consider home ownership. An advertisement in the *Daily Mirror* in 1963 asks the reader: 'Have you ever thought of owning your own home? ... With a house of your own you can feel secure – and you are. Nobody can shift you, nobody can put up your rent...' (Building Societies Association, 1963). In 1914 home ownership in Britain stood at only 10% (Marsh & Mullins, 1998: 9), but by
1971 had risen to around 49% (Office for National Statistics, 2002). As the pre-war practice of renting accommodation gave way to home ownership, householders could no longer call on landlords to carry out minor repairs. Added to this, as an economic boom took hold in 1950s Britain, a labour shortage meant that it became difficult for householders to find tradesman to carry out some repairs. Consequently, rather than searching for expensive professional help, it became more convenient and economical to attempt small maintenance jobs themselves (Dent, 1997).

Encouraged by magazines and television programmes, and with growing confidence, many householders began to tackle larger, more complex home improvements. During the 1950s thousands of people set about modernizing their homes, and DIY was deemed so significant that in September 1955, on the first day of British commercial television broadcasts, E.P. Matthew presented a new fifteen-minute programme on the subject. It was after Matthew’s death, in March 1956, that Barry Bucknell took over as presenter of the show. As part of the programme Bucknell not only showed viewers how to renovate houses, but also how to build simple furniture using newly emerging technology such as chipboard and synthetic glues, stressing the ease with which sophisticated results could be achieved (Bucknell, 1963). A measure of Bucknell’s subsequent popularity came in 1962, when his later programme, *Bucknell’s House* achieved viewing figures of five and a half million (Anon, 2003). The *Daily Mirror* TV column in January 1963 reported that speculators were clamouring to buy the house renovated by Bucknell as part of his television programme (see figure 3). At this time, Bucknell was receiving over 40,000 letters a week, and the BBC was reputed to have employed a staff of ten to send out more than a quarter of a million information leaflets. Eventually the house was sold through auction for £7,000, against an initial outlay by the BBC of £2,750 (”Bids Roll in for Barry’s House”, 1963).
By the mid 1950s, magazines had joined ‘how-to-do-it’ books and television programmes as a more regular and changing source of guidance and inspiration. *Practical Householder* was launched in October 1955 to an already large and well-established market. The editor, F.J. Camm, opens the issue with an enthusiastic appraisal of a ‘do-it-yourself movement that has reached such proportions today that it can only be dealt with satisfactorily by a journal entirely devoted to it’ (1955: 15). Camm emphasises the shortage of skilled labour and the consequent rise in costs as an incentive for householders to carry out their own repairs and maintenance. Tracking the editorial emphasis and advertising content of *Practical Householder*, one of the UKs longest running DIY magazines, gives a useful insight into the changing attitudes to
DIY and home improvement activity over the 1950s and 1960s. The content of the first issue of *Practical Householder* is a mix of articles covering household maintenance (such as repairing plumbing and electrical faults), home improvements (making loose covers for a sofa and laying lino floors), creative projects (including designs for a table lamp and how to make rugs and carpets) and ‘scientific’ gadgets (such as an automatic draft excluder, and a homemade ‘ozoniser’ that appears to be constructed from a home chemistry set). Remarkably, the issue also included the first article in a series entitled ‘Build your own bungalow’:

This attractive two-bedroom bungalow, which has been specially designed for *The Practical Householder*, may be built by any handyman able to use simple woodworking tools and a trowel ("Build Your Own Bungalow", 1955).

The following month’s piece in the series showed readers how to prepare foundations and lay bricks. The tone of these early articles is primarily utilitarian, and aesthetics play little part in the agenda of the magazine. DIY and home improvements are largely portrayed as a means of saving money by bypassing the use of tradesmen.

In 1957 the monthly magazine *Do It Yourself* appeared as a rival to *Practical Householder*. By 1959 it claimed to have a readership in excess of three million, and began publishing an ‘annual’ in February of each year (*Do It Yourself Annual*, 1959). Both publications also ran annual exhibitions, with the *Practical Householder Exhibition* launched at London’s Earls Court exhibition centre in February 1958, and the *Do It Yourself* exhibition opening for the first time at the neighbouring Olympia exhibition centre in September of the same year.

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13 Magazines consulted for this research included *Practical Householder* and *Do-it-yourself*, both published in the UK from the mid 1950s, with *Practical Householder* running until the early 1990s.
By the 1960s, do-it-yourself had become a major economic force, and both magazines devoted around 60% of their pages to advertisements placed by manufacturers and suppliers of DIY related goods. These ranged from paints and building materials, through to tools and equipment, and sheds large enough to house the handyman’s trappings and to provide a space to work. Manufacturers and retailers responded to the growth in interest in DIY by developing and marketing new building products aimed specifically at the amateur market – they were easy to use, and importantly, they were easy to buy. Products that had previously only been aimed at tradesmen began to be
sold in smaller quantities, and in forms that were undemanding for an amateur to understand and utilize. New products were also developed enabling householders to achieve instant success. An advert for *Marleyfilm*, the ‘vinyl asbestos wonder surface, as seen on TV’, boasted the possibility of your dream kitchen coming true simply by covering all the surfaces in a plastic film (Marley Products, 1957). Manufacturers also provided free guides – in this case *1001 ways to use Marleyfilm* – helping consumers to find new uses for their products. Power tools began to be designed with the home workshop in mind, and products such as the electric drill were marketed as versatile do-anything products that brought even the most complex tasks within reach of the home handyman. Advertisements showed drills being adapted for use as jigsaws, circular saws, polishing machines and even paint sprayers. Products were sold with a direct appeal to the financial benefits of DIY using phrases such as ‘Make money all over the house’ (Wolf Cub Power Equipment, 1956: 743), and ‘Make money with the king of power tools’ (Bridges Power Tools, 1956: 859) (see figure 4).

As the market for DIY matured, the emphasis in specialist magazines changed from one of utility and economy to the portrayal of DIY as a means of improving the style and aesthetics of the home. By the early 1960s, *Practical Householder*, which had previously been dominated by articles on the basics of home maintenance, had been repositioned as a catalogue of design ideas. The August 1959 issue seemed to pre-empt this change of tack in an editorial that promoted the activities of the Council of Industrial Design, recommending to readers ‘...if you are in London with a little time to spare, and want to see the latest designs in anything from flowerpots to food mixers ... call in at the Design Centre in the Haymarket...’ (“The Council of Industrial Design”, 1959: 925). Helped by the addition of colour photography the magazine began to specialise in the inclusion of detailed plans for furniture to be made at home, and by 1965 home build projects had almost entirely superseded house maintenance tasks (see figures 5 and 6).
Figure 5: During the 1960s it became increasingly common for do-it-yourself magazines to include measured drawings of home-build projects. Plans for the construction of a table lamp, Practical Householder August 1961, p. 821.
Figure 6: One of a series of plans for items of furniture that were included in the *Practical Householder* from the early 1960s.
As well as reflecting a change in the activities of householders, this progression from utilitarian building maintenance to the making of discrete artefacts may also reflect the magazine’s aim of widening its readership to include the enthusiasts of home crafts and hobbies that had co-existed alongside this conventional understanding of DIY since the nineteenth century – albeit in a more restricted form. Writing from an American perspective, Gelber identifies home craft activity as originating in the pastimes of women in the nineteenth century:

As the new leisure class of industrial society, middle class women first laid claim to crafting in the nineteenth century when they began to transform sewing from a duty into a pastime (Gelber, 1999: 5).

According to Gelber, Victorian husbands, on the other hand, avoided manual activities altogether, that is until the growth do-it-yourself later in the twentieth century:

Only the jigsaw fad of the last quarter of the nineteenth century broke the mold, and set the stage for the arts and crafts movement, which legitimated a broad spectrum of crafts for both genders. The masculinized manual pastimes of the arts and crafts movement allowed men to exercise a new 'domestic masculinity' by using tools around the house, a trend that expanded steadily from World War I through the great do-it-yourself boom of the 1950s (Gelber, 1999: 5).

New technology also brought new forms of home craft activities within reach of the amateur. The war-time development of resin bonded waterproof plywood, combined with new synthetic resin glues, suddenly made boat building a possibility for the 1950s home handyman. Michael Verney’s book *Amateur Boat Building*, which had originated as a series of boat building articles in *Yachting Monthly*, was first published in 1948, and had reached its second edition and been reprinted five times by 1959, when it was reissued as

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14 In this survey of home crafts and DIY and there is an acknowledged distinction between what Fiona Hackney has described as ‘soft’, (decorative) DIY, and ‘hard’ (structural) DIY, and gendered stereotypes that this implies (Hackney, 2006: 19). The focus of this research is on the latter area of hard structural making, and the implications of this approach are discussed more fully in chapter 4 of the thesis.
Complete Amateur Boat Building. It continued to be amended and reprinted a total of seven times up until 1974 (Verney, 1948, 1967). As Verney stated in the preface to the 1959 edition:

Although many yachtsmen now build their own boats because they just cannot afford to become boat owners in any other way, some have found that boat building, especially during the months from October to April is a pastime as enjoyable as sailing (Verney, 1967: vii).

Light Craft, a magazine devoted to the subject, was even published for a period, and the 1959 Do-It-Yourself Annual also featured an article on home boat-building (Jordan, 1959) (see figure 7).

Figure 7: An editorial feature in the Do-It-Yourself Annual (1959) promoting the contemporaneous ‘Light Craft’ magazine.
The article covers six existing designs that could be either built from scratch using plans, or assembled from a kit, pre-empting the launch of the Mirror Dinghy by four years. The magazine *Practical Boat Owner*, a monthly magazine devoted entirely to practical boat maintenance, was also launched in January 1967, and continues to be published today.

As well as the woodwork associated with hobbies such as boat building, amateurs also engaged in model engineering. The magazine *Model Engineer* has been published continuously since it first appeared in 1898 as *The Model Engineer and Amateur Electrician: A Journal of Mechanics and Electricity for Amateurs and Students* (Marshall, 1898). The first edition contained articles on building radios, clocks, locomotives, batteries dynamos and motors.

It is clear from these precedents that do-it-yourself and home crafts have an established history as a form of leisure that goes beyond functional household maintenance. Additionally, towards the end of the twentieth century, householders had increasing amounts of time and money to devote to these activities. In the period between 1970 and 1977 UK expenditure on leisure went up by 8 per cent, and by 1981 one-third of all UK consumer spending was on leisure related goods and services. Over this period paid holidays became commonplace, and the working week had also shortened, often giving men weekends free of work for the first time. Between 1950 and 1980 the average working week for UK manual workers declined from between 45 and 50 hours with one or two weeks' annual paid holiday, to between 35 and 40 hours with at least three weeks annual paid holiday (Roberts, 2006: 24-30; Rojek, 1985: 14).

However, in spite of the prevalence of do-it-yourself as a feature of everyday life, until the end of the last century it had received relatively little attention from academic researchers. One might assume that the production of things would fall within the field of design history, but, as Judy Attfield observed in her 2000 publication *Wild Things*, DIY is 'often mentioned in passing, but still not accorded much attention by design historians', (2000: 73). A special 2006 edition of the *Journal of Design History* devoted to studies of DIY attempted to reverse this trend and, writing in the introduction, the editor, Paul Atkinson speculated that one of the reasons that DIY has rarely been examined in
published studies was the problem of definition (2006: 3). Because the term DIY means different things to different people, he states, there is uncertainty about where it should sit in relation to the discourses of art, design and craft (though of course it may have been more apposite to consider the place of the phenomenon in the discourses of sociology, anthropology or cultural studies, as I will demonstrate later in this section).

Ironically, the range of subject matter contained both in this, and a subsequent Journal of Design History (Beegan & Atkinson, 2008) devoted to amateur design, only confirmed the problem; the articles in the 2006 issue had examined subjects as varied as DIY nuclear fallout shelters (Lichtman, 2006), inter-war women’s magazines (Hackney, 2006), punk fanzines (Triggs, 2006) and my own article on the Mirror Dinghy (Jackson, 2006a). In the face of this confusion, Atkinson attempts to reach a more precise classification of do-it-yourself activity by employing a series of sub-categories – Reactive DIY; Essential DIY; Lifestyle DIY and Pro-active DIY (2006: 3). For Atkinson ‘Reactive DIY’ consists of making activities mediated through the use of kits or templates (such as building a Mirror Dinghy), the motivation ranging between a way of occupying spare time through to personal pleasure. ‘Essential DIY’ is defined as home maintenance activity carried out because of economic necessity or a shortage of skilled labour (though such activities may also be personally rewarding), whilst ‘Lifestyle DIY’ consists of home improvement undertaken as emulation or conspicuous consumption, and where the use of one’s own labour is by choice rather than necessity. The final category ‘Pro-active DIY’, describes do-it-yourself that contains significant elements of self-directed design effort; skilled activities that require high levels of creative input, with the motivation often being personal pleasure. In other words, at one extreme the term DIY can be used to describe the most prosaic of maintenance activity, such as applying a coat of paint to a wall, or putting up basic shelving, whilst at the other it can refer to the design and self-building of complete houses and extensions (Brown, 2007, 2008; Samuel, 2008), and the construction of complex miniature engineering projects.

Since the late 1970s, the situation has been further complicated by a use of the term as a signifier of home-grown creativity, activism and political protest –
from underground publishing and alternative music, through to the organisation of anti-corporate protest movements. The punk movement of the late 1970s extolled the virtues of do-it-yourself music, fashion and publishing, aiming to by-pass corporate involvement (Hebdige, [1979] 2002; Triggs, 2006, 2010), and the legacy lived on in the form of a number of subsequent youth cultures and political movements (Thornton, 1996), and other espousals of do-it-yourself design activity (Lupton, 2005). The Indymedia website, for instance, describes a form of radical DIY intended ‘to create and distribute a paper that reflects the lives we actually live (...) the lifestyles, ethics, skills and ideas that enable us to live with increasing independence and self reliance from the dominant culture’ (Indymedia, 2002).

The idea of DIY and craft being associated with forms of activism is further exemplified by a trend that has become known as ‘craftivism’ (Greer, 2007, 2011). Coined by Betsy Greer, the term refers to a revitalised interest in traditional handicrafts by young women who embrace the hobbies and activities of their grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and self-consciously combine this with a political agenda. This seems to encompass a series of positions that range from a re-appraisal of sexual politics through to anti-war protest. To use Greer’s shorthand: craft + activism = craftivism. Greer believes that:

Each time you participate in crafting you are making a difference, whether it’s fighting against useless materialism or making items for charity ... it is possible to go beyond banners, email petitions and chants as ways of fighting for a cause you believe in. You could have a knit-in, make papier-mâché puppets, or teach a crafty class for kids. (Greer, 2007)

Her book, Knitting for Good! A Guide to Creating Personal, Social, and Political Change, Stitch by Stitch (2008), is representative of the trend, in that it is a combination of sexual politics and an instruction manual on how to knit various garments; an ironic juxtaposition that gives the book an engaging presence. Amy Spencer’s Craft Culture Handbook (Spencer, 2007) also combines practical advice with a discussion of the politics behind this
'rediscovery' of domestic crafts. The publicity from her publisher’s website states:

Today's crafters are aware of the impact of their actions, some create as part of a radical form of political protest, others take a stance against sweatshop manufacturing by making their own clothes, some produce as part of a self-sufficiency lifestyle, others start knitting groups as a way to meet new friends.
(www.marionboyars.co.uk/Amy%20individual%20book%20info/The%20Crafter%20Culture.html accessed 23/06/10)

Craftivity: 40 Projects for the Maverick Crafter (Carson, 2006), Making Stuff: An Alternative Craft Book (Hanour & Woodcock, 2006), The Big-Ass Book of Crafts (Montano, 2008), and Indie Craft (Waterhouse, 2010) follow in the same ironic vein, albeit with the political angle playing a diminishing role as publishers cash in on the newest trend. Craftivism has even been co-opted as an art movement, with the Arnolfini gallery in Bristol mounting an exhibition of the same name in 2009/2010 (www.craftivism.net, 2010). However, as the art critic Charles Darwent noted in his review of the show:

...taking the name of art in vain is fair enough, given artists have spent much of the past century doing just that. But hijacking craft – a word that has, surely, to encompass skill and experience and tradition – is another thing again (2010).

As Darwent seems to have recognised, although the aims of the movement are laudable, focussing as it does on political engagement and consumer involvement, the work produced under the banner seems to occupy an awkward middle ground between un-legitimated art practice and a form of 'casual' craft, which generally places a low level of importance on skill acquisition and technique. These activities also seek a strong public presence; this distinguishes them from conventional approaches to do-it-yourself and home crafts, which tend to be private in nature. As well as being made visible through books, exhibitions and public demonstrations, so called craftivist activities have also placed a strong emphasis on the potential for participatory projects and social interaction through craft. Events have included the 'stitch’n’bitch' knitting clubs (Buszek, 2011: 16), and the Cast Off Knitters
group who carried out public stunts such as holding a knitting group on the Circle Line of the London Underground (Campbell, 2004). The pre-dominance of female participants in these crafts activities, and the issue of gender in relation to home crafts and DIY is discussed more fully in the following literature review. For now, I want to make the point that the range of these phenomena further demonstrate the diversity of activity encompassed by the field of amateur making and DIY. In academic terms, this breadth of activity, combined with the varied disciplinary location of the research, has led to a dispersed range of literature that extends beyond the confines of the field of Design History outlined earlier. The following literature review attempts to make sense of this diversity by acknowledging the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to the research question and, as a result, considers work from a variety of academic orientations, and on research that has originated primarily in Britain and the United States, with some references to sources from Australia.
4: Literature Review

Disciplinary location

The topic of this research means that it might be assumed to sit within the remit of research into the crafts, and hence draw upon literature published in this field. However, until the end of the 1990s, at least in the UK, published work in this area had been extremely limited and tended to focus on survey histories of individual professional craftspeople, their significance being measured by the public visibility of their work through exhibitions and public collections and, of course, through a kind of circular logic, the publication of the books themselves. The early exceptions to this were Peter Dormer’s The Culture of Craft (1997), and Paul Greenhalgh’s The Persistence of Craft (2002). Unfortunately, even though these edited volumes gathered together sound scholarly contributions to the field, they had little to say about the engagement of amateurs with craft activity. The most recent significant addition to the literature to come from within the world of craft scholarship is Glenn Adamson’s Thinking Through Craft (2007); though as mentioned earlier in this thesis, Adamson tends to be less than sympathetic towards amateur practice. This is perhaps symptomatic of his approach, which though possessing academic rigour has, in this book at least, a tendency to exclusively consider his subject matter through the lens of art criticism. In addition to these texts, the recent inauguration of the Journal of Modern Craft (also edited by Adamson (2008)) and Craft Research (Niedderer & Townsend, 2010) is also an indication of the emergence of a more rigorous and scholarly approach to the subject. The sociologist Richard Sennett’s book The Craftsman (2008), has also had a significant impact, asserting the importance of material skills and practices within a range of contemporary contexts, not just those we might call craft. 15 The breadth of his philosophical and historical outlook on the subject, however, means that his discussion tends to lose focus when considering the specifics of contemporary craft practice.

15 Sennett was the keynote speaker at the Making/Crafting/Designing symposium held on 10-12 February 2011 at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart.
In spite of these developments, serious research into the crafts has, until recently, had to find a home in the neighbouring disciplines of design history, art history and, occasionally, material culture studies. The crossing of disciplinary boundaries is not a new problem for scholars of designing and making. The location of these practices at the intersection of a range of different academic disciplines has led to a fundamental questioning of the methodologies associated with the area (Bird et al., 1996). This was made clear by the editorial policy of the *Journal of Design History*, which was presented in the first issue:

...the journal seeks to promote links with other disciplines exploring material culture, such as anthropology, architectural history, business history, cultural studies, design management studies, economic and social history, history of science and technology, and sociology (The Editors, 1988: i).

The beginnings of this trend are perhaps best exemplified by the publication in the 1980s of the journal *Block* and the growth of interest in what was dubbed as 'The New Art History' (Rees & Borzello, 1986). These developments encouraged scholars to embrace interdisciplinary methodologies, many of which owed their largest debt to cultural studies. The idea of cultural studies as a discrete academic discipline has its origins in the formation of the *Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (BCCCS), founded in 1966 by Richard Hoggart, and later strongly associated with Stuart Hall, who succeeded Hoggart as director. Dick Hebdige, who was also associated with the BCCCS, was a prominent contributor to *Block*, and did much to influence subsequent approaches to the writing of design history (Hebdige, 1988). Cultural Studies concerns itself with the meanings and practices of everyday life, and the ways in which meaning becomes attributed to particular activities, and to the objects that form part of those practices. Cultural theorists in this tradition reject the study of only a particular selection of canonised texts and legitimised practices, asserting that they represent the very systems of power and domination that their work aims to deconstruct. Their analyses therefore encompass not only artefacts, but also the

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16 One of the first published outcomes of this PhD research found an unlikely home in *Extra/Ordinary*, an anthology of essays that set out to consider the relationship between craft and contemporary art (Buszek, 2011).
everyday lived texts of social rituals and institutions, examining the interplay between situated cultures and ideological formations (Murdock, 1997: 59).

This trend within design history is well documented in Kjeti Fallan’s (2010) appraisal of the trajectory of the discipline. In his account he notes how the field of study has increasingly tended to treat the visual as subordinate to the social, challenging aesthetics as the determining factor in the study of designed objects, and recognising amateur and marginal practices as legitimate subject matter. As Christopher Bailey stated in the editorial of the issue of the *Journal of Design History* cited above, ‘...the humblest object to the grand plan finds a place in the history of design’ (1988: iii). This re-appraisal of the aims of design history has provided a number of perspectives on the subject of amateur design and making, and it is to these that I turn first.

**Professional versus amateur**

In a relatively early discussion of the tensions between amateur and professional design practice, Philip Pacey’s polemical article ‘Anyone Designing Anything? Non-Professional Designers and the History of Design’ (1992), argues that the tendency to focus accounts of design history on the specialised professions has progressively undermined and marginalised the amateur and integrated design activities which existed before the divisions of labour that emerged as result of the Industrial Revolution. Pacey asks that design history ‘should examine the origins and edges of its chosen field, and that in particular it should investigate what happens to non-professional designing when a design profession comes into being.’ (1992: 217). Pacey attempts to recast amateur designers as an ideological force, citing the work of Reyner Banham and Victor Papanek, who both champion the use of alternative technology and the empowering qualities of self-enabling communities. For Pacey, the marginalised practice of amateur design ‘has a radical, subversive role to fulfil (...) which deserves to be encouraged alongside and in dialogue with professional design’ (1992: 224). In this sense, one could argue that he retains the prejudice against the everyday – amateur design is only worth discussing if it has far reaching implications. Indeed, Pacey regards the confinement of women's creativity to the home as a
trivialisation of their efforts, and the home and hobbies as ‘confined spaces’ which shrink the possibilities open to makers. Although, he acknowledges that ‘more recently the do-it-yourself phenomenon has equipped many people to construct furniture and other artefacts for themselves; no doubt some will have done so to their own designs in spite of the availability of drawings, instructions and complete kits prepared by ‘professionals’ (1992: 220), there is still a sense that unless the work of amateurs is judged by the same standards one might apply to the work of professionals, then it is likely to be less worthy or significant.

In spite of its limitations, Pacey’s study is an early example of the general move cited above, of design historians to encompass a wider and more diffuse range of objects and practices. Evidence of this shift can be seen in later studies of amateur design and making activity, perhaps best exemplified by the work of Alison Clarke (2001) and Jo Turney (2004), who have tended to apply a more anthropological or sociological approach to their subject matter, accepting that the everyday may have significance even when judged on its own terms.

Turney’s study of the meaning of home crafts spans the period between 1975 and 2002, with fieldwork undertaken between 1998 and 2002, and centres on needlecraft activity. Rather than starting with the premise that women’s creativity is trivialised by being located in the home, she instead asks whether amateur activity can be regarded as ‘art’ or ‘serious craft’. She discusses the kitsch quality of home handicrafts (kitsch is defined here as a threat to the fine arts), deliberately concentrating on practices that have low social value; cross-stitching from kits, knitting and embroidery. As well as challenging the accepted meanings of art, design and craft, a key element of this research is an examination of the ways in which the products of home crafts are subsequently displayed around the maker’s homes, and how this practice instils a sense of value and status within the maker (2004: 278-279). Although this avoids the trap of simply regarding amateur or domestic creativity as a trivialised version of the ‘real thing’, her conclusions about the making and subsequent display of craft objects tend to be confined to an understanding based upon the outcomes of the activity and their signification:

What makes home craft ‘special’ or ‘valuable’ is that both activity and object act as a receptacle, a carrier, a transmitter of feeling emotion,
sentiment, challenge and relationships. The home craft object carries a secret and personal message, which is only fully understood by the maker and the consumer. (Turney, 2004: 279)

In her research on the home decorating activities of women on a London housing estate, Clarke also focuses on issues of identity formation, and the ways that decisions and actions related to interior design decisions help to objectify identity. However, in spite of the original perspectives they bring to their subject matter, both Clarke and Turney tend to downplay the practical involvement of makers in the actual act of production, failing to consider the possibility that the materiality of making may, on occasion, be more important than the final product. The brief exception to this position is when Turney, noting the ‘addictive’ qualities of cross-stitching, cites an article from Cross Stitcher magazine that describes a cross-stitcher’s day without her hobby as kind of ‘non-life threatening ‘cold turkey’, in which the subject becomes more distressed the more distanced she is from her sewing’ (2004: 275).

Whilst Judy Attfield had also tackled DIY in her research, she had also chosen not to address the material experience of the making process itself. Instead, she limits her discussion to the aesthetic distinctions brought into play by the strategies of appropriation employed by do-it-yourself home improvement enthusiasts. She argues that DIY ‘…needs to be seen as an additional layer applied to an uncategorised ‘builders’ vernacular style’. (2000: 208). She conceptualises this phenomenon by employing the notion of bricolage. According to Attfield, in the same way that Dick Hebdige ([1979] 2002) observed how members of youth sub-cultures attempted to ‘think’ the world into a material logic of their own by appropriating commodities in new and unexpected combinations, DIYers can be seen to appropriate and caricature period detailing – with scant regard for historical accuracy – in order to express their ideas about the home. Thus, rather than considering the actual making process inherent in DIY activity, her study is limited to a discussion of its stylistic and aesthetic results, set against a general background of a critique of modernism and the ‘good design’ lobby.

Although they tackle a subject matter that is often ignored, the analyses provided by Turney, Clarke and Attfield tend to focus on the symbolic outcomes of amateur making, and fail to address the principle question posed by this thesis, which asks
how people derive pleasures from making which are unrelated to separable outcomes. As I will discuss later, this thesis aims to extend those accounts that explain material culture purely in terms of representation, by considering instead how the role of material interaction and the experiences that people have whilst engaged in the act of making, offer rewards that cannot be found in other ways.

**Customisation and user intervention**

As well as interesting design historians, amateur making has also received attention from scholars working in the fields of sociology and cultural studies. Writing from within the discipline of American cultural studies, Kevin Melchionne uses the study of DIY to highlight what he sees as the prejudice of conventional cultural studies against the everyday and the material, complaining that 'Cultural Studies is above all Media Studies' (1999: 254), and as a consequence fails to engage with the domain of material things. Melchionne argues that because the emphasis of conventional Cultural Studies is on the representational qualities of texts, and on the spectacular at the expense of the ordinary, the discipline is in danger of neglecting the material culture of everyday life ‘even as it flourishes beneath our noses’ (Melchionne, 1999: 255). His central theme is that:

Do-it-yourselfers make things. They do not just interpret them. Creativity resides not just in the construction of the meaning of the commodity, but, more importantly, in the physical formation of the final product. (Melchionne, 1999: 249)

For Melchionne this is exemplified by do-it-yourself home improvement activity, where consumers buy semi-finished materials that are then subsequently used in the creation of something of their own design. In addition to home improvement Melchionne also includes car customising, clothes sewing and desktop publishing within his definition, arguing that they share the same economic structure and benchmarks. They all involve the mixing and matching of factory made, shop bought components in a way that amounts to a distinctive individual style. For Melchionne 'do-it-yourself products' are raw materials for projects that need to
be completed in some way before being incorporated by the individual into an overall personal project.

There are parallels here with the sociologist Colin Campbell’s later (2005) concept of the ‘craft consumer’, for whom the ready-mades of mass production will no longer suffice. Campbell’s concept hinges on a commonly held understanding that craft can be defined as a seamless mode of production where the design and manufacture of an artefact is carried out by the same person (Dormer, 1991; Greenhalgh, 2002). Campbell extends this idea to include the making of objects through the assemblage of pre-manufactured components, arguing that craft production is still possible within systems of production that are dominated by the division of labour. According to Campbell, craft consumers engage in self-initiated acts of creative consumption intended to customize, modify and (re)design the practices of their everyday consumption. Craft consumption involves the production of an object that is both designed and made by the same person, and involves the application of skill and judgment. Although this is similar to the definition of craft used to describe pre-industrial production, the crucial difference is that the components used in craft consumption are themselves industrially produced. As examples of craft consumption Campbell cites the planning and preparation of a meal, the assembly of a wardrobe of clothes, and the design and maintenance of a garden. Craft consumers:

...consume principally out of a desire to engage in creative acts of self-expression... [though] there is no assumption that they are trying to create, or even necessarily to maintain a sense of identity (2005: 24).

Campbell’s paper attempts to counter the dominant assumption of postmodernism that consuming is principally motivated by a desire to create identity (2005: 40). He proposes that the concept of craft consumption can be used to supplement the widely cited list of consumer identities and motivations that was originally compiled by Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang in their book The Unmanageable Consumer (1995), and later reiterated by Don Slater (1997). These include the concepts of ‘consumer as hero’, ‘consumer as rebel’, ‘consumer as dupe’, and ‘consumer as identity seeker’ (or to use Mike Featherstone’s term, ‘consumer as postmodern strategist’ (Featherstone, 1991)). Campbell’s proposition is for an additional category he calls the ‘self-actualising consumer’
who, he claims, uses craft consumption in an attempt to maintain a sense of individual agency in the face of alienating mass production. Here we can begin to see some relevance to this thesis, as the emphasis of his theory is not on the representational qualities of outcomes, but on the practice of making, and on the ways in which this helps to realise the consumer’s sense of potential – their capacity to act upon the world in a way that is relevant to their life. When applied in a wider context than his original proposition, Campbell’s ideas begin to provide new and useful routes into understanding the motivations of amateur makers, and consequently the concepts of agency, alienation and self-actualisation are revisited in more detail in the later data analysis chapters of this thesis.

The ways in which consumers can be more intimately involved in the design and production of artefacts have also been considered by some groups of professional designers. The Automake/FutureFactories project at the University of Huddersfield used rapid prototyping technology to enable ‘mass-individualisation’ (Atkinson, 2008: 2), an approach that allowed end users to have a direct input into the manufacturing process. Each artefact produced using this method was designed (albeit in a limited fashion) by consumers who could interact with online CAD software and rapid prototyping technology in order to create a completely unique household product. This is then only manufactured once the consumer has agreed that the final form is acceptable to them (Atkinson, 2008: 15).

However, although the Automake/FutureFactories example alerts us to an interest in user participation in the design process (an approach sometimes referred to as ‘co-design’), and attempts to address issues associated with customised production, it does not, however, concern itself with the experience of the consumer, focussing instead on the production systems which enable this shift in emphasis to take place. Nor does it address the question of whether consumers would want to be involved in the design process, or the personal benefits to the individual that might accrue from this involvement. These questions are addressed more fully by Elizabeth Shove, Matt Watson and Jack Ingram in their research project entitled ‘Designing and consuming: objects practices and processes’, albeit in the different sphere of do-it-yourself.
Undertaken between January 2005 and December 2006, and carried out as part of the larger AHRC/ESRC research initiative called Cultures of Consumption (www.consume.bbk.ac.uk), their project aimed to develop a new theoretical understanding of the ‘stuff’ of consumption, focusing on ‘use, rather than acquisition; on the material, rather than the symbolic; and on relations between artefacts and practices’ (Shove, Watson, & Ingram, 2007a: 1). One section of their project examined do-it-yourself activity in the UK, and fourteen DIY practitioners were interviewed about the projects they had undertaken, the tools they owned, and their ‘careers’, ambitions and frustrations in doing DIY. Representatives of companies involved in designing, manufacturing and selling DIY tools and materials and professional builders and decorators were also interviewed as part of the research project (Shove, Watson, & Ingram, 2007b: 3).

Their sample dealt exclusively with DIY home improvement projects, so had little to say about making hobbies and activities that were not related in some way to maintaining or upgrading the homes of the informants. Nevertheless, the project usefully examined the dynamic relation between things, skills and ambitions, and found that the consumption of tools and materials was:

...inextricably related to the iterative formulation and accomplishment of projects and plans. Projects were in turn important for the accumulation and distribution of competence, confidence and disillusionment. Patterns of consumption changed as new products were developed and as people acquired experience (2007a: 2).

Their emphasis, unsurprisingly, given the nature of the research initiative, is on the acquisition and ownership, of tools, and the ways in which the consumption of these goods is dominated by issues of practice and competence, rather than simply as carriers of meaning. Although the span of their study does not address what it feels like to make things, and why this experience is so compelling that many will spend large amounts of their free time carrying out activities that others might regard as alienating work, it raises some interesting issues around the agency of objects and the interrelated complexes of environments and practices. Their work introduces the idea of practice into the discussion of do-it-yourself, and the relationships between the hardware of the activity, and the distribution of competence (drawing upon the ideas of Bruno Latour (1993) to
explore the agency of non-human objects). The project also usefully introduces the concepts of project, practice and competence in relation to amateur making, and these are be pursued later in the development of my thesis, alongside the concepts of agency, alienation and self-actualisation introduced above.

Making and gender

As the preceding discussions have suggested, do-it-yourself and home crafts are activities that are frequently defined in terms of gender, either in the sense that certain activities tend be dominated by female or male participants or, as in the example of the ‘craftivists’, because the participants self-consciously position their pursuits within sexual politics. This section briefly summarises these issues, and discusses the place of gender within the thesis.

Previous studies of amateur making have tended to fall into either one of two dominant strands – do-it-yourself (related to the building, construction and engineering trades) and hobbies and home handicrafts (descended, from the ’make-do-and-mend’ ethos of earlier generations (Hackney, 2006; Kirkham, 1995 [1989])), which I have referred in an earlier note as ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ crafts. In her study of amateur textile crafts, which was introduced earlier in this thesis, Jo Turney notes how within earlier discussions of domestic needlecrafts ’the emphasis is on understanding the making process and objects as ‘women’s art’, an extension and symptom of a patriarchal society’ (Turney, 2004: 268).

Although it appears that most, if not all, Turney’s respondents are women, and the activities that she discusses fall within the generally agreed category of handicrafts, issues of gender and feminist critiques of domestic art and craft practice are not the main focus in her study, and she discusses them only briefly. However, there is a clear gendered distinction between ‘hard’ DIY and ‘soft’ home handicrafts, with the demographics of amateur participants tending to reflect the gender orientation that became established before the activities took on a new status as a leisure activity. In other words the ‘hard’ activities of do-it-yourself, home construction, and craft pursuits such as wood-work and engineering, tend to be dominated by men (mirroring the male dominated trades), whilst the ‘soft’ home handicrafts tend to be seen as women’s activity (inheriting the
conventions of the generally unpaid domestic production of clothing and soft furnishings by the housewife (Cowan, 1983: 26; Sparke, 1995: 21)).

Whilst studies of home handicrafts have tended to focus on the needlecrafts, frequently in relation to issues of gender and status (Edwards, 2006; Freeman, 1989; Gelber, 1999; Hackney, 2006; Parker, 1986), Steven Gelber, (who as noted earlier, carried out extensive research into the growth of do-it-yourself in early twentieth-century America) is one of the few historians to explicitly address the issue of male gender in relation to the subject of do-it-yourself. In his analysis, he identifies what he terms the half pound rule: 'That is, women did not use any tool weighing more than a half-pound while men by and large avoided most tools weighing less, although larger paint brushes sometimes occupied a degendered middle ground' (1997: 70). Gelber argues that, in the years after the Second World War, men found themselves in a situation where they were required to be simultaneously masculine and domestic. There was a new fear that they would become subsumed into an undifferentiated identity with their wives, challenging the perceptions of masculinity that had developed in the nineteenth century around technology and industry. In addition, whilst the man's role tended to be characterized as one of production, women were more likely to see themselves (and be seen) as consumers, and the predominantly private world occupied by female members of the household, contrasted with the masculine and public sphere of work (Gelber, 1999). Even though this distinction has come to be seen by some historians as an over simplification (Sparke, 1995: 237), the idea of the separation of male and female spheres (which was first clearly identified and analysed in the work of Davidoff and Hall (cited in Sparke, 1995)) underpins much feminist historical writing in the closing years of the twentieth century. As Ruth Schwarz Cohen has explained:

...the division of labour by sex in household work seems to have no rhyme or reason to it, but it was unquestionably a real fact of social existence before industrialisation, just as it is today (...) Women had some tasks with which they filled the interstices of their days (sewing, spinning), but so did men (chopping wood and whittling) (1983: 26).

Changes in the fundamental structure of the family home in the mid twentieth century may have further contributed to the place of hobbies and pastimes there.
A number of social historians argue that during that time, working class interdependent communities began to give way to privatized, insulated spaces. The issues of privatized family places and changing domestic hierarchies were first raised by Michael Young and Peter Wilmot in their two classic studies, *Family and Kinship in East London* ([1957] 1962) and *The Symmetrical Family* (1973), in which they recognized that family homes had become privatized in an economic as well as a symbolic sense. The home became an economic asset as well as a place of residence, and home improvement was seen as the easiest way of maximizing the investment inherent in home ownership. In *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, Lynne Segal draws attention to home improvement as a component of family life. She cites a 1958 manual for middle class men that ‘...indicates what [men] might have been up to in the home: hammers, saws, smoothing tools, gripping tools, boring and drilling tools, scissors, nails, screws and glue are successively illustrated and explained’, and notes that although men may have spent more time in the home, there was a still clear gender demarcation in the way domestic duties were allocated in this period (1990: 4). For Gelber, DIY and home improvements had allowed men to actively participate in family activities while retaining spatial and functional autonomy. Because jobs around the house had an economic value attached to them, they also carried the legitimacy of masculine skilled labour; they allowed men to stay at home without feeling emasculated, and, by replicating and reinforcing work values, gave a sense of psychological fulfilment. Like sport, craft became an emblem of masculinity. To quote Gelber: “The productive leisure of hobbies has operated as a form of disguised affirmation, helping to sustain the overarching ideology of capitalism by serving up its ideals in the palatable form of domestic leisure” (1999: 11). These issues will be pursued in the data analysis chapters of the thesis, where I discuss the concepts of leisure, capitalism, and the division of labour in relation to amateur making.

As the introductory chapters of this thesis have made clear, this research originated from an interest in the 'hard' making of do-it-yourself, and the construction of things using resistant materials.17 This interest originates in my

17 The term ‘resistant materials’ has been used within the United Kingdom national school curriculum since the 1980s as a way of distinguishing between the teaching of textiles.
investigation of the history of do-it-yourself in relation to the success of the Mirror Dinghy, and in my own career, both as furniture designer and maker, and as a university lecturer in craft and product design. The implication is that this study is, to use Gelber’s shorthand, oriented to the ‘half-pound rule’; it investigates the nature of the making of things at home that are more normally made in the workplace. The corollary of this is that the subject matter tends to be gendered; because of the choice of area of investigation, many (though not all) of the people I interviewed as part of this study were men. However, although issues of gender clearly play a role in the ways in which the meanings of these activities are constructed for the participants, the research does not specifically set out to answer questions about gender. Rather, the analysis focuses on core concepts which help us to conceptualize aspects of the making experience which were common across all the makers in the study, both male and female. The sampling method is covered in some depth in the methodology chapter, but it is worth noting at this point that, men who made things at home from resistant materials were much easier to find than women, and the women who were identified as participants in the study tended to make smaller scale items. One female respondent provided an exception to this pattern as, although she made artefacts using a variety of materials, she saw herself as primarily a quilt maker. Her experience as a participant in ‘soft’ crafts provided a useful counter-case to the male dominated sample and, as will be seen in the later data analysis chapter, largely confirmed the proposition that the core motivating experience associated with amateur making was common across the sample. This is not to say, however, that the quality of the individual experience was not influenced by demographic factors, gender included.

Summary

The preceding sections have located and defined specific strands of amateur making by exploring their historical precedents and contrasting them with alternative manifestations of the phenomenon. I have established that the area

and needlecrafts, and the teaching of craft and design skills using wood, metals, plastics and ceramics.
dealt with by this research can be characterised as 'hard', or structural DIY as opposed to 'soft', or decorative DIY. The implications of this have been briefly explored in terms of gender, and it has been established that whilst gender is a factor in the experience of amateur makers, it is not the over-riding concern of this thesis. Instead, the question asked by this research is to do with the ways in which the experience of making motivates participants to engage with the practice in the absence of instrumental outcomes, regardless of gender. A review of the literature in the area confirms that this is a question that tends to be disregarded in favour of considerations of the symbolic outcomes of making. Exceptions to this include Campbell’s conception of the craft consumer as self-actualiser, and Shove, Watson and Ingrams’ introduction of the ideas of practice, project and competence as analytical terms, all of which provide a useful starting point for the later data analysis chapters of the thesis.

As the following methodology chapter will make clear, the inductive approach adopted in this project means that the review of literature is by no means complete and as fieldwork has been undertaken this has led to new theoretical sources which have been used to elucidate the data. The later data analysis chapters, therefore, continue to explore and build upon relevant literature, some of which has only been briefly introduced up to this point in the thesis. Before I turn to the data, I now describe the methodology that has been adopted for this project, and set out the research design.
5: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter begins by revisiting the research question, and uses this as a starting point for discussing the possible methodologies for this research project. This is followed by a brief context setting review of the approaches that have been used in the field of design research. The rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology is then set out, and contrasted with alternative quantitative and positivist approaches. The range of available qualitative approaches is considered, and the chosen ethnographic approach and case study method is discussed in detail, covering the use of analytic induction and grounded theory. Finally, the analytic techniques that have been used in the project are examined, and a clear summary of the method is set out.

The methodological implications of the research question

Because the purpose of the study was to arrive at an understanding of the experience of amateur makers, an interpretive, qualitative methodology was adopted, based on a case study model. This approach is considered useful for investigating areas that are under-theorised, and where there are few guidelines and assumptions to direct the opening stages of the research. These qualitative approaches enable a theory building process that originates from particular experiences and situations, and that does not necessarily set out to test a hypotheses, or existing theory model against empirical findings. Jo Turney's 2004 study, which is discussed in the literature review, is characteristic of the turn in design research towards empirical and ethnographic methods, and it is in this manner that the current study was undertaken.

For the purposes of this research project, we can understand theory as a set of well-developed concepts, definitions, and propositions related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 55).
This theory can be used to describe, analyse and classify properties of individuals, situations and events according to observed commonalities. This kind of theory is needed when, as is the case with this project, knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated is limited.

To this end, the study adopted an inductive methodology that was built around the tradition of case studies. These were comprised by the identification of makers who fitted the general definition of the phenomenon, followed by visits to their workshops and homes, photography of their workshops and the things they had made, and long, semi-structured depth interviews. This data gathering was supplemented by primary text-based sources such as specialist magazines, publications and archive material, and secondary text-based sources where the findings offered insights into the empirical case study material.

The choice of a qualitative methodology is, however, not a straightforward one, and academic conflict frequently takes place between positivists, who tend to advocate quantitative and experimental methods, and interpretivists, who prefer qualitative and naturalistic approaches to research. Before discussing these differences, I want to briefly review how researchers working in design history, design research and cultural studies – the disciplines from which this study springs – have addressed these issues.

**Design research methods**

This study has its origins within the discipline of art and design and, as discussed in the previous chapter, has connections with the related disciplines of design research, design history, cultural studies and craft theory. It is research into design – as distinct from research through design, and design as research (Frayling, 1993/1994: 1-5)). In this sense it springs from a tradition established in the second half of the twentieth century that sought to better understand the ways that designers worked, and the function of design in society. Misha Black and Milner Gray’s *Design Research Unit*, founded in 1943, Bruce Archer’s *Systematic Methods for Designers* (1965), John Chris Jones’ *Design Methods* (1970), and the forming of the Design Research Society in 1966, are all early examples of the drive to better understand the nature of design activity through
research. These projects tended to assert their legitimacy by adopting positivist approaches that have their origins in the natural sciences; they attempted to develop methods that could be replicated across design practice in order to achieve consistent and reliable results. Journals such as *Design Studies* and the *Journal of Design Research* continue this tradition by publishing work that deals with technical subjects such as computer interface and engineering design, as well as the results of experimental research in subjects such as interaction design.

Design, essentially a human activity, has also been the subject of enquiry for historians and cultural theorists, who have tended to reject positivist methods in favour of the interpretive approaches more closely connected with the humanities, and with textual research. The ‘Chicago School’\(^{18}\) are frequently cited as the pioneers of an interpretive approach to sociology that combines theory with ethnographic fieldwork (Gelder & Thornton, 1997: 11-15). Their influential approach was taken up in the United Kingdom by the researchers at Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and their work on youth sub-cultures (Hall & Jefferson, [1976] 2002; Hebdige, [1979] 2002; Willis, 1978) exemplifies a qualitative approach that pays attention to the previously disregarded structures of popular culture and everyday life. However, for critics of these early studies, their weakness lay in their lack of empirical data, leading to accounts that are characterised as ‘thin’, with insufficiently contextualised interpretations (McRobbie, 1997; Murdock, 1997: 60). The desire to overcome this methodological flaw and to achieve ‘thick description’\(^{19}\) has led many researchers toward the more detailed ethnographic data gathering techniques formerly found

\[\text{A term which is used to denote the work of academics who taught, or were trained, at the University of Chicago Department of Sociology and Anthropology in the early and middle parts of the twentieth-century.}\]

\[\text{The phrase ‘thick description’ was adopted by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (Geertz, 1973). Ryle used the example of the wink to demonstrate that, without a context, simple actions can have multiple meanings. A wink might mean the person is attracted to us, that they are trying to communicate secretly, or that they understand what you mean. As the context changes, the meaning of the wink changes. Geertz argues that all human behaviour is like this. In this model, a description solely of the wink itself, however accurately described, would be described as thin. According to Geertz, the task of the anthropologist, therefore, is to explain the context of the practices and discourse that take place within a society, such that these practices become meaningful to an ‘outsider’ – to offer ‘thick description’.}\]
primarily within the discipline of anthropology (Clarke, 2001; Pink, 2004; Thornton, 1996; Woodward, 2007). This method is able to provide more finely grained research which takes account of particular local dynamics. Design researchers have also both borrowed from, and contributed to, work carried out in the field of material culture studies, an area that is championed, and indeed dominated by the work of Daniel Miller (1987, 2001). Miller was also associated with the academics at Middlesex Polytechnic who produced the ground-breaking journal *Block*, cited earlier, and his contribution to their *Household Choices* compilation of essays – ‘Appropriating the State on the Council Estate’ (1990) – helped to cement the relationship between material culture studies and design research.

This research follows in this interpretive ethnographic tradition in order to investigate human behaviour in a natural setting, thus rejecting the positivistic approaches normally associated with scientific research. As the design theorist Terence Love has noted, the theoretical foundations of disciplines, which involve practical human action, are not amenable to Cartesian validation. They therefore tend to pay a great deal of attention to the epistemological and ontological basis of their theoretical abstractions:

This lack of Cartesian validation means that the development of empirical research programs requires a critical identification of the assumptions and implications of abstractions reaching back to an understanding of the ontological and epistemological bases of such research (...) A human-based perspective on design research implies that it should be viewed in the same light as these other disciplines that involve research into human action and, in consequence, needs a similar level of attention to epistemological and ontological issues relating to theories involving humans in design (Love, 2000: 296).

As such, the methodological justification for the research design and analysis becomes an important part of the thesis, and the following section aims to clearly set out the epistemological and ontological issues related to this research.
Qualitative and quantitative approaches

A key distinction is drawn in academic research between quantitative and qualitative approaches, each of which starts with very different theoretical assumptions (Silverman, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln apply the following general definition to qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (1994: 3).

Quantitative research tends to be driven by theory, and takes a ‘top-down’ approach, setting out to scientifically test hypotheses, by analysing data in order to arrive at answers to pre-set questions. In contrast, qualitative research tends to adopt a ‘bottom-up’ approach, in other words developing the thesis as the data is collected and analyzed, and generating hypotheses rather than testing them. Research questions tend to be flexible and allow the researcher sufficient freedom to explore an issue in some depth and from a variety of standpoints. Although the research might begin with this general approach, more specific, detailed questions tend to arise during the course of the research that then direct further data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 27). This often leads to further reviews of the literature, and the consequent introduction of new theoretical material. Details of the fieldwork are frequently retained and presented in order to paint an in depth picture of the phenomenon being investigated, and there is a focus on the construction and negotiation of meaning.

Whilst quantitative research conventionally involves the handling of large quantities of data collected from an extensive number of informants, and perhaps carried out by multiple researchers using pre-determined questionnaires and interview procedures, a qualitative approach tends to be smaller in scale, with
less rigid guidelines and more open procedures, relying on a few cases and many variables (Creswell, 1998: 17). As Denzin and Lincoln observe in the passage above, multiple sources may be used, resulting in large and complex collections of data that require sorting and collating in order to arrive at a core findings of the research.

As well as having practical and operational implications, some writers assert that the choice of qualitative methods is an affirmation of the researcher’s worldview; Guba and Lincoln declare that methodology is derived from a researcher’s accepted paradigm, or ‘the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways’ (2003: 17). In other words, what is the nature of the reality that is being investigated in a research endeavour? They describe how social science studies originating in the first half of the twentieth century sought the production of untainted morally neutral knowledge. In an attempt to legitimate their field, social scientists working at this time were keen to adopt quantitative and logical positivist methods, believing that this would lead to greater acceptance and to more valid knowledge. Empiricist and positivist in their outlook, these studies assumed that an objective truth is self-evident, exists in the world, and can be accessed, and have universal validity. In other words, the methods and logic of the physical sciences are applied to the social sciences. However, the idea that knowledge is ‘out there’, waiting to be apprehended, has been repeatedly challenged as a form of naïve realism (Silverman, 2006). Whilst scientific enquiry focuses on efforts to objectively verify or falsify a priori hypotheses, interpretive approaches tend to acknowledge that it is only possible to ‘tell a story’, and that this will always remain a provisional and situated account. They accept the subjectivity of the researcher, whose own experience necessarily contributes to the analysis, and this should be self-consciously acknowledged in the writing up process, and in the presentation of the findings. Some theorists working within this interpretive paradigm acknowledge these challenges by calling for texts that allow for more creative and complex modes of representation by being ‘messy, open and fragmented’ as they ‘may be more faithful to the complexities and contours of social life’ (Atkinson, Goffey, & Delamont, 2001: 12-13).
In spite of the differences between advocates of qualitative and quantitative approaches, it is important not to overstate the two positions. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) take a pragmatic approach to the decision about appropriate methods, suggesting it is more of a ‘technical issue’. In other words, both approaches are distinctive, but each is appropriate for different types of research questions. The choice of method for this research is both pragmatic and epistemological. Pragmatic, because of the conspicuous lack of theory and previous research in the area to be investigated, and epistemological because of my background in the subjective and contingent worlds of design practice, and my academic career, which has been located within cultural studies, and the humanities. In the next section I will explore the available range of established qualitative methods in more depth, and discuss in more detail the choices made for this project.

**Ethnography and case studies**

Within the broad tradition of qualitative research, Creswell (1998) identifies five dominant approaches, and notes the academic discipline from which they spring. These are *Biography*, which is the study of the life and experience of an individual person, and originates in the disciplines of history and sociology; *Phenomenology*, which aims to describe the meaning of the experiences of a phenomenon, such as concepts of home, identity or perception, and originates in the disciplines of philosophy and psychology; *Grounded Theory*, or the inductive generation of theory, rather than the testing of a theory, originating in sociology; *Ethnography*, the study of a culture sharing group, originating in anthropology and sociology; and the *Case Study*, a study of single or collective cases studies, originating in social and health sciences.

Although this summary provides a useful starting point for discussion, the comparison is compromised by the varying ways in which these terms can be used. Whilst some, such as case study, refer to broad approaches to data gathering, others, such as phenomenology, refer to specifically defined methodological positions. Therefore, the approach adopted for this research can be defined by using a number of these terms. The structure of the project is built
around the idea of the case study, where a number of cases have been considered in depth using visits, interviews, photography and secondary literature, thus generating multiple sources of data. The study also has some features of an ethnographic approach, though as I discuss below, the term ethnography has a range of interpretations. Finally, the data analysis and theoretical orientation of the project utilises the analytic induction methods associated with grounded theory.

The term ethnography has been used to describe a variety of types of qualitative study, ranging from traditional long term academic anthropological projects, to short term commercial surveys used to inform marketing strategies and product development. As a consequence the term has taken on a number of differing meanings. The first important point to note is that ethnography refers to both the physical account (the transcript and other data collected in the field) and the technique (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The literal meaning of the term is writing about people. Ethnography, however, is not a methodology, and it does not adhere to a predefined theoretical or conceptual status, and it has been used in support of many methodological standpoints.

The primary method is observation, but this can refer to extended fieldwork (with up to a year or more in the field), with full participation in an activity, or immersion in a culture, and with the production and accumulation of field notes, reflective diary, collection of artefacts and documents. Some ethnographic projects have lasted decades, and deviated widely from the conventions of academic anthropology. Mass Observation, led by Charles Madge, a poet; Humphrey Jennings, a surrealist filmmaker and Tom Harrison, an anthropologist, collected material about everyday life in Britain from 1937 until the early 1950s, often ‘...blurring between what an anthropologist at the time would call ‘native informants’ and ‘participant observer ... refusing the interpretative authority of specialist ethnographers’ (Highmore, 2002: 87).

Alternatively it can simply refer to a relatively short series of interviews, observations or meetings that build to provide a bigger picture. Design consultancies and market researchers increasingly use this ‘quick and dirty’ ethnography in order to gain insights into consumer behaviour and inform future product development. This form of ethnographic study is conducted quickly and
the analysis is less rigorous and scientific, as accuracy of results is not as important as the general observations. Basic principles are held onto but the analysis and interpretation is adapted to suit the objectives of the research (Aldersley-Williams, Bound, & Coleman, 1999).

Whichever approach is taken, ethnography tends to focus on the generation of a breadth and depth of data that is used to produce the ‘thick description’ outlined above, and may incorporate general descriptions of behaviours, descriptions of physical layouts, close descriptions of conversation, thoughts and feelings, and anecdotes. All ethnographic approaches are also united by their naturalistic approach (ethnographers study real people in their natural environment rather than in artificially constructed and controlled experimental conditions) and a common aim, which is to study societies or parts of societies who share aspects of a common culture, or sub-culture (Creswell, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Ethnography takes an emic understanding of the world; in other words the research is influenced by the point of view of the informants and uses categories drawn from the respondents themselves in order to make explicit practices and systems that are implicit to the data collected. Whilst emic accounts are a description of behaviour or a belief in terms meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor, an etic account is a description of a behaviour or belief by an observer, in terms that can be applied to other cultures. Etic accounts facilitate comparative research and aim to be culturally neutral. Emic accounts on the other hand, offer insights into the local construction of meaning, and local rules for behaviour, and this inductive uncovering of meaning is well-suited to the under-researched areas of amateur making (Michlewski, 2008).

In its conventional usage, ethnography is more likely to produce ‘insights’ than theory, though this is dependent on the analytic methods that are used to understand the data once it has been collected. Therefore, in this context, it is most useful to think of ethnography as a data gathering technique rather than a methodology that is rooted in particular contexts, or which produces a specific or consistent type of knowledge.
Analytic induction and grounded theory

Together with the use of ethnography as a data gathering method, this study follows the qualitative methodology of analytic induction (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 235). Silverman defines this as ‘based on the study of particular cases rather than just derived from theory’ (2005: 378). The term refers to a general approach that involves inductive, rather than deductive reasoning, and it is an approach that generates theoretical propositions rather than testing hypotheses. This describes a process which starts with a loose definition of the phenomenon (a job that is partly accomplished in this research by the preceding chapters and by the following research design chapter), after which field work is undertaken. As the findings of this research are analysed more detail is gradually added to the definition, and the beginnings of a hypothesis, or an explanation of what is going on is formulated. Literature is also reviewed continually as this process is undertaken, with the field work directing the researcher to appropriate theoretical sources, and these in turn sensitising the researcher to what might be happening in the data. The researcher returns to the field and the process begins again, in what has been described as an ‘iterative dance’ (Warburton, 2005) (see figure 8).

This methodology also owes a debt to the conventions of the grounded theory method (GTM) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002), and I spent some time looking at GTM whilst considering the methodology for this project. Silverman (2005) defines grounded theory as ‘a term used by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to describe a way of inducing theoretically based generalisations from qualitative data’ (2005: 384). Originating with the publication of Glaser and Strauss’s The Discovery of Grounded Theory in 1967, grounded theory method has since been widely adopted, and developed and modified in a number of different ways. Although offering a practical and concrete set of methods for qualitative enquiry, the origins of grounded theory rest in some fundamental philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge (though as Corbin points out, it is not necessary to become conversant with these ideas in order for the method to function effectively (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 17)). To quote Corbin and Strauss: ‘This methodology’s
epistemology has come to it in a two-step evolution, involving both the tradition of Chicago Interactionism and the philosophy of Pragmatism inherited largely from John Dewey and George Mead’ (2008: 2).

In the introduction to the third edition of their text devoted to the techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory, Corbin and Strauss show how grounded theory owes a philosophical debt to pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 1-10). Symbolic interactionism develops from the premise that nothing in the world (that is objects, people or events) has intrinsic meaning or inherent value in and of itself. Meaning is created by experience. It is the meaning attributed to an object by social life that gives it value. Put simply, pragmatist approaches hold to the principle that ideas must be looked at in terms of their consequences and practical effects on the world. This
philosophy underpins the grounded theorist’s methodology of building theory from the direct practical experiences and interactions with the world. There is no simple explanation for things. Rather, events are the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often unanticipated ways:

...experience, and any action/interaction that follows, is likely to be formed and transformed as a response to consequence and contingency. We don't necessarily want to reduce understanding of action/interaction/emotion to one explanation or theoretical scheme; however, we do believe that concepts of various levels of abstraction form the basis of analysis. Concepts provide ways of talking about and arriving at shared understandings... (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 8)

The grounded theory method uses a process of analytic induction to generate theoretical articulations of aspects of experience that are located and specific, and emerge from the study as fieldwork is undertaken. As in analytic induction, sampling is extended as the fieldwork progresses, with sampling procedures being guided by the findings of earlier fieldwork, and the emergence of theoretical frameworks. In this respect, the method aims to build theory rather than test it, and fieldwork tends to precede literature review or theoretical conjecture. Theory emerges as the fieldwork progresses as 'conceptual generalisation' (qualitative and descriptive) rather than 'predictive generalisation' (positivist and quantitative). Grounded theory generates theory 'models'. Not totalising 'explanations', but theoretical articulations of aspects of experience – an interpretive approach. Theory is informed both by literature and by field work, and findings are always specific to examples.

However, the limitations of this method are acknowledged in the following section, and the approach taken does not strictly follow the occasionally over-formulaic requirements of the purist grounded theorists – an attitude towards research that Jim McGuigan has termed 'disciplinary methodism whereby correctly prescribed technique is reified over and above the matter of the enquiry' (2010: 3). In GTM, theory is assumed to be derived from the data as research progresses, so the work cannot begin with a fixed theoretical proposition; the intention is for the work to generate theory rather than test it.
The branch of GTM advocated by Glaser (1978)\textsuperscript{20} insists that the researcher enter the field with a minimum of preconceptions, or existing theoretical assumptions (for example by avoiding any kind of literature review or investigation of extant theory). This approach has been frequently challenged as a form of naive empiricism, or to use Silverman’s term, ‘simplistic inductivism’ (Silverman, 2005: 78), that has been criticised as not only impractical and unrealistic, especially for experienced researchers, but also as epistemologically suspect. The possibility of this research beginning with a tabula rasa was inevitably compromised by my existing interest in the research question, which was initially prompted by the relation between an existing theoretical model – flow experience – and an empirical investigation that I had already been considering in some depth. Therefore the investigation was necessarily underpinned by concepts and theory which both defined the subject area and offered routes into the study (Bauman & May, 2001). Nevertheless, an open ended approach to the research was adopted in line with a commitment to qualitative methodology, and as the later data analysis chapters demonstrate, the theory building process substantially extends these preliminary suppositions through the process of analytic induction.

**Data analysis**

Irrespective of the break with the core principles of the grounded theory outlined above, GTM still offers a clear set of research guidelines that provide a useful structuring device for data analysis, and it is in this respect that the method has been utilised in this project (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002).\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who together developed the original grounded theory Method in the mid 1960s, had a dramatic falling out in the 1970s. This led to the emergence and promotion of two alternative branches of GTM, with the key distinction being between those who adopt a rigid systematic approach to the method, and those who use a looser, more impressionistic approach to the interpretation of data.

\textsuperscript{21} For Glaser and Strauss, the originators of grounded theory, this attention to process lent rigour to qualitative research methods, and helped to defend them from accusations of subjectivity and unreliability.
In grounded theory, the data is analysed in order to generate conceptual categories. These represent a researcher’s understanding of the experiences, actions and issues that have been described by the respondents, and act as way of grouping and organising the data that the researcher is working with (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 51). In this project, as over the course of the analysis responses were repeated and concepts became crystallised, they were named, or coded. Further occurrences were then recognised and noted, and these modified or improved the articulation of the infant concept. Theory was generated by moving from substantive to formal accounts of the phenomenon; in other words moving steadily from the concrete account of the field data to increasingly generic theory; a move from detailed local analysis towards greater generality and abstraction (Silverman, 2005: 105).

Hammersley and Atkinson point out that a researcher may also move from the formal towards the substantive: ‘...within ethnographic research there is generally a constant interplay between the topical and the generic, or the substantive and the formal. One may begin with some formal analytic notion and seek to extend or refine its range of application in the context of a particular new substantive application’ (1995: 31); this is also a move from an ‘emic’ account to an ‘etic’ account. In this approach, the fieldwork is ‘foreshadowed’ by theoretical investigation. This opens potential lines of enquiry and contributes to conceptual sensitisation: to ‘encode and foreshadow a tradition of enquiry’ (Creswell, 1998: 99). One can also develop research problems by extending the use of an analytic framework from one substantive area to another.

Corbin and Strauss use the terms ‘basic level concepts’ and ‘higher level concepts’ to refer to the levels of abstraction inherent in the theory (2008: 52). In this model lower level concepts provide the detail, and point to higher level concepts, with this process leading to increasing levels of abstraction. It is a central premise of grounded theory that higher level concepts are always dependent on, and are derived from, the lower level concepts which are, in turn, grounded on, and tested against the empirical data.

Corbin and Strauss use the term ‘open coding’ to describe the initial identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the data. Essentially, each line, sentence, paragraph etc. is read in search of the answer to the repeated
question "what is this about? What is being referenced here?" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Axial coding refers to the grouping together of these initial codes into categories that are able to represent a group of ideas, particularly in terms of common causal conditions and contexts, intervening conditions, and consequences. A key aim at this stage is to develop a clear understanding of the properties and dimensions of these categories.

The aim of the research on which this thesis is based was not to arrive at a generalisable, totalising theory, but rather, to generate local and contingent knowledge that provides insights into particular experiences and situations – to produce theory that is grounded, with a story emerging as the research progresses. In terms of process, this necessitates literature searches that are generated as a result of emerging themes, and occur in the later stages of the research process, helping to solidify conceptual generalisations and to relate them to existing theoretical frameworks.
6: Research Design

Sampling method

Having discussed the choice of research methods, I now want to go on to describe the details of how they were utilised in this project. The fieldwork for this thesis was based upon a process of purposive sampling, using predefined criteria to select respondents (Silverman, 2006: 306), as opposed to the probability, or random selection sampling methods associated with quantitative methods. In other words respondents were chosen on the basis of their potential for providing the information required for the study, with subsequent sampling extended as the fieldwork progressed, guided by the ongoing development of theoretical frameworks, allowing emerging theories or findings to be developed further. This is also known as theoretical sampling, and aims to maximize opportunities for exploring emerging concepts.

Using the snowball method,22 the fieldwork began by identifying makers who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. These were people who had set up their own home workshops, and had produced complex artefacts over a number of years, often attaining high levels of skill. They were then asked to recommend others who they knew who also meet these criteria. To some extent the sampling was also opportunistic – unplanned meetings and encounters frequently unearthed leads that offered a route to participants suitable for inclusion in the study, and I took advantage of these whenever possible.

After some preliminary research, those offering the most potential to inform the study were short listed, and asked to accommodate site visits, interviews and photography. The goal was not the representative capture of all possible variations, but to gain a deeper understanding of analysed cases, and facilitate the development of analytic frames and concepts to be used for further research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

22 The snowball method utilises a form of word-of-mouth, where each participant recommends further participants who they think would be appropriate for the study.
**Sampling criteria**

In line with the starting point recommended for analytic induction (outlined in the previous chapter), and in order to establish some boundaries for this study, a specific category of maker was defined. This chapter begins to define the characteristics of the group I chose to sample and discusses their distinctive features; the aim being to reach a reasonably clear and controlled definition of the people who would be asked to take part in the study. This not only provided useful constraints for the study, thus accommodating the practical limitations of the PhD, it also allowed the work to focus on a specific set of concepts that were likely to be found within the sample. Therefore the sampling criteria that follow are a result of both pragmatic and methodological considerations.

The sampling process aimed to include amateur makers who engage in projects that require sustained periods of activity, probably over a period of months, or even years. Their projects have a clearly identifiable outcome, normally in the form of a discrete self-contained artefact, and contain varying levels of design input, from adaption and modification of existing patterns, through to the completely original conception of new objects. I call these people ‘serious amateur makers’.

The makers in the sample undertake activities, processes and techniques that require tactile skill, and encourage ingenuity and iterative design processes. The making processes involve the use of a range of tools, and a variety of materials and processes; they form part of a lasting enthusiasm, and require the acquisition of skills over time. They form part of a ‘career’ in the sense that each project can be identified as part of a series of increasingly complex endeavours, each leading on from the previous one, but financial reward is not the prime motivating force for engagement in the activity.

The complexity of the tasks undertaken, the extended periods of time necessary in order to bring a project to completion, and the range of tools and materials involved, means that many of the informants chosen for the sample maintain a dedicated workspace, either within their home or its grounds, or at another location away from their home. These workshops often have strong
resemblance to the spaces used by the professional equivalents to their amateur
enthusiasms.

These criteria can be illustrated by considering Greg\textsuperscript{23}, the first participant in the
study, who makes wooden sea kayaks in his spare time (see figure 9).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure9.jpg}
\caption{One of Greg's completed sea kayaks.}
\end{figure}

Each canoe takes around three months to complete, and is crafted from
hardwood strips and ‘two-pack’ polyester resins. Made to his own design, these
objects are sophisticated high-performance sports craft, built to a standard
higher than that achieved by most professional boat builders. Although a keen
canoelist himself, Greg doesn’t keep his kayaks for his own use – in fact he is
anxious to see them leave his small workshop so that he can free up the space
required to start the next project. Although he sells his canoes, he earns his living
by being a general carpenter and odd job man. It is impossible for him to recover

\textsuperscript{23} The names of all participants in this project have been changed to preserve their
anonymity. Interviews were carried out between May 2007 and June 2010 in the maker’s
homes and workshops, and photographs were taken throughout the visits (unless
otherwise stated, all images are by the author). All the participants have consented to
their comments, and images of themselves and their workshops being used in this PhD
project, and in any subsequent publications which may result from the research. A
sample of the consent form that was used can be found in appendix.
the real costs incurred during the making process, and impossible to truly recompense for his labour time. As Greg puts it, ‘I spend my spare time working for the minimum wage.’ The example of Greg characterises the amateur makers who were chosen to take part in the study. Because they are deeply involved in activities that require much time, effort, and skill, yet produce little, or no financial or status compensation, their experiences help to illuminate the questions about the relationships between internal rewards and amateur making that are posed by this thesis.

In most cases there is a professional equivalent to the amateur activity that was sampled. However, the informants are not liable to be constrained by external timescales or deadlines, and their work takes place at times, and in durations decided by themselves – which is not to say that these kinds of activities do not generate their own, inherent, constraints. These could arise from processes that have to be undertaken at a specific time or place, or involve processes with high levels of risk (to quality of outcome rather than to health and safety). In some ways these external constraints begin to replicate the pressures experienced by professionals carrying out the same activity in the context of paid work, except that the amateur is in a position to abandon their activity at any time, without incurring significant financial losses, or the disruption of a vocational career path.

The sociologist Robert Stebbins, whose influential work on serious leisure has formed a significant starting point for this research, chooses to describe this group as hobbyists, and defines them thus:

Here is the conceptual home of such enthusiasts as inventors, flytiers, seamstresses, furniture and toy makers, automobile repairers, boat builders, knitters and weavers, quilters, lapidary workers, indoor gardeners, home remodellers (where this is a recurrent activity), model airplane builders, and handicrafters (where no professional counterpart exists). Mind you, the do-it-yourself drudge who paints the exterior of his or her house to avoid the expense of a full-time tradesperson is not an example of the hobbyist home remodeller (Stebbins, 1992: 12).

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24 Direct quotations from the participants in the study are italicised throughout, and have been transcribed from the recorded interviews.
Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The research design is based around the semi-structured in-depth interview, focusing on the experience of the individual – allowing the respondent to lead the discussion within an open and flexible structure made up of a core of five to six interview questions\(^\text{25}\). The semi-structured depth interview is a face-to-face encounter between the researcher and the informant that aims to reach an understanding of the informant’s life experience and situations as expressed in their own words (as discussed in chapter 5, this is termed an emic approach). The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they allowed me to ask a set of core questions that offered a level of consistency across different interviews, but that permitted me to pursue points with improvised follow up questions, and to lead the conversation towards the area that I regarded as most important in understanding the concept being investigated. This approach requires a certain level of skill on the part of the researcher as they have to be able to respond quickly to the flow of the interview. I undertook a training course in semi-structured interviewing with Tom Wengraf as part of my Masters Degree in the History of Design at Middlesex University, and this proved to be a useful foundation for this project. As Wengraf notes in his book on qualitative research interviewing:

> ... most of the informant's responses can't be predicted in advance ... and you as interviewer therefore have to improvise probably half and maybe 80% or more of your responses to what they say in response to your initial prepared question or questions (Wengraf, 2001: 5).

This approach offers a greater degree of flexibility than a survey-style interview and has the appearance of a regular conversation, therefore putting the participant at ease and allowing them to give a more natural response. With the respondents’ permission, I also used an inconspicuous digital voice recorder that picked up the conversation from anywhere in a normal sized room and could be carried around whilst I was being shown around their workshops.

\(^{25}\) A representative sample of the core interview questions is contained in the appendices section of the thesis.
None of the respondents appeared to be inhibited by the presence of the voice recorder, and the digital files could easily be uploaded onto a computer for transcription purposes. As Steven Pace has noted in his accounts of using semi-structured interviews to investigate flow experiences in web users, one of the drawbacks of interviews is that interviewees are able to exaggerate and deceive, whether consciously or unconsciously, just as they are in normal conversation. But as he notes:

The only way a researcher can get at what goes on in the minds of his or her informants is to rely to some degree upon their testimony. Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990: xiii) reinforce this point: ‘Experiences are subjective phenomena and therefore cannot be externally verified. Either one trusts the words of the person who reports the experience or one does not’ (Pace, 2004: 333).

As well as the recorded interview, visits to the respondent’s house and workshops included a tour of their home (some showed me their entire house, others just the more ‘public’ spaces) and their workshop. If they had objects that they had made in use or on display they described these to me and I took photographs. I used a Nikon digital SLR camera which allowed me to take photographs quickly and spontaneously, yet still record high definition images suitable for publication. After each visit I also made field notes that covered my overall impression of the visit and recorded notable points that had been made whilst the recorder was turned off. In addition to these planned visits I also made more or less spontaneous visits to a number of additional locations including a hobby shop in North London, a wood working supply centre, a custom car and hot-rod show, and a Robot Wars event, all in East Kent. I also jointly organised a week long research workshop at the University for the Creative Arts in Rochester with Dr Terry Perk, another researcher at the institution. This involved around ten makers who ranged from students at the university to professional artists and makers who also had teaching positions in the faculty. All volunteered to take part, and were given the task of making a series of objects over the course of the week. During this time I interviewed them about their experiences whilst they were making, and followed their progress. This gave me some additional insights into the way that makers approach project work, and allowed me access their
thoughts and feelings about their experiences whilst they were engaged in the workshop or studio. Although some interviews were recorded, the majority of were not, as I wanted the conversations to remain spontaneous. Photography was used throughout. The historical section of the introduction to the thesis topic was partly researched at the archives of the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture at the Cat Hill campus of Middlesex University where I was able to access early issues of do-it-yourself magazines and books from the 1950s onwards.

**Computer aided qualitative data analysis software**

As well as using conventional cataloguing methods, the data was also stored, organised and accessed by using NVivo, a computer aided qualitative data analysis software programme (CAQDAS). I was able to take part in a two-day training course run by the makers of the software, and subsequently had the software installed on the various computers that I worked on. This allowed me to store, organise and work with large amounts of data within one digital environment, including interview transcripts, audio and video recordings, and photography, and most importantly, facilitated the coding of data.

CAQDAS, has, to some extent, formalised some of the conventions associated with grounded theory methods (Wickham & Woods, 2005). Programs such as Atlas/ti, NUD*IST, NVivo and Ethnograph, which have been available in various forms since the 1980s, tend to be based around the methods of analytic induction associated with grounded theory. Although none overtly claim an allegiance to the method, the design of the software encourages the user to organise data and structure the analytic processes in a way that mirrors the conventions of grounded theory. However, the labels that they apply to the codes and the analytic stages do depart from the terms proposed by Glaser, Strauss and Corbin in their respective texts. There has been some discussion of the ways in which software developers might be determining the research methodology of those who use their products, and it is important to be aware of the limitations this might impose on research design and analytic method (Davidson & Jacobs, 2008). However, the advantages offered by the use of software extend beyond simple
time saving and organisational benefits. The speed with which data can be processed, and the spontaneity with which responses and insights can be recorded and organised, means that the software offers a qualitative difference in approach to analysis that outweighs its limiting design.

NVivo uses a coding system built around the idea of the ‘node’. Open coding is carried out by labelling data as ‘free nodes’. These can then be grouped as themes emerge. Once two or more nodes are grouped together, these are then termed ‘tree nodes’. Respectively, these are broadly equivalent to the open codes and axial codes found in conventional grounded theory analysis. However, tree nodes can be arranged into a limitless hierarchy, facilitating a type of family tree, or pyramid arrangement, where a larger number of more ‘grounded’ nodes – codes that are directly connected to data – are grouped beneath a diminishing number of broader, more abstract nodes. In practice it seems that using a total of about four levels in the tree allows over-arching theory concepts to be developed from the grounded data, with three or less parent nodes forming the summit of the pyramid. These are the equivalent of the conceptual categories found in conventional grounded theory.

An important activity during coding is the writing of theoretical notes or memos. NVivo allows memos to be written spontaneously, linked to the data that prompted the note, and stored for future use. Memos served as a record of thoughts and ideas that occurred during the coding process, and acted as a trigger for further research and investigation. These prompted further literature searches and guided further sampling. Most importantly, the coding and memos sensitised my understanding of the questions that need to be asked of the research, bringing initial theoretical suppositions to the fieldwork, and helping to determine what the data might be indicating.

**Ethics**

As Pink has noted, problems arise when research necessitates access to private spaces such as the home, often asking participants about activities that they do not normally speak about (2004: 29). As many of my informants not only allowed me into workspaces in the private space of their home, and discussed activities
that are situated in their private and personal leisure time, the ethical constraints of the project needed careful consideration and planning. The project was put before the University for the Creative Arts research ethics committee, and it was decided that no special measures were required above and beyond the standard privacy and anonymity agreements associated with participant research. These measures included supplying participants with full details of the project and its implications well in advance of any meetings, so that they had an opportunity to ask questions and withdraw from the project if desired. They were also asked to sign a form agreeing to their participation. This form assured their anonymity, but also granted permission for their words and the images taken to be used in the PhD project and in any subsequent future publications related to the research. Copies of the pro-forma are contained in the appendices.

Data analysis

Before moving on to the analysis of the data gathered in the fieldwork, I will briefly comment on the approach that was taken to the analysis.

The ages of the people in the case studies ranged 33 to 69 years old, and their occupations varied from a lorry driver and a print finisher, to a university professor and a successful entrepreneur. The objects they made were as diverse as needlecraft and jewellery, and kayaks and racing cars. They nonetheless all displayed some evidence of being a serious amateur maker, the concept that was used to drive the theoretical sampling process. The data analysis set out to explore this concept further, and in the process aimed to develop a clearer articulation of the factors that motivate these activities. As these conceptual categories became crystallised they asked new questions of the existing fieldwork, and guided further interviews and sampling. They also prompted further reading and theoretical investigation, contextualising the new emerging theory within existing theoretical frameworks, and reflecting on the place of this new knowledge within the academic field.

The following chapters of the thesis therefore begin to develop an analysis which relates the empirical findings of the fieldwork to a set of existing theoretical frameworks. These are drawn from the literature that currently addresses some
aspects of the research questions posed by this study. Patterns across the data, including commonalities and differences, have allowed formal theoretical propositions to be developed from the substantive theory represented by the data. The resulting analysis explores the ways in which these themes develop and extend prior work in this area, and uses these insights to build new theoretical frameworks that contribute to our understanding of these phenomena, and to further contribute to the development of theory in this field.26

26 As has been discussed in the early section the thesis, the concept of a ‘field’ can be problematic in areas of investigation that are under theorised and poorly defined. One of the objectives of this thesis is to address this problem, and to help to develop the characteristics and boundaries of this relatively new area of knowledge.
7: The Place of Making in the Lives of Amateurs

Introduction

The data analysis section of the thesis is contained in the following 7 chapters. Each of these deals with one of the themes that has been drawn from the data, and their sequence develops an analysis that moves in progressively from a wider cultural and sociological approach to the material, towards a closer understanding of the individual experiences of the maker. These later chapters give a detailed account of the intrinsic and personal rewards that the makers derive from their practice, and draw in work from the discipline of social psychology.

In the intervening chapters I consider the material conditions that makers set up to support their practice, and place this in the context of discussions about the relationship between work and leisure, and the connections between their activities and wider networks of making practice. I discuss the costs and benefits associated with amateur making, and I consider in detail the processes that amateur makers undertake, including the material interactions that form part of their experience. I place this in a theoretical framework derived from theories of practice, and the theory of flow, and consider the motivations that sustain the practice of amateur making and contribute to its enriching qualities, referencing intrinsic motivation and self-determination theory. Each of these strands contributes to the answering of the research questions outlined in chapter 2, and contributes to my thesis, which is fully developed in the conclusion chapter.

Where it contributes to the analysis, I aim to offer a descriptive account of the case studies by including frequent extracts from the interview material, together with photographs that record my encounters with the makers, and offer a vivid picture of the places they have made to work in, the tools and equipment they use, and the things they have made. This empirical data is combined with theoretical reflection, and discussion of the literature that has contributed to my thesis as the field work has developed. When it is able to contribute to the analysis, I also include my own reflections as maker, and I acknowledge that my
experience as maker inevitably supports my interpretation of the data, and contributes to my thesis.

Before discussing the data in theoretical terms, I will start this chapter with a brief descriptive account of the fieldwork for the project, and the ways in which it was gathered. This material is condensed from my more extensive observational and field notes taken at the time of the visits and interviews, and it conforms to Corbin and Strauss's definition of observational notes as reports of events or interactions that have occurred in the field, which might include a description of the setting, and perhaps some informal interviewing (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 124). In this thesis, they are intended to give the reader an understanding of the participants and their background, and act as an introductory supplement to the interview transcripts and photography. These accounts also cover some informal visits and interviews that are not necessarily formally referenced in the data analysis chapters of the thesis, but have nevertheless helped to inform my interpretation of the data.

**Field notes**

Before describing the discrete characteristics of each case, it is worth outlining some of the commonalities among them. The geographical limits that result from the word-of-mouth contact used in the snowball and opportunistic sampling process outlined earlier in the research design chapter meant that all the participants in the study lived in South-East England, with the furthest afield being in located in East Sussex, Surrey and Bedfordshire. All could be easily reached from my base in east Kent. The exception was Tim, whose permanent residence and workshop was in Gloucestershire, but as he worked in central London we met at his office. The remainder of the participants lived in Kent.

The primary criteria for sampling was that the participants should be engaged in pursuits that were substantial enough for them to engage in the long-term acquisition of a range of special skills, knowledge and experience, as well as acquiring and maintaining the material resources of tools, machines and workspaces necessary to achieve the standards they sought. All apart from Peter, who had just moved to a new flat and was in the process of setting up his workshop,
had dedicated spaces where they could make things. However, although all the participants are united by this commitment to the making of complex objects for pleasure rather than financial return, or the fulfilment of utilitarian goals, they differed in many other respects. It is the location of the commonality of their experiences in the face of these differences that forms the objective of the data analysis. Corbin and Strauss use the term theoretical sampling to describe this approach and note that:

Rather than being used to verify or test hypotheses about concepts, theoretical sampling is about discovering relevant concepts and their properties and dimensions. (...) in theoretical sampling the researcher is not sampling persons but concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008: 144).

From the outset of the research, the concept that was being sampled was ‘serious amateur making’, a term that will be discussed in more depth in chapter 8 of the thesis, and participants were chosen because they were likely to provide data about this phenomenon.

A total of 14 case studies were carried out over the course of the fieldwork. Of these, 10 were conducted using a semi-structured interview technique, and included a tour of the respective workshops and the taking of photographs. These interviews were all transcribed. The remaining 4 meetings were carried out on an informal basis, with two of these recorded, but not transcribed. The case studies were supplemented by study visits to the archive at the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture at Middlesex University, which informed the historical background chapter of the thesis, visits to retailers, events and fairs related to amateur making, and a weeklong collaborative research workshop and focus group held at the University for the Creative Arts in July 2008. The core of the fieldwork is constituted by the 10 in-depth case studies, and the following section describes the activities of each these individuals in more detail in the chronological order of the meetings, together with details of some of the informal encounters.

**Greg**

My first meeting was with Greg who made wooden kayaks, and who earned the bulk of his income from general carpentry and ‘handyman’ work. I interviewed
him in June 2007 after finding him through a flyer that he had placed in the local yacht chandlery. He was using this marketing as an attempt to convert his amateur canoe building into a viable business. At the time of the interview Greg was 38. He had originally been in the Royal Navy, then worked as a computer aided design technician in an engineering company. One day he had what he described as an 'epiphany', and decided that he needed tangible outcomes from his work in order to be satisfied. His previous experience renovating domestic houses in his spare time, initially for his mother, and subsequently his own flat, encouraged him to take up an informal apprenticeship with a local joinery firm, and then to become a self-employed carpenter. At the time of the interview he was making most of his income from installing decking, both in domestic gardens and as part of a commercial café and market development at the local harbour.

Figure 10: Greg's improvised 'warm-cabinet' that he uses to keep his resins at a working temperature in the winter (unconstrained by health and safety regulation he is content to eat his pasty whilst handling these materials).
Greg worked from a very small workshop (approximately five metres by three metres), which was part of complex of industrial units of varying sizes. The tenants in this collection of converted industrial buildings ranged from artists and a blacksmith, through to furniture makers and a car repair yard. Although the workshop had minimal facilities (Greg described how in the winter the workshop was often too cold for his glues and resins to cure (see figure 10)) and was only just big enough to house some of his larger jobs, Greg prized the sense of community that the complex offered.

On the day of the interview he had just finished making a large batch of spear shafts for the neighbouring blacksmith (who made armour and armaments for battle re-enactment groups), and the sense of mutual support and community offered by the complex of workshops was further reinforced by the flow of people offering to pick up food for Greg’s lunch, or wanting to borrow teabags for themselves. Since the interview took place Greg has abandoned the idea of building canoes as a viable source of income, and now regards carpentry and joinery as his main employment, with canoe building being an adjunct to his paid work.

Peter

I met Peter at a research training event, where he was a fellow student. Peter was 34 and working as a psychiatric nurse in the Brighton area, and taking a part-time Masters course in order to attain a professional development qualification. When another student heard about my project she prompted Peter to talk to me, as it was quite well known that he was an amateur woodworker. He made furniture and household accessories, including lights, tables, and sculptures, mainly from wood, but also incorporating some resins and light metal work. I arranged to meet Peter at his flat in Brighton in February 2008, where we conducted the interview. He had recently moved into the flat, and it was largely furnished with the furniture, lights and accessories that he had made himself.

Because of moving home he was unable to carry on using his last workshop, which was in a lock up garage at the end of his former garden. During the visit Peter showed me a basement room that he was planning to make into a new workshop. It looked like it would need a lot of work to get it operational, but he was confident that it would be up and running quite soon after my visit. He
subsequently contacted me to say that he had in fact set up his new workshop, but I have not yet been back to see it.

**Jenny**

I contacted Jenny through a work contact who was a designer, and had a workshop locally where he ran a furniture making business. He had been helping her to set up her workshop in an outhouse at her property and he recommended that I contact her. She agreed to be interviewed, and I travelled to her house in May 2008. At the time of the interview she was 33 years old. She lived in a farmhouse in a rural location, which had a number of outbuildings. One of these, former accommodation for migrant fruit pickers, had been converted into a workshop. Jenny was Norwegian, but had lived in England for most of her adult life after getting a job with a bank in the City of London. At the time of the visit she was not in paid work, devoting her time to looking after her children, and decorating the house.

Her father-in-law had retired early from his job in business, and set up his own furniture workshop in order to use his spare time productively. He had died a few years before the interview took place, and handed all his tools and machinery down to Jenny. It was this equipment that made up the bulk of her workshop. The house was also furnished with several pieces of his furniture, which were in a reproduction style, and made to a high standard in expensive woods. The conversation about his attitude and experience of making was just as useful as Jenny’s own experience, and in effect I was able to get accounts of two amateur makers from the one visit.

Jenny mentioned Smith and Jones Turning Co\(^{27}\) to me, a local company that specialised in wood-turning supplies and woodcraft courses for amateurs; Jenny had taken a wood machining course with them during the previous year or so, and I later visited Smith and Jones Turning Co and spoke to one of the owners (see below). Jenny showed me some of the things she had made, which included a large child’s outdoor climbing frame, a chicken house, storage for her ‘boot room’, occasional tables and some lights.

\[^{27}\text{The names of the company and its employees have been changed.}\]
Cherry

Cherry was a 38 year old mature student at a local design college when I met her in June 2008. She was just finishing a degree specialising in jewellery design. Going to college was an opportunity for her to pursue, and effectively professionalise her passion for making, which she told me had been with her since helping her father with his do-it-yourself activity as a child. I met her in the studio where she was working as a student, and she showed me her workspace and the pieces she was working on (see figure 11).

![Figure 11: Detail of Cherry's work bench.](image)

These were all jewellery and body adornment, using a variety of materials ranging from ceramics, silver, and some found materials such as teeth and human hair. Although Cherry had an interest in making things that stemmed from her childhood, and had initially studied for an HND in retail design at a vocational college, she had had spent most of her working life as an office manager at B&Q, a large do-it-yourself retail chain. After pursuing this for a number of years and bringing up her three children she decided to return to her interest in making by enrolling as a mature student at her local university to study applied arts. At the time of the interview Cherry had just graduated, participated in the annual end of year show at the university, and was finishing off some pieces in the applied arts studio of the university.
Donald

I met Donald through a friend, who told me about his interest in making. Donald is now semi-retired from his job as a history professor at a London university, but still writes books and carries out research. He has made things all his life, originally as way of extending and improving his home, but later focussing on making wooden furniture. At the time of the visit, in June 2008, he was 69 years old. He showed me his two sheds, both of which he built himself. One housed his small woodwork shop, and the other a large collection of books. He also showed me the parts of the house that he had built himself, and several pieces of furniture he had made, although he had given most of his pieces away to friends and relatives. Although his small work shop was unsophisticated in comparison with some of the other case studies, he displayed a strong commitment to making things, and along with skiing and mountaineering, it had been an abiding interest for most of his life.

The Kent Hot Rod and Custom Car Show

This was a 2-day custom car and hot rod festival that took place in June 2008, and was open to the public. I spent a day viewing the show, talking to participants, and taking photographs. The show took place in a large field with about 80-100 exhibitors showing their cars, and with about 15-20 small businesses showing their products. The businesses were mainly suppliers of custom car components or workshops that built custom cars commercially. Many of these businesses had grown out of amateur concerns, and become professional or semi-professional suppliers to the enthusiasm. With one or two exceptions, the owners of the cars were all amateurs who had built or modified the cars themselves, and were primarily interested in showing off their achievements and meeting and networking with other enthusiasts. The exceptions were semi-professional drag racing teams who occasionally started up their cars – these were exceptionally loud and quickly drew crowds of admirers. There was also a small stage set up on flat bed lorry which initially held a band, and towards the end of the day provided a focus for a prize giving to the best cars and a drive by of the winners.

I managed to informally interview the owner of one custom car at length; who I shall call James, though I was not equipped to record the conversation other than
in the form of notes. At the time of the interview James was a self-employed driving instructor based near Dover. He worked on his car in a lock-up garage that he rented specifically for that purpose. The car is an ongoing project that had taken several years, and quite large financial investment to build (he now has a picture of the car on his business website – though he doesn’t use it to give driving lessons).

![Figure 12: James' hot-rod, custom car show, June 2008.](image)

The core of the car is a kit assembled from factory-produced panels, supplemented by a variety of one-off additions (see figure 12). The standard of workmanship was extremely high, and he called upon specialist sprayer to do the paint work. James described how he had designed the car as he went along, adding additional components piece by piece. He would sit in the car in the evenings and imagine what the next addition would be, particularly in the interior. When I spoke to him he was just considering how to incorporate a DVD player into interior. During these ‘planning’ periods he described how he could spend many hours in the garage and lose track of time. It didn’t seem clear to me that the display aspect of the festival was a huge focus for him. He had even prepared an explanatory sign that he propped against the bumper so that he didn’t have to talk to anyone unless necessary. He appeared to be more
interested in the social aspect of the event – simply meeting fellow car enthusiasts, having a beer and hanging out.

**Eric**

I was introduced to Eric by a work colleague who knew about my research. At the time of the visit, in June 2008, Eric was 63, and about to retire from his business as a self-employed test engineer. He lived in a rural location, and had several outbuildings attached to his house. These accommodated his business and his wife’s computer training room, which was part of her own separate business. The largest of the outbuildings was devoted to restoring 1960s Formula 1 racing cars, Eric’s main interest outside of his engineering business. He had constructed all the outbuildings himself and clearly devoted a great deal of time to setting up the whole place. Many of the components of his racing cars spilled out into his wife’s training room (see figure 13), and a covered trailer for transporting the cars stood on the drive. His enthusiasm for car racing was evident throughout the house, from the magazines in the toilet to the memorabilia adorning the walls of the workshop.

![Figure 13: Fibreglass body shells and moulds also spill out of Eric’s workshop into the nearby offices that accommodate his wife’s business.](image)

86
Brian

At the end of the visit with Eric, he suggested that I meet one of his neighbours, Brian. Brian, who was a 58 year old print finisher, worked nightshifts, but he was up and about when we called in the early afternoon. Although he wasn’t expecting me, he was quite open and immediately enthusiastic about talking to us about his hobby, which was building model steam engines. He was working in a brick built and tiled outbuilding that sat immediately outside his back door, and had the parts for a miniature steam locomotive chassis lain out on the bench (see figure 14). In fact he had two sets of parts. As he explained to us later he had made a small error in machining one of the early parts of the assembly. Rather than discarding these, he had decided use them to make a second locomotive that was smaller than the first, but which would accommodate the incorrectly dimensioned parts.

Shortly after arriving, Brian took me upstairs in his house to a spare bedroom that had been converted into a small office. Half the visit took place here amongst his drawings, models, and computers. Whilst we moved through the house we would encounter objects that he had made, some with his son when he was younger (his children had now left home). Most appeared to be pieces of scientific equipment that looked as though they belonged in a 1950s physics classroom, though we did also discuss his hand-made racing bike, which he had constructed himself.

Figure 14: Brian’s locomotive chassis set out on his work bench.
Smith and Jones Turning Co

During my meeting with Jenny she had mentioned that she had attended wood working courses at local craft supply centre called Smith and Jones Turning Co. In November 2009, I located their premises and arranged to visit. Bill Smith started the business as a wood yard in 1987, after the 'Great Storm' felled thousands of trees across southern Britain. Since then the business has expanded into the provision of woodturning teaching workshops and the supply of specialist timbers, tools and equipment for hobby work. They used to run general wood working classes until their tutor recently retired. They cater mainly for retired people (see figure 15).

Whilst I was looking around the showroom Jan Smith (Bill’s wife) offered me and the two other customers a coffee. The atmosphere was open and friendly and I was free to look around. The place was on a farm and occupied the farm’s outbuildings and barns. They sold a lot of timber turning blanks and furniture fittings (hinges, catches, etc.) as well as lots of chisels and lathe accessories. They focussed heavily on the turning side of amateur woodwork.

![Figure 15: The board outside Smith and Jones Turning Co advertises their products and services.](image)

Simon

I contacted Simon via one of the wood turning websites that had been recommended to me by Bill Smith. I visited Simon in his workshop in December
2009, which was in a small outbuilding in the grounds of a farmhouse in Bedfordshire. He was 46 years old at the time of my visit. The farmhouse was owned by a friend of his who had let Simon fit out the outbuilding as a workshop. The space was poorly insulated, and the wind blew through various opening in the walls and around the doors, and there was a simple earth floor. As the meeting took place at the beginning of December it was quite cold, and Simon was well wrapped in layers of clothing and a leather biker’s jacket. Although Simon had only been in the workshop for a few weeks, he had put a lot of effort into setting it up, including mounting memorabilia on the walls and setting up racks of tools (see figure 16).

![Simon's newly established workshop in drafty 'borrowed' barn.](image)

Simon had worked as a lorry driver for most of his life, but had a strong interest in motorbikes that had been inspired by sitting on his uncle's Norton as a three year old boy. Before taking up woodturning Simon’s main interest had been building custom motorbikes, and he had previously designed and built a number a number of bikes. Although he still harboured an ambition to build a 'trike'\(^\text{28}\) he seemed less interested in discussing this aspect of his pursuits in any depth. It

\(^{28}\) Although Simon took part in the research because of his interest in woodturning, he was also planning to continue his interest in customised motorbikes by building a 'trike'; a three-wheeled motorcycle. He plans to build large sections of this in timber.
seemed that he had decided the conversation should be about woodturning, and as this was his new passion, it was an area of discussion from which he was reluctant to depart. However, it was possible to make useful connections between this earlier interest and his woodturning activity. Like Greg, Simon was hoping to be in transition from a hobby wood turner to a woodworking professional, and he was in the process of fulfilling an order for ‘earplugs’, which are wooden discs used for stretching the piercings in earlobes. Although Simon discussed his orders in business terms, it was difficult to see how they could have generated a viable income.

**Tim**

I met Tim in the early stages of my research at the New Designers graduating student exhibition at the Business Design Centre in Islington. Whilst browsing around the show I noticed Tim’s work on a stand representing a vocational training college in East London. Tim was there with his work, which was a number of hand-crafted solid oak pieces in the arts and crafts style of the late nineteenth century. It turned out that Tim was a Canadian anthropologist who had secured a research grant which had enabled him to train for two years as a furniture maker whilst retaining his tenure as a lecturer in anthropology at a London university. Before taking his PhD he had been a practising architect, but had carried out research on the mud building technologies of the Sudan and West Africa. He was aiming to produce a comparative analysis of the apprenticeships in these countries and the training of furniture makers in the UK. His period of training in East London was the final phase of this fieldwork.

I later contacted Tim to arrange a meeting, to which he agreed. I met him in his office in London in December 2009. At the time of the visit he was aged 43. Tim’s main home was in the Cotswolds, and at that time he didn’t have his own workshop. Tim brings to the study both the experiences of a non-professional maker, and the insight of an academic who shares many of the research interests that drive this study. I was able to plan the interview questions around many of the emerging theoretical issues in the study, and he was able to articulate his experiences as a maker very clearly in relation to these conceptual issues. At the end of the visit he gave me copy of his recently published paper that documents his experiences training to be a furniture maker (Marchand (2007) ‘Vocational
Migrants and a Tradition of Longing' *Traditional Dwellings And Settlements Review*, 19.1)³⁹. In his research he uses the term ‘vocational migrants’ to refer to people like Simon and Greg – people who aspire to a career change that will encompass their hobbies and pastimes and give them greater satisfaction than their previous jobs. Ironically, Tim expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction on having to return to his job as an academic, leaving behind his experiences as a trainee furniture maker. I will return to these issues in more detail in the later data analysis chapters.

**Rose**

My final visit was to a maker called Rose, who heard about my research from a colleague and offered to be part of the study. At the time of the interview Rose was 66 years old, and working as a psycho-therapist, having previously had a career in marketing. Rose makes quilts and other needlecraft artefacts such as cushions and crochet blankets, so she did not fit exactly with my previous sampling criterion of using resistant materials. However, she also paints and makes small sculptures and stained glass objects, and I decided that her experience would add another perspective to the study. Having already established some patterns across the previous fieldwork, I was interested to see whether her experiences would be comparable with the other cases I had undertaken. In May 2010 I travelled to her house in Surrey to meet her, and she showed me a large number of pieces that she had made over the preceding two decades. She had a studio space that contained easels and paints, wood carving and textiles pieces. She was clearly a prodigious maker, but although she had briefly attended two art schools, one in Maryland, USA (Rose was originally from New York) and one in London, she had never worked as a professional creative.

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³⁹ Marchand contributes to this study in two ways. As a maker of furniture who is an informant for the fieldwork he is referred to by the pseudonym Tim, thus maintaining continuity with the anonymity afforded to the other informants. However, as well as giving an account of his experiences as a furniture maker, Marchand also contributed to the study by offering an academic perspective, both in his published work, and in my interview with him. In references to his academic and published work I use his real name, Trevor Marchand.
She was semi-retired, and was undertaking a PhD with a research scholarship at a University outside London.

Growing up with making

Almost all the makers acquired their interest in making through their family or school background, and by being encouraged to have direct hands-on engagement with material processes. In some cases this was a very significant part of the informants' upbringing. Jenny described how as a child growing up in Norway it was very common for families to build their own house at least once in their lives. This lengthy Norwegian tradition, confirmed by the work of August Røsnes (1987), is partly due to the convention of building houses in timber because of the relative abundance of the material in Norway. This ‘dry’ building technique (as opposed to the 'wet' trades associated with concrete and masonry buildings) means that it is easier for amateurs to undertake, even with relatively basic tools. Jenny explained how:

...when I was five or six my parents built their own house, which is a normal thing to do in Norway, and so even then I sort of started using blanks and stuff and I actually made a life size bed for me when I was seven as they were finishing off, so I have always liked doing that.30

Also referring to his background outside the United Kingdom, Brian told me how his interest in making:

...probably all comes from my Dad, who used to make absolutely everything. He would make his own clothes. He comes from the rural backwaters of Poland and if you don’t make it you don’t have it. (...) his father died when he was 12 and he was in charge of the farm and he just literally made everything. He made the ploughs, the woodwork tools, everything.

Whilst being shown around Brian's house I spotted something that looked like a homemade Van der Graff generator. Brian told me how his father had helped him and his son build the machine:

30 All quotes from participants are italicised and are drawn from transcriptions of the recorded interviews.
That is something my boy made as a school project; my dad helped with that as well. We had three generations at that, you turn it round and it makes sparks. It will literally make your hair stand on end, it will make a spark about that long. (...) this has belts, the whole thing goes. It’s something out of Frankenstein isn’t it? In fact they do have one in most Frankenstein films...

Both Rose and Cherry also thought that their interest had come from parents or older family friends. Rose recounted how, at age five, her ‘goal in life’ was to be able to walk to the shops and knit at the same time, just like her friend’s mother, whilst Cherry owed it to her father who she described as a keen ‘do-it-yourselfer’:

My Dad always done his own DIY, absolutely everything; never got anybody in to do anything, so I sort of knew a little bit about DIY; the world of it as it were (...) My Dad’s like me. If he wants a job doing properly he does it himself. My Dad won’t pay somebody else to do something that he can do.

Cherry also told me how:

... my Mum has always done dress making because her Mum was a dressmaker for a living, and erm, so that’s really how the creative side started when I was younger, just sewing and embroidering, and then moving on. But then my sister who is younger than me, she went to university a few years before obviously I’ve come, here. She did fashion, she’s a fashion designer.

(...) my Mum always decorated, my Dad did the DIY, so and my Dad would say “can you come out and hold this for me”, so you would, and then you just stand out there and just watch, so yes, so I have learnt all my decorating and DIY skills really from my parents because they did it...

Simon told me how:

...me dad used to be an artist brush maker and he was in the guild of master craftsmen and, err, I think that’s where I get mine from, my wanting to use my hands, you know, from as well, so I think it’s like in the genes.

A common theme here is the fact the makers had all been put in a situation where they had been obliged to participate – they acquired their interest through direct
hands on engagement with material processes. In this respect, each of the participants in the study had had their enthusiasm fired by a mentor, even if they were not a member of their own family. Donald had grown up with a father who attempted to make things, but who, in his opinion, made them badly:

And I suppose it was partly in reaction to my father who worked as a clerk for a timber company but had the most dreadful collection of tools which he did bodged work with. (...) I can remember him making kitchen units, dreadful design and badly made, they survived for a long time and they thought they were the bees knees, but you could see at a glance the bits stuck on... poor old dad.

(...) I thought as soon as I am my own man I would do it in the way that I knew it should be done. You only had to read a book on basic woodworking to realise that, aside whatever I could remember from school, that you needed to have sharp tools, and basic but relatively cheap equipment.

Donald’s chance to learn wood-working skills came from a colleague rather than a family member:

... when I got married and graduated from university I went to teach in a comprehensive school, a big one, excellent wonderful school, and it had a superb workshop with machine tools and planers, electric saws, and there was a pattern maker, who was the man who essentially sharpened tools and swept up, and was the workshop minder after school, before he knocked off at five, and he’d teach me.

(...) and then when I taught at a school where the chap who was a good organist, and he made musical instruments, but taught a group, and I began working at the workshop there. He was a little bit fussy but he was a very kindly man and would show you how to do things, so I owe a lot to those people...

Jenny told me how:

...because I was clever at school, I went to university, I studied economics and then accountancy and got a job in the city, and that was a sort of path, but thinking back I don’t know when I started off as a five or six year old building things, if I hadn’t been able to go the sort of academic route, then
maybe I would have chosen more sort of practical skills and possibly been happier. I mean, as it happens I really enjoyed my career as well, but at least when I grew up and chose what to study and things it was always academic study, it’s the sort of most recognised I suppose, and if you can do that you definitely do it, whereas I would sort of hope for my own children if they had talents either making things I could possibly I don’t know, encourage them to do that, rather than feel that they have to go and do the academic thing.

Tim didn’t mention being influence by older family members, but he did also say that his interest in making had started when he was very young:

I think by the time I was five I knew that I wanted to be an architect, and that’s in fact what I did (...) I was trained as an architect in Canada...

Tim talked about how his original motivation to become an architect had been an interest in making things, and how the realities of being an architect had been disappointing:

I think that’s probably one of the reasons that I liked the profession. I like, I like drawing very much and I think that’s probably where my energies for making went in to, in to the craft of drawing. But then by the time I was graduating and leaving, AutoCAD was becoming the way forward and architectural offices were all adopting AutoCAD and, you know, the role of the designer was basically a computer technician, from my perspective, and I think I discovered as well that, there was a very big gulf between the designer and the maker...

A job that had previously included model making, drafting using pencil, pens and paper, and the rendering of perspective drawings using crayons, markers and pastels, had, by the end of the 1990s become almost totally dominated by digital systems. This move from craft based, analogue modes of representation meant that, after a few years working in architect’s offices, Tim was not even required to make drawings by hand any more. Instead he satisfied his desire to make by visiting the building sites he was managing:

The thing that interested me most when I was working as an architect (...) was going on to the building sites and talking with the carpenters. I became
interested in the actual construction process I think, mostly on site monitoring my own projects...

Like Tim, Brian had been disappointed by his first job, which was an engineering apprenticeship at Rolls Royce. His work in the training school had tangible outcomes such as technical drawings and machined components, but this was missing when he moved to the relatively mundane administrative tasks of the main works:

When I went to the works it was really dull because you just, I seem to remember one place I worked at I just had to look numbers up in one file and then transfer them over to another file. I didn’t really have a clue what I was doing. I would probably have been better off if I had stayed using machines.

For both Tim and Brian, their frustrations resulted, in different ways, from the division of labour. For Tim the joy of architecture lay in the sense that he could see the project through to its conclusion, to feel that he had contributed to the production of an artefact from beginning to end. When this was no longer symbolised by the completion of tangible drawing or model, he found his satisfaction by connecting with the building process on site, and becoming involved in the tangible results of the architectural design process. For Brian, this was not a possibility. He was simply directed to move data around with no comprehension of the purpose or outcomes of the activity. Matthew Crawford’s account of his rejection of a job in the 'knowledge industries' in favour of working with his hands in a motorcycle repair shop – *The Case for Working with Your Hands or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* (2009) – paints a vivid picture of this dichotomy. I will return to these ideas – the proposition that industrialisation and the division of labour is an inherently alienating condition – later in the thesis. For now I want to establish that, for the people in this study, the discovery of the enjoyment to be had from the making of things has had a lasting consequence for them, and they have subsequently continued to seek out this experience. For some, when the expected fulfilment of this pursuit has not come from paid employment, they have turned to their work as amateurs in order to satisfy their desire to carry on with the experience of making.
The early experience of the makers in this study was rooted in instrumental outcomes. Although few of the activities described above were motivated by paid employment, very few of them took place without some other kind of obligating factor. The building of a family house, the maintenance of a farm when there is no one else to turn to, the making of clothes for children, and the installation of central heating and soft furnishings in the family home are all activities motivated by some utilitarian force – whether saving money, or ensuring levels of quality by taking control of work. Donald described how in the early 1960s he had made things that he needed, like bookshelves:

... and later on I suppose, the other things that I did, when I was first married, making beds, making bits of furniture to furnish a house when we had a relatively low income.

Cherry, who is much younger than Donald had described how in the 1970s her family could not afford to employ professional tradesmen:

... they couldn’t afford to have somebody come in and do something, so my Dad did it. My Dad re-plumbed the whole of their house, and my Mum was without hot water for two years, you know. My Dad would go to work and have a shower, my Mum had to do the washing for five people, and wash three children and herself in heated up water.

It is this attitude, of course, that gives rise to the phrase do-it-yourself, and comes from the make-do-and-mend approach discussed in the historical accounts of amateur making contained earlier in this thesis (Dent, 1997; Edwards, 2006; Hackney, 2006), and which still exist in current attitudes towards home improvement (Clarke, 2001; Powell, 2009; Rosenberg, 2011). The makers chosen for this study, however, represent an attitude towards making that departs from these precedents, an attitude that is perhaps most clearly identified in the literature by Colin Campbell’s article on ‘craft consumers’ discussed earlier in this thesis. In this work he regards consumers (and amateur makers are consumers as well as producers) as being primarily engaged in acts of self-expression rather than the fulfilment of utilitarian needs. We also saw in the previous historical survey how do-it-yourself publications had gradually made the transition from being manuals of house maintenance to catalogues of design ideas for home crafts.
The informants for this study have tended to carry on with the practice of making things first encountered in their previous life histories, but without the sense of need that they describe in their early encounters with making. Although many of the characteristics and outcomes of their pursuits may remain the same, they tend to make for pleasure rather than necessity, and are motivated by rewards that are intrinsic to the activity. Making for them is a form of leisure on which the practicalities of their everyday lives no longer depend. Whilst the exact nature of the rewards offered by amateur making will be discussed later in the theses, I want to focus first on how we can understand the concept of leisure more fully, and to locate amateur making more securely within this realm. So what is leisure, and how does amateur making fit into this category?

**Work and leisure**

According to the website of the Leisure Studies Association\(^{31}\):

> The recognition of leisure as a subject for serious study has arisen from fundamental changes in society since the 1950s. These have included greater affluence, increased alienation from work, earlier retirement, higher unemployment and greater mobility… (http://www.leisure-studies-association.info/LSAWEB/History.html: accessed 28/03/11)

In the United States leisure and recreation studies became established in a number of universities from the 1950s, growing from the disciplines of health, kinesiology, crime control, urban aesthetics, social planning, social theory and philosophy (Rojek, 2010: 101). However, as Rojek notes, these early American studies rarely deviated from the orthodox notion of leisure as ‘time off’ and ‘free time’, and emphasised applied approaches to the subject such as recreation and park administration, and the development of health and fitness programmes. In the UK leisure studies was linked with geography and sociology, and tended to favour qualitative and interpretive analysis, engaging more fully with the

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\(^{31}\) The Leisure Studies Association was formed in the UK in 1975 with the stated aim of providing: ‘…a unique multi-disciplinary meeting and communication forum for researchers, practitioners and students involved in all areas of leisure studies…’ (www.leisure-studies-association.info: accessed 28/03/11).
theoretical perspectives offered by sociology and cultural studies (Hall & Jefferson, [1976] 2002). As an example of this approach, Rojek notes how the cultural theorists Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall ‘...were not clipboard researchers. They practiced an approach that related questions of free time behaviour to culture, power and civilisation’ (2010: 104).

In spite of the growth of the discipline of leisure studies, the term leisure remains difficult to define. The concept of leisure has its basis in time; leisure time is frequently seen as a form of time ‘left-over’ after other obligations have been fulfilled. The crudest definition draws a straightforward opposition between work and leisure. In this model work, tends to be defined as structured, repetitive and extrinsically rewarded, whilst leisure is defined as being controlled and regulated by the individual themselves, and is seen as containing intrinsic rewards (Haworth, 1997; Roberts, 2006). This understanding, however, presumes a clear-cut distinction, between both work time and leisure time, and between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, and fails to acknowledge the complexity of the relationships between these factors. Amateur making exemplifies these complexities, and one of the aims the discussion that follows in this thesis is to elaborate and clarify these relationships. The first step in this process is the consideration of more finely grained models that describe a series of categories that move from work time towards ‘pure’ leisure time, in graded steps. Stanley Parker’s model, cited by Stebbins (1992: 4-5) is a prominent example of this approach, and describes five categories of spent time:

The first is working time, sold time or subsistence time. This is usually identified with earning a living, with working time and sold time referring to ways in which remuneration is earned, and subsistence time referring to the purpose of work for the employee – enabling him and his dependents to subsist. The second category is work related time and work obligations. This includes the time spent travelling to and from work, and the time spent preparing for work. Peripheral activities such as work related reading, and meetings and conferences, which have a social component as well as a work side, also fall into this category. Parker’s third category is existence time, and meeting physiological needs. This is the first of Parker’s three non-work groups, and includes sleeping, eating, eliminating and so on. There is also an overlap in category between satisfying
these purely functional needs, and treating them as a form of leisure. This could include, for instance, eating for pleasure and sexual activity beyond a purely physiological need. The next non-work category is non-work obligations, and semi-leisure. Activities in this category arise from obligations other than work, usually to other people, but also to non-human objects such as pets, homes and gardens. Depending on the attitude of the participant these activities can be viewed either as a chore, or as a pleasurable hobby. Lastly, the time that conventionally creates the space for non-instrumental hobbies and pastimes, Parker calls free time, spare time, uncommitted time, discretionary time, or choosing time. This time has the character of being available for use at our own discretion, and involves an element of choice and lack of obligation.

Attitudes and experiences of work and leisure also vary both across cultures and in relation to individuals. For some people work is a vocation that carries with it a set of intrinsically rewarding facets, with work time offering pleasurable benefits that equal or even surpass the pleasure to be had from free time pursuits, whilst for others work is an obligation that has to be undertaken in order to finance leisure activities. Parker argues that there are three main patterns of leisure activity: extension, neutral and opposition (Roberts, 2006). The extension pattern, occurs where work is central to life rather than family, and leisure is an extension of work. This occurs when the occupation has high levels of autonomy and intrinsic job satisfaction. The neutrality pattern occurs where leisure is family centred and work is undertaken for pay and conditions rather than intrinsic satisfaction. In the opposition pattern leisure is very different from work, and is the main focus of interest. This pattern occurs in jobs with very low levels of autonomy.

The people who participated in this study appeared to occupy the full gamut of these patterns. For Eric, who owned his own test engineering company, his pastime of restoring Formula 1 racing cars was a clear extension of his paid work. He used many of the same skills, and being self-employed, had managed to achieve high levels of autonomy. Greg had a similar relationship between his paid work, as a carpenter and joiner and his building of wooden kayaks. In Parker’s terms their leisure followed the extension pattern. For Brian the print finisher, on the other hand, his leisure activity was clearly in opposition to his paid work. He
found his work as a print finisher boring and unfulfilling, and it was clearly just a way of making enough money to pursue his other interests, which included the model engineering work discussed in this research. Peter, the mental health nurse, exhibited Parker's neutrality pattern when he told me:

\[I \text{ just generally I feel busy. I mean I am not someone that would like to work longer hours; I'm very much like, I work the hours that I work, I leave it there, I go home and I enjoy my spare time. I suppose I do a bit of overtime at the moment um, in the kind of job I used to do, but it's quite easy work, but I am not someone that would do overtime for the sense of wanting to be at work, or to do more work. I work a certain amount of time, I do that, and then I want to enjoy myself.}\]

Parker's definitions help to avoid the straightforward binary opposition between labour and leisure, and take greater account of the permeable boundaries between work and free-time. They stop short, however, of considering the influence of lifestyle and class, and the varying experiences of men and women in their use and understanding of free time. The time of the full time housewife, for instance is, by definition, not demarcated by divisions between paid and unpaid paid work commitments – her relationship to time and obligation is much more ambiguous and fluid. Cherry and Jenny, the two female respondents with children at home, found their available time defined by the obligations associated with motherhood. Jenny ‘snatches’ time to spend in the workshop and relishes the opportunity to be single-minded, whilst Cherry's return to education was timed to coincide with the increasing autonomy of her children. Before then she had only been able to find the time to get involved with making things by volunteering to help out in her children’s’ school craft classes, or by making furnishing for her house.

Men too, have domestic obligations that have to be managed. Brian, whose children have now left home, told me how he grabbed time during the week, presumably from his other domestic obligations, in order to supplement a considerable amount of time spent in his workshop at the weekends:

\[...\text{ maybe at the weekend I would like to spend the whole day in my shed, two days maybe at the weekend, then about three hours a day during the week, when I can get away with it.}\]
Whilst the relationship between the various parts of the respondents’ lived time varied in relation to their gender, occupation and life-stage, they are united by a common feature. The time for making, whether as a complement to paid work or in opposition to it; whether easily accessible or taken with difficulty out of other time commitments, has a common feature – it is what we might call ‘project time’. Project time takes place in a physical space that is different both to the space of paid work, and to the space of domestic life. It also exists in a temporal space that is markedly different to cyclical time of everyday routine. Jenny told me how her project planning took place outside the workshop, and then went on to describe how the project unfolded:

...if you were thinking about the time I spent, [when I filled in] your form,32 I would probably add a couple of hours at least. It’s almost like my day-dreaming, if you see what I mean, and I am thinking, well I saw this bookcase in the newspaper and I just thought that would be such fun to make and then you sort of think, well I would use this and that, and then you draw it up and go and measure the wall you would put it on, and sort of yes, tinker along with it for a while and then suddenly sort of think ‘well actually I have a day sort of next week let’s see if I can get the wood for it’ and yes, it sort of goes from there (...). I don’t just go in the workshop and look around, and think what shall I do now, I do have a plan.

This space, which is the time left over after other obligations have either been fulfilled or consciously deferred, cuts across the cycles of day-to-day living. Whilst these ebb and flow in predictable daily, weekly and seasonal repetitions, project time has an indeterminate span that is bounded by beginnings and endings that are quite distinct from the cyclical reverberations of everyday life. This is special kind of time that provides a unique space where amateur makers are able behave according to different sets of aspirations and obligations. Projects can have a lifespan of weeks, months and occasionally years. The makers were able to leave their projects safe in the knowledge that they would be able to pick up where they left off each time they returned to their workspace, and that

32 Respondents were asked to fill in a pre-interview questionnaire that asked them how many hours a week they spent making. A copy of this form can be found in the appendices.
their projects would steadily develop and move towards a conclusion, even if this endpoint varied according to the amount of time that could be dedicated to the work. For the makers these projects become a form of parallel existence to their normal lives – they constitute worlds that the participants can leave or enter at will. These worlds remain available, even if the makers take a break from their activities for weeks, or even months – for there is always an element of the project that can be resumed when resources allow. As Watson and Shove have pointed out ‘projects constitute ‘orchestrating’ forces, condensing diverse resources and energies around specific goals’ (2008: 81).

As Jenny observed in the section of interview transcribed above, building complex objects also requires planning and preparation. The makers in this study use a variety of methods to plan their work, including sketching and drawing, model making, and the use of computer aided design applications. Eric’s car restoration projects also include archive research and the compilation of histories that demonstrate the provenance of the car he is working on (see figures 17 and 18). These are kept in folders and books that become records of the project.

Figures 17 and 18: One of Eric’s sets of research and planning files.
Figure 18.

Figure 19: Detail of Brian’s completed traction engine with part of the technical drawing he is using to build his locomotive.
Tim told me how planning became a diversion from his normal work routine:

There's a real pleasure of letting go of all of the kind of mundane email and the administrative things that I need to do, and just kind of thinking, you know, like creatively about the next project that I'd like to work on or the next thing that I'd like to make.

In this respect all of the makers, to greater or lesser extent, frame their activities within the idea of the project. A project can last from several months to, in Brian's case, a number of years. A significant component of the appeal of these activities consists in the creation of routines and regimes of experience that are self-determined, structuring time outside of work that would otherwise remain fluid and indeterminate. Greg told me how he planned the building of a canoe:

Obviously the whole process of building a boat is a step by step process. You have to do one process before you do the other. Generally now, I know how long it is going to take. So I will say well I'm gonna, this week I am going to be stripping the body of a boat and I know it is probably going to take me about a week, and I'm thinking about right that's the way forward and right, a couple of days next week I am going to be fairing and sanding, then once I have done that then I'll start [fibre-] glassing, and this that and the other. So you have got a general idea of what you are going to do and when situations arise you sort of fire-fight them.

Here the plan remains an important means of structuring and organising activity at a macro level but, at a local level, will be adapted to suit circumstances. When specific actions do not have the desired effect, on-line rethinking takes place about how to achieve specific sub-goals, or as Greg puts it ‘fire-fighting’. The original internalised plan remains a complete, if fallible, design of a route to success. It is, however, partial and intimately dependent on the properties of the local environment.

These iterative processes, which are an important part of the amateur maker’s experience, are considered in chapter in 11, were I consider in detail the characteristics of the making process itself. For now, I want leave this part of the analysis, having shown that amateur making takes place within a particular kind
of leisure time, that regardless of its varying relation with other obligations and commitments, consistently overlays the routines of everyday life.

In the next section I want to show how, for some amateur makers, even though the time in which their activities takes place is clearly demarcated from the obligations of paid work, the ways in which they approach their making often means that there are strong parallels between their approach and the work of the professional – and that, in some cases, the boundary between these two realms can begin to dissolve.

Pro-ams

As well as being separated from the cycles of everyday life, amateur making is also separated from the obligations of paid time associated with professional work. Using Parker’s scale amateur making would be described as taking place in choosing time, the opposite of subsistence time, the time spent earning the money required to subsist. The meaning of the word amateur has evolved over time. Initially derived from the Latin amator, the word for lover, in its original usage it describes a connoisseur, or someone who is enthusiastically involved in an activity, and acquired knowledge and expertise for the love of it. The term has particular currency in its usage with regard to sports, and until the end of the nineteenth century amateur sportspeople enjoyed a higher status than professionals. Unlike the professional, their participation was not motivated by monetary reward, but by a love of the activity (combined with an ability to finance their pursuits). Amateurism was a zealously guarded ideal in the nineteenth century, especially among the upper classes. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the meanings of these terms has been reversed, with the word amateur now often being used as a disparaging description of someone who performs a task badly, or lacks training in an activity, whilst professionalism denotes excellence.

Although some did get a small monetary return for their efforts, none of the makers sampled for his study derived their livelihood from their pursuit. In this sense they were amateurs who made things for the love of it – but this does not mean that they failed to achieve the standards of the professional in their work.
Eric's racing cars are used to compete on commercial race circuits, and have to undergo strict safety testing before they can be driven on the track, and Greg, Simon, Tim and Cherry all harboured ambitions to become professional makers. Greg's canoes, for example, are bought by canoeing enthusiasts as an alternative to commercially produced kayaks, and are used to compete at high level events, and Simon is already fulfilling commercial orders from his wood turning workshop (albeit at a level that cannot currently be classed as commercial activity).

Some of them therefore occupy a middle ground that might be described as 'pro-am'. The boundaries between the professional and the amateur activity are explored by Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller in their Demos report *The Pro-Am Revolution* (2004), which considered activities as varied as volunteering for the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade, playing tennis, or contributing to the exploration of outer space through open source astronomy. Leadbeater and Miller observed how the twentieth century was shaped by the rise of the professional as in many areas formerly amateur activities became progressively more organized. As knowledge and procedures became increasingly codified and regulated, the amateur gradually lost status:

> As professionalism grew, often with hierarchical organizations and formal systems for accrediting knowledge, so amateurs came to be seen as second rate. Amateurism came to be a term of derision. Professionalism was a mark of seriousness, and high standards (2004: 12).

According to their definition, most pro-am activities take place outside of normal working hours, in the evenings, holidays and weekends, and pro-ams may spend

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33 On its website Demos is described as an independent ‘...think-tank focused on power and politics. Our unique approach challenges the traditional, 'ivory tower' model of policymaking by giving a voice to people and communities. We work together with the groups and individuals who are the focus of our research, including them in citizens’ juries, deliberative workshops, focus groups and ethnographic research.’ (http://www.demos.co.uk/about, accessed: 27/09/10)

34 See also the television documentary *Star Men* (Lochhead, 2005) which gives an account of Britain’s 40,000 amateur star astronomers and the lengths to which they go in order to pursue their hobby, including building full size observatories in their gardens and collaborating with professionals.
a large amount of their disposable income supporting their pastime. They create a sense of identity for themselves through consumption (though pro-am activity often falls between conventional boundaries of production and consumption) and they build up forms of ‘cultural capital’ that they can deploy in their hobbies. This is in the form of the skills and knowledge associated with their activity, and of the disciplines and subcultures that allow them to become part of that group or pastime (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004: 20-23).

The ‘new amateurs’

The people that Leadbeater and Miller depict as a new type of amateur enthusiast are partially defined by their ability to tap into easily available high technology, and their access to increasingly sophisticated networks of communication. This, they claim, constitutes reclamation of amateur and voluntary activity that, outside of the stifling systems and regulation of the corporation, offers new routes into innovation and taps into previously ignored reservoirs of creativity. In the following section I want to briefly explore this proposition and consider its relevance to the phenomenon explored in this thesis.

In his later book, which expands on his work for Demos, Leadbeater identifies the latent economic power of ‘pro-am tribes’ who are able to develop thriving communities based on shared identity rather than locality (2008: 35). He explains the functioning of these systems by using the analogy of beach use – the adoption of a series of etiquettes that allow holidaymakers to co-exist in a confined space, and engage in a variety of activities without causing offence (or having fights). He uses the examples of the open, self-regulating, peer-to-peer systems (such as Wikipedia), and open source programming, which operate without the centralized rules and regulations of professional intervention – yet manage to sustain a cohesive and productive culture.

35 In his book We Think; Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production (2008) Leadbeater takes these ideas further and discusses how networked communities are able to create collectives that are more efficient and productive than centralised institutions. The work, however, quickly moves beyond the discussion solely of the Pro-Am, and is consequently less relevant to this study than the original Demos report authored by Leadbeater with Miller.
This phenomenon is not without its critics, and books such as *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet Is Killing Our Culture* (Keen, 2007) offer a counter-argument to Leadbeater's optimism, claiming that as a result of amateurs the world wide web is overflowing with ill-informed reviews, poorly made videos and inaccurate information. Whilst Keen's writing, in line with other commentators who aim to get to grips with Web 2.0, deals mainly with the effects of the internet on DIY publication, in *Making is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0* (2011) the sociologist David Gauntlett extends the scope of the discussion to encompass both making on the net, and the making of things as a physical activity. By drawing an analogy between the material connecting processes used to make things and the communication connections that come about through social networking, he manages to draw both aspects into his discussion. Gauntlett's argument that there is a new enthusiasm for making things is well represented by the American magazine, *MAKE: Technology on Your Time* which has been published as a quarterly since February 2005. *MAKE* features amateur contributors who engage in a variety of construction projects, ranging from simple constructions such as furniture to complex machines controlled by microelectronics. Many of the amateur makers featured in the magazine earn their living from a field related to their hobby, but use their leisure time to express ideas, and work in a way that the regulation of their professional work disallows (see figure 20).

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36 The term Web 2.0 is associated with web applications that facilitate participatory information sharing, interoperability, user-centred design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. Tim O'Reilly, the founder of O'Reilly Media who publish *Make*, has also been a significant contributor to the development of the term (2008) at [http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html](http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html); accessed 04/04/11.
Examples of the projects featured range from the designing and building of a working monorail in a domestic yard, to the making of an alarm clock that wakes the user by frying rashers of bacon (Parks, 2006). One of the most obsessive of these projects is the 'Handmade ‘G5 Cube’ computer' – a perfect, but morphed reproduction of a Macintosh G5 computer casing that is capable of housing the user’s old G4 cube (see figure 21). The builder is a professional industrial model maker who seems to be using his spare time to test his skills as acutely as he can for no other purpose than the satisfaction of knowing that he can carry out the task successfully.
The *MAKE* motto 'If you can't open it, you don't own it', which can be purchased emblazoned on t-shirts, is exemplified by an article from a 2005 issue. Here, the author encourages users to dispense with the Apple operating system contained in their iPod and replace it with a Linux alternative (Torrone, 2005). This seems to substantially reduce the functionality of the device, but appears to be motivated by the maker's wish to resist the ability of manufacturers to closely control the ways in which their products are used by consumers. These 'consumer's as rebels' are effectively seeking to regain control of the individual agency that is sacrificed when products arrive hermetically sealed and impervious to any creative modification or repair by the end-user.

The culture of the magazine extends into websites, online newsletters, exhibitions and books. The Maker Faire, which is billed as the world's largest DIY festival (http://makerfaire.com/, accessed: 29/03/11), has been held in a number of cities across the United States, and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the UK (http://makerfaireuk.com/, accessed: 29/03/11), whilst *MAKE* Editor-in-Chief Mark Frauenfelder's book *Made By Hand: Searching for Meaning in the Modern*
World (2010) describes his attempts to raise chickens, keep bees, grow and preserve food and make musical instruments. The technological bias of MAKE is complemented by its partner magazine Craft: Transforming Traditional Crafts also published by O'Reilly Media.

The content of Craft centres on needlework, paper crafts and other decorative craft projects (see figure 22). It would be difficult to find a clearer expression of the gendered distinction between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ DIY outlined in the earlier chapters of this thesis, than these two magazines. The two publications are united by what might have once have been called their ‘postmodern’ sensibility. There is a studied irony throughout, and most of the projects in MAKE have distinctly useless feel about them; they are justified by their jokey take on conventional craft or high technology, combined with the sheer accomplishment of achieving such demanding, yet often functionally pointless feats of invention.

Figure 22: Craft: Transforming Traditional Crafts volume 2 magazine cover (Drieu, 2007).
Even though they are keen to adopt the terms ‘DIY’ and ‘craft’, there are some important differences between what we might call the ‘new amateurs’ and the constituency represented by the people who are included in my thesis. The work produced by these people rarely expressed any ironic intentions, and they largely adopted conventional approaches to their practice that differ little from those discussed in the historical review contained in chapter 3. Even Simon’s wooden motorbike headlamp, and his plans to build a wooden ‘trike’ motorbike were devoid of any irony; they were about the accomplishment of the task, not the symbolic and anachronistic contradictions of their conception.

![Simon's wooden motorbike headlight](image)

**Figure 23: Simon’s wooden motorbike headlight.**

As part of my interviews I also asked each of the makers to talk about the importance of the internet to their making pursuits, and they gave a variety of responses. Simon, and Greg the kayak maker, had both developed basic websites to showcase their work, though these were static, and remained largely unchanged over the duration of the study. Some ordered materials and tools online, and Eric researched the provenance of his cars on the internet. None of
the respondents, however, belonged to online discussion groups or actively searched for advice on how to go about their craft by using the internet. It seems that, for them, the internet provided a useful resource for accessing materials and factual information, but its networking potential was largely ignored. In this sense, therefore, it is difficult to associate these amateur makers with the Web 2.0 phenomenon described by Leadbeater, Keen, Gauntlett, and others. Although mostly computer literate and willing to use the web when it helped them with their projects, the practices of these makers largely appear to be a remnant of the earlier forms of amateur making that existed prior to the advent of the internet.

**Professional partners**

Although the advocates of this resurgence in craft activity assert that the networking capacity of the internet is a central to its growth, the internet is not the only form of network that links amateur makers, and many professional/amateur connections pre-date the internet. Their activities are linked in less visible and more indirect ways; ways that are often only recognised by the participants themselves. As Robert Stebbins noted in relation to his own research on serious leisure pursuits:

> Serious leisure participants carry on their interests within their own social worlds, worlds described as amorphous, diffuse constellations of actors, organisations, events, and practices which have coalesced into spheres of interest and involvement for participants in which it is likely that a powerful centralised authority does not exist (Stebbins, 1992: 7).

As I noted earlier, the pursuits considered in this research often have professional equivalents – but they may also depend on professional partners who sustain a loosely organised overarching 'economy' that makes the activity possible. Many of these partners are former amateurs who have professionalised their enthusiasm and made the transition into the running of a commercial business connected to their interest (see figure 24).
Bert Moorhouse (1991: 21) identified this economy in relation to hot-rodding, and described it in the following way: firstly there is a core of professionals and amateurs associated with an enthusiasm. The professionals make money from this and help to sustain an ‘economy’. In the case of hot rodning this includes paid practitioners as well as administrators, officials, promoters, suppliers, dealers and writers, though these networks vary in complexity and size according to the nature of the activity. Moorhouse describes pro-am enthusiasts as having ‘a great involvement with the focal concerns [of the pursuit], and may uphold these against ‘mere money making’. They attend events, have great knowledge about, and practice the skills of the enthusiasm.’ (1991: 22). In my own visit to a hot-rodning festival, many of these professional partners were present. They either helped the amateur custom car builders by offering professional services such as spray painting car bodies and building engines, or manufactured and supplied body parts for kit cars (see figures 25 and 26).
Eric also made use of these services in his own car building pursuits, and described how race events were often organised and sponsored by former amateur racing car builders who had become part of the professional infrastructure of the sport. Even Brian, the model engineer, and one of the most fiercely individualistic of the makers, bought some of his components and design drawings from professional model supply companies who he believed had originally been enthusiasts themselves. Jenny had taken a course in woodwork from Smith and Jones Turning Co, who had started as amateur woodworkers, and
turned their interest into a business by collecting, seasoning and selling on storm-felled timber to hobby woodworkers.

Although involving only a minimum of the involuntary social-role obligations normally imposed by a fully professional activity, some amateur pursuits can involve commitments to external agents or circumstances, such as producing work for particular events such as shows or competitions, collaborating with fellow enthusiasts, and voluntary duties on behalf of clubs or societies.

In order to access the resources and supplies demanded by their pursuits, all the makers sampled for this study relied to some extent on these pro-am economies. The backdrop of communication networks and peer group approval, however, played only a limited role in their activities. What was more notable was the autonomous nature of their pursuits, which rarely answered to external agents, save for the domestic interruptions created by everyday life. When I asked Brian if he had ever joined a club connected to his hobbies he reacted with distaste:

...it doesn’t appeal to me in the slightest no. I rather dread the thought of that. (...) I sometimes go to a model engineering exhibition to have a look, and I sort of look at what the other people have and I think ‘oh dear, how did I get like that?' (...) I much prefer to get on quietly on my own...

Rose had a similar outlook. Although she had been in contact with local quilting group she could not bring herself to go along with her work:

I haven’t gone ... I haven’t been able to go because I’m very private about my work in a certain way ... it’s one thing to show it to a general public. But it’s another thing to be with a group of people that are right there in your face [laugh]. So I think I’m shy.

But when asked about showing her work she was also reticent about this:

I’m not happy about showing my work locally because people are not interested in my work. They’ve got a university of creative arts here and they’re interested in that. And there’s a [local] art society and that’s not my thing. I’d rather have no audience.

Although Brian and Rose represent the most extreme viewpoints of the sample in relation to showing their work and interacting with other makers, all the
participants in the study tend to work alone. This is not to say that they were unwilling to call on help when it was needed – Donald was able to depend upon his friends to help him erect the sheds he had built, and Eric has a helper who assists him during tricky phases of his car building projects. But unlike the amateur performers and sports people who have been the subject of other investigations of amateur enthusiasms (Moorhouse, 1991; Stebbins, 1992, 1996, 1997), and for whom success in their activities was dependent on audiences, interaction and competition – few of the participants in this study are willing to accept external constraints arising either from deadlines imposed by the participation in events (such as exhibitions and competitions), or through obligations to co-participants in the field of activity. As Eric made clear, the freedom associated with amateur status allows different priorities to be set:

Racing, to me racing is not important. (...) I look about three weeks before, four weeks before, look at my work schedule, and look at what I have got, and say to Les [Eric’s racing partner] what are you doing that week? Shall we go? Yes, okay and then I will see if there’s an entry. If there’s no entry I don’t lose sleep over it. I am not one that has got to be racing, my friend is opposite he just wants to go racing and I am not interested – I like creating.

Conclusions

In this chapter I considered the ways in which almost all the makers acquired their interest in making through their family or school background. They were encouraged, or in some cases obliged, to have direct hands-on engagement with material processes, and it was through this experience that they were able to comprehend and engage with the practice of making. I noted how some of the respondents had made career choices based upon this experience, and later became disappointed when their subsequent job roles took them away from the hands on activity they had initially sought as part of their working life. The analysis also showed that the early making experiences of the people in the study tended to be rooted in instrumental outcomes. However all them have developed their pursuit so that it has become a form of leisure activity. An exploration of the concept of leisure followed, allowing distinctions to be drawn between various
categories of time use, and emphasising the importance of avoiding a simplistic binary opposition between work time and leisure time. The introduction of the term ‘project time’, an idea that is specific to this thesis, allows us to conceptualise the ways in which people use their spare time when they are engaged in amateur making practices. 37

I also noted how other theorists had identified what they called the ‘culture of the pro-am’, and that there seemed to be a new and emerging set of practitioners who were enthusiastic amateur makers. However, even though these accounts utilise the terms ‘DIY’ and ‘craft’, there are some important differences between this group, which we might call the ‘new amateurs’, and the constituency represented by the people who are included in this study. The work produced by these people rarely expressed any ironic intentions, and was largely based on conventional approaches to making that have changed little since the period covered by the historical review in chapter 3. They did, however, use networks of professional partners who provided the services and products that enabled their practices to continue – though this is not to say that the makers necessarily engaged in the communal activities sometimes associated with their activities, and many of them positively rejected this kind of social involvement, declining to submit to external obligations. The freedom associated with their amateur status allowed the makers to set their own priorities, and few of them are willing to accept external constraints arising either from deadlines imposed by the participation in events (such as exhibitions and competitions), or through obligations to co-participants in the field of activity.

37 I return to the ways in which time is categorised and experienced by amateur makers in chapter 12. However, the issues of time, time use and experienced time are central to this thesis, and discussions of these issues are also included at a number of different points over the following chapters.
8: Serious Making

Introduction

This chapter considers the work of Robert Stebbins and his definition of ‘serious leisure’ in more detail, and discusses the ways in which it contributes to this study. There are parallels between the case studies used by Stebbins and my own sample, but there also important differences, and these are discussed in this chapter. This returns the discussion to definitions of leisure, and positions amateur making more clearly in the category of ‘active’ or ‘productive’ leisure, reiterating the permeability of the distinctions between work and leisure. I consider the ways in which issues of identity and romantic aspirations towards making means that some amateur makers to aspire to begin professional careers in their pursuits, and discuss the varying experience of the respondents in this respect.

Serious leisure

The fieldwork has shown that these makers pursue their activity mainly for the love of it, but aim to set a professional standard, even at some sacrifice to their comfort and cost in free time. In the previous chapter I argued that the amateur makers in this study made work that was close to professional standards, and depended to some extent on professional support networks to facilitate their interests. However, they also expressed ambivalence towards the kinds of external constraints and deadlines associated with professional work. Their pursuits generally took place at times decided by themselves, and over periods of time that were flexible in duration, and organized around other commitments.

This is not to say, however, that these kinds of activities did not generate their own, inherent, constraints. These arose from processes that had to be undertaken at a specific time or place (such as the curing of glues or the application of paints and finishes), or exposed the project to the high levels of risk associated with processes that could go wrong (potentially wrecking hours of previous work). All of the participants in the study also demonstrated a willingness to endure
unpleasant situations in order to achieve the higher overall goal of completing the project. Greg described the worst part of building his kayaks:

*The worst job is joining it together. That's horrible. The surf kayak wasn’t so bad but the sea kayaks are a pain in the ass!* [...] Lots of swearing and shouting goes on. It's horrible. Of course all the time your head is stuck inside the boat and you have to wear respirator equipment, you can smell resin, and it's just generally a very unpleasant job. I can't bear it actually...

Brian told me how things had once gone badly wrong:

*...I remember I'd spent five days [making a flywheel] with emery cloths, smoothing it all out, I dropped it on the floor and cracked it [...] your first reaction is to think, 'oh, it will be alright'. Very often when you bodge something up your first reaction is to think 'oh I'll get away with that', you know, you won't be able to see that, and then after a couple of hours you think 'no, I've got to do it again'.*

These are not 'second jobs', but they *are* work-like, and the amateur makers frequently carried out their activity on the understanding that they are emulating or mirroring a professional equivalent. Sometimes described as being driven by a 'protestant leisure ethic' (Clarke & Critcher, 1985; in: Gelber, 1999: 11)\(^38\), pastimes such as these can be termed 'serious' leisure.

It was Robert Stebbins’ widely cited work *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure* (1992) that first established the term 'serious leisure' as common currency in studies of leisure and the amateur. In his study (which was conducted in Canada over a period of fifteen years in the 1970s and 80s) Stebbins draws upon an ethnography that includes eight substantive fields: theatre, music, archaeology, astronomy, baseball, football, magic and stand up comedy, with his later work also considering barbershop singers (Stebbins, 1997). His sample is different to the one used in this study, as he does not include craft based making activity in his research and, apart from archaeology and astronomy, the pursuits

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\(^{38}\) Adapting Max Weber’s term 'protestant work ethic' from his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (English Translation 1930) which, put simply, attributes the success of capitalism to individual hard work and self-denial, combined with the fear of divine retribution for the lazy.
he investigates all contain a strong element of performance and competition. Later, I will consider how these differences affect the applicability of Stebbins’ theory to my study, but initially, at a conceptual level, Stebbins’ definition of serious leisure offers us a good benchmark for a group of activities to which serious amateur making clearly belongs:

Serious leisure is the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centred on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience (Stebbins, 1992: 3).

In order to add detail to this definition, Stebbins distinguishes between ‘amateurism’, ‘hobbyism’ and ‘dabbling’. He defines dabblers as ‘... aimlessly doing something as a temporary diversion’ whilst ‘a hobby is a specialized pursuit beyond one’s occupation, a pursuit that one finds particularly interesting and enjoyable because of its durable benefits’ (Stebbins, 1992: 10). There are parallels here with Leadbeater and Millers’ pro-ams, though the terminology they use is different. They regard pro-ams as being ‘on the edge’ of becoming a professional, and their status may be described as semi- or quasi-professional. Leadbeater and Miller place the pro-am on a continuum between professional and amateur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devotees, fans, dabblers and spectators</th>
<th>Skilled amateurs</th>
<th>Serious and committed amateurs</th>
<th>Quasi-professionals</th>
<th>Fully-fledged professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Adapted from Leadbeater & Miller, 2004: 23)

All of the makers sampled for this study took their pursuits beyond conventional ideas of DIY and home handicrafts, both in terms of the types of projects that are undertaken, and in the complexity of work required to execute them. The
seriousness of their activity and their proximity to professional equivalents marks these makers out as distinct from the dabblers and semi-skilled practitioners of conventional DIY. Some of the participants in my study recognised these distinctions in their descriptions of their activities, and though their classification does not exactly coincide with the taxonomy adopted by Stebbins, and Leadbeater and Miller, they do clearly refer to these categorisations in their descriptions of their activities. Greg, for instance, saw himself as being much more than a hobbyist:

Well a hobbyist is somebody who doesn’t wanna particularly (…) mainly old men who have a set of forms sat in a garage covered in cobwebs and they’ll, when they get an hour of a weekend or a rainy Sunday, they will potter around in their workshop and, and a boat will take them a year, two years. Y’know, and they’ll just do a little bit here, and it’s just something they enjoy, they’re maybe y’know, white collar workers who go to a dusty workshop and have a potter with some wood, whereas I actually am a boat, am a kayak builder.

Participants in serious leisure are usually more obliged to engage in their pursuits than their less serious counterparts. Greg’s description of garages ‘covered in cobwebs’ and white collar workers pottering around in rarely used dusty workshops paints a picture of people who are not really fully committed to their pursuit. They are more than dabblers (they do after all dedicate a space to their hobby) but in Greg’s eyes, they are not really serious about their activity.

For Stebbins, as well as the need to persevere, and the distinction between dabbling and more serious commitment, the additional qualities that define serious leisure include the significant amount of effort necessary to acquire knowledge, training or skill, and the tendency to maintain ‘careers’ in an endeavour. As we saw earlier, serious amateur makers are willing to persevere in their pursuit even when the experience is unpleasant, but they also conform to Stebbins’ definition by being willing to invest in their skills in a way that facilities future activity. They maintained careers in their endeavours that sometimes lasted many years, with each project identifiable as part of a series of increasingly complex accomplishments, and with a significant amount of effort spent acquiring additional knowledge. Their activity is substantial enough for them to
engage in the long-term acquisition specialised skills, knowledge and understanding – and the sense that they were improving their competences, sometimes over a lifetime, came across strongly in my meetings with them. Jenny told me how:

...I think [the projects] are becoming more and more ambitious, because I am able to sort of, I guess you just break things into sort of biteable chunks, and can see how making something bigger isn’t necessarily so daunting.

Brian explained how he had spent over three years learning AutoCAD as an aid to the making process – and how it became almost as important as making the locomotives themselves, whilst Jenny had attended short courses in woodworking, and sought out meetings with local professional furniture makers in order to develop her skills.

Figure 27: Jenny’s woodwork shop.

Skill acquisition and a tendency for the makers to progressively increase the challenge of their activities push them closer and closer to their professional counterparts. It also integrates the participants into a sub-culture, and provides them with benchmarks by which they can measure their achievements (Pantzar & Shove, 2005: 2-3). When Simon told me ‘I’ve only been turning for 18 months, so I’m pretty new to the game’, he implicitly refers to the membership of the sub-culture of wood turning, a perceived community of experts in the ‘game’ who
provide standards of skill that precedes his engagement and offers a set of aspirational goals that have to be achieved before full membership can be attained.

The financial cost of achieving professional standards is also continually falling, and affordable amateur equipment is now equal in sophistication to the professional equivalent. The increasing complexity and availability of power tools means that amateur makers now have techniques and processes at their disposal that twenty years ago would only be available to professionals (see figures 27, 28 and 29). Donald told me how power tools had fallen in price to such an extent that he could now afford a much more sophisticated workshop, and Brian is using computer-aided design software that little more than a decade ago would only have been available to professional architects and engineers. 39

Figure 28: Some of Donald's power tools.

39 When I started my furniture making business in 1985, a key piece of equipment was a power tool called a biscuit jointer – at that time this cost around £500. The website http://www.measuringworth.com estimates that according to the retail price index this is equivalent to £1200 at 2011 prices (accessed 1/04/11). An equivalent tool could actually be purchased in 2011 for around £70. Bob Hunter’s article for Wood Magazine (O’Reilly, 2005) provides an informative account of the increase in sophistication and reduction in price of woodworking equipment since the magazine’s first issue in 1984.
Also fundamental to the concept of serious leisure is the fact that the results achieved by amateurs are often as good as, if not better than those achieved by professionals working in the same area. On occasion amateur makers have taken this commitment to their pursuit to surprising extremes; amateur hot-rodde building custom cars on the west coast of America in the 1960s were even able to break and hold the world land speed record for a time (Diamond, 1996; Moorhouse, 1991). Such leisure activities are work-like in that they are complex and demanding, unpleasant at times, and may at times even be life-threatening. The pursuits are taken to an extreme, but remain within the boundaries of leisure, because they are self-directed and contain an element of freedom of choice. As Stebbins has noted, serious leisure does not constitute work for most of those people engaged in it, but the fact that it is leisure is sometimes difficult to assert when using conventional definitions of the term (1992: 5). Amateur makers work at their leisure, forcing us to distinguish between ‘serious leisure’ and the passive consumption of manufactured entertainment or spectator sport.

All the makers sampled in this study, whether aspiring professionals or not, pursued their activity to a degree which allowed them to produce artefacts to a similar level of sophistication as their professional counterparts. For a small
minority, however, making work of professional standard is not enough—they actually want to make the transition into earning a living from their craft. In the next section I consider the attraction of this proposition, and consider in more detail the respondents for whom this was an ambition, also considering the wider social context for this desire.

Moving between amateur and professional

Leadbeater and Miller recognised that many of the amateurs identified in their report had an ambition to take up their pastime professionally, either when they reached their next life-stage (for instance when childcare responsibilities become less pressing, or after leaving a job) or, in the case of semi-professional sportspeople and musicians, if they are able to get an opportunity that allowed them to give up their day job. For most people in these latter categories, this break never comes, and they continue to pursue their activities as amateurs, often sinking large amounts of the income from their paid employment into their amateur activities (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004: 19). Trevor Marchand (2007) notes how some amateurs want to embrace professional careers by becoming, to use his term, ‘vocational migrants’. These are individuals who aspire to an idealised alternative career, often embarking on expensive and lengthy training courses in order to achieve their ambitions – effectively professionalising their amateur pursuits. In order to investigate this idea further, Marchand, an anthropologist in at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, secured a research grant that allowed him to take a sabbatical from his academic position and enrol as a full-time furniture making student at the City and Guilds Fine Woodwork Diploma course at London’s Building Crafts College40. This research was a continuation of previous fieldwork that Marchand had carried out with masons in Arabia and West Africa. According to an article that was written after the first year of his fieldwork, the aim was to carry out a detailed ethnographic study of Britain’s contemporary craft context that would

40 The Building Crafts College was founded in 1893, by the Worshipful Company of Carpenters, a City of London livery company, to train young people in a range of construction crafts.
allow a cross cultural comparative analysis with his previous studies (Marchand, 2007: 23). Marchand found that the students on the course mostly conformed to a consistent demographic; although mixed in gender, they were predominantly white, middle-class, and many already had degrees in subjects unrelated to the crafts. Most were aged between mid-twenties and late thirties, and were making a career change as a result of a what Marchand describes as a 'longing for engagement in non-alienating modes of production, aesthetic work, and an authentic way of living' (2007: 23). Their aspiration was to enter a specialist field known as 'fine craft' and become designer makers. This involves both designing and making high-value artefacts to commission (normally hardwood furniture) in consultation with a client, and frequently using labour intensive methods to achieve complex construction in exotic and decorative materials, and to very high levels of finish. Although my own route into a professional career as a maker was different to the one Marchand describes, I began my career with similar aspirations. However, after a period of eight years running my own furniture design studio and workshop, I made a career change of my own, and became a college lecturer41. My first post was at Rycotewood College in Oxfordshire where I taught for three years, until 199442. At this time one of the courses at Rycotewood was the one year full-time Certificate in Furniture Making, which attracted the same types of students as those described in Marchand's paper, although they were generally older, often in their forties or fifties. The majority had abandoned lucrative professional careers – including work as engineers, lawyers, accountants and architects – in order to retrain as furniture makers. Many financed their education by taking pensioned early retirement or, in some cases, by using redundancy payments. Like the students Marchand encountered at the Building Crafts College, their aspirations were normally to become self-
employed, independently owning and running their own workshops, preferably in rural locations. They were, as Marchand puts it, aiming:

... to forge a pleasing integration of work with life; to be part of an ancient tradition that retains a degree of contemporary relevance; to work creatively with their hands; and to participate in a practice that links sources of raw materials, processes of making, and the consumer in a direct and sustainable manner (2007: 24).

This aspiration however, is hard to achieve, with the cost of the final pieces tending to restrict the market for fine furniture to commercial institutions, or the very rich. In spite of this, the attraction of an activity that promises an alternative to alienating work, and offers the possibility of personal satisfaction and self-actualisation remains a powerful, utopian, draw for many people. They are seeking to distinguish between what William Morris described as:

...two kinds of work – one good, the other bad; one not far removed from a blessing, a lightening of life; the other a mere curse, a burden to life. (...) One has hope in it, the other has not. It is manly to do one kind of work and manly also to refuse to do the other (1884: unpaginated source).

To varying degrees, all of the makers I met expressed a view that was in line with William Morris’s idea of two alternative kinds of work. When I met Trevor Marchand to discuss his work he admitted that his own motivation for undertaking the research project, wasn’t entirely to do with the academic outcomes for which he had been funded:

*I suppose, to be very honest, I was looking also for a possible alternative career. There’s something that really appealed to me about going back in to design and making as opposed to simply theorising things, and I needed to find that balance again in my life. And I knew that if I didn’t meet my academic career at the end of my three-year study, and became a*

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43 I was fortunate enough to be able to sustain my own business through a combination of work for wealthy individual clients furnishing their houses, and contract commissions for architects and interior designers carrying out corporate projects – but it is a hard way to make a living.
woodworker, at least I would have the skills to continue practicing and find my own personal enjoyment.

Others too, had a view of their pursuit as representing an idealised lifestyle; one that they either acknowledged as difficult or impossible to achieve, or that they saw themselves as taking positive steps towards achieving. Peter told me how ‘I once saw a TV programme about people that design chairs and did think in [his] middle age that’s what I would like to do.’

Television programmes such as Grand Designs and Mastercrafts have been screened on British Television ever since Barry Bucknell’s output in the 1950s and 60s. These frequently portray amateur makers not only engaging in craft processes and achieving satisfying tangible outcomes, but also engaging in life-defining pursuits. Peter later acknowledged that this, for him, was an impossible dream because he ‘...certainly couldn’t imagine making money as easily as in [his] day job. It’s one of those things about modern society; it’s quite hard to do what you want’.

Although Marchand, had considered the possibility of becoming a professional maker at the end of his research project, he too acknowledged the difficulty of making a living at the craft, and wondered whether the sacrifice of idealism would make it worth becoming a professional maker.

...this has become clear in my own series of interviews with makers, many who have had to have sacrificed a lot of the idealism that they ventured into the whole career with. We have a guy that comes around to the country house to work on different projects that I just simply don’t have time for, and he is really wonderful, in fact he used to work for Martin Grierson. I think he’s a very talented carpenter, but he wasn’t really able to make a go

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44 Grand Designs has run on Channel 4 since 1999, and tracks self-build housing projects from start to finish, often featuring detailed biographies of the builders. Mastercrafts, was a one-off series that ran on the BBC in early 2010, and introduced groups of novice makers to the crafts of chair making, blacksmithing, thatching, stained glass making, weaving and stone masonry.

45 In the sub-culture of fine woodworking Martin Grierson is one of a number of names are noted as being the ones who have ‘made it’. Jeremy Broun’s website attempts to document this sub-culture for the benefit of its members. (http://www.designermakers.org.uk, accessed: 31/03/11).
of it as a furniture maker. He tries to keep his hand in it but mostly for his own pleasure, and that’s when he does have time, and he has a family, and he has a mortgage, and he feels that there are, you know, certain responsibilities that have made his engagement with wood different than it was when he was a student (...) But he still very much enjoys it.

The idealism that Marchand, Peter, and a number of the other makers made reference to, described a romanticised existence where they were free to spend uninterrupted periods of time with complete autonomy; free to design and make the objects they wanted to, without the pressure of external constraints and financial commitments. Both Greg and Simon were taking steps towards achieving this goal by taking commercial commissions and, as noted earlier, setting up basic websites. Nevertheless, on the evidence of my visits and conversations with them, it seemed unlikely that they would be able to generate the financial income necessary to sustain their desired lifestyle.

This idea is also wrapped up with the concept of identity, for the makers partially construct their identity through their activities, and by positioning themselves in relation to their perceptions of making – their relative skills, abilities and achievements being measured against external benchmarks, either imagined or real. Some makers, such as Donald, had a perception that the professional equivalent of their amateur making represented a more authentic version of their pursuit. He was hesitant to compare his making to professional equivalents, wondering whether his skills and equipment were of a high enough standard to be described in the terms he reserved for the work of professionals. Cherry, who was in transition from being an amateur maker and student to being a professional, pondered over how to identify herself. Though she was unsure whether in her new life as a professional maker she would call herself an applied artist, designer maker or jeweller, she was quite certain that in her previous life she was a ‘mum’ and not a maker – this was in spite of spending all her spare time making things for her family and her house. Her education had validated her ambitions and gave her permission to finally describe herself as the maker she wanted to be. Eric’s engagement with making cars fulfilled a different kind of ambition. As a child growing up in South Africa, Eric’s dream had been to become a racing driver. For him, making cars was a way of achieving this. Rebuilding
vintage Formula 1 cars (some of which he had actually witnessed racing as a child) allowed him to engage in an aspiration that would otherwise remain unattainable.

What unites these makers’ accounts is the sense that an alternative way of being existed somewhere outside their direct experience, and that this offered a benchmark by which they measured their own performance and achievements. Some of these perceptions were more pragmatic than others, but all tended to be associated with the values of the broad sub-cultures to which they aspired. These consisted either of loose groupings of other amateur makers who collectively aspired to an idealised way of living, often represented on television documentaries and in magazines, or of the perceptions of related trade occupations (such as carpentry, car mechanics and jewellery making). Simon summed this up well when he described his aspirations to become a ‘fully-fledged’ wood-turner:

\[
\text{We've all got affinity with wood, you know, we all love to make things out of wood. I mean some of the things that these chaps have made are absolutely beautiful and I couldn't, I couldn't aspire at the minute to do that, perhaps you know once I've been doing it 20 years, you know, perhaps I might get there...}
\]

**Conclusions**

In this chapter I have considered the distinction between amateur and professional, and the ways in which amateur making is divorced from the obligations of paid work. However, I also find that many amateur makers attain a different kind of professional status which can be measured by the sophistication of the work undertaken, the skills acquired, and the tools and facilities utilised in the making process. Although some makers try to make the transition from amateur to professional, and some of the makers in this study have aspirations to turn their hobby into paid employment, it is apparent that the increasing levels of obligation this brings can change the practitioner’s perception of their activity. Rather than remaining an enjoyable pursuit, the external pressures and decreasing autonomy associated with paid employment can have the effect of
alienating the maker from their practice, reducing the levels of enjoyment and satisfaction it can offer. These issues are covered in more detail in chapter 10, when I consider the concepts of work and alienation, and discuss the relationship of these ideas to the experiences of the amateur makers in this study. Before moving on to this, the following chapter briefly considers the cost and benefits that are associated with making, isolating some of the key intrinsic rewards associated with the practice.
9: Costs and Benefits

Introduction
This chapter starts with an appraisal of the proposition that there is a cost-benefit relationship at work in the pursuit of amateur making that marks it out as being significantly different from the conventional understanding of leisure. An assessment is made of the rewards leisure theorists have associated with leisure, and a comparison drawn between their wider theoretical abstractions and the empirical findings of this study, with the discussion focussing on those rewards that appear to be the strongest motivators for amateur makers.

Costs
This study has shown that, for the serious amateur makers, their pursuits are substantial enough for them to engage in the long-term acquisition of a range of special skills, knowledge and experience, and to acquire and maintain the material resources of tools, machines and work spaces necessary to achieve the standards they seek. Rather than dabbling and moving on, for these people their activities became a form of personal enrichment as they acquire the experiential knowledge associated with the use of tools, techniques and materials. They maintain careers in their endeavours that last many years, with each project identifiable as part of a series of increasingly complex accomplishments, and with a significant amount of effort spent acquiring additional knowledge. In chapter 8, for instance, we saw how Brian, had spent over three years learning AutoCAD as an aid to his model engineering activities, and Jenny made it clear that even though she had inherited her tools from her father-in-law, she still appreciated how the investment in equipment would be a barrier for some people to even get started:

I think with making things it seems more complicated, and also the fact that you need a lot of expensive tools to make what I do, and I think if I had to sort of say 'oh, I need to make this shelving unit, but I need to go out and
buy a router for a hundred and twenty pounds, I just don’t think I would have been able to justify it. But the fact is that I have got, I don’t know, three routers, and all the bits in the world I can just get, so that barrier for me is not there.

I have shown that serious amateur making requires the accumulation of both material and embodied capital. The effort and resources used to generate and sustain these assets means there is almost always a cost attached to these leisure pursuits. Leadbeater and Miller have noted the financial investment necessary in order to sustain a pro-am career, frequently with no financial return. One of their interviewees is a pro-am tennis player:

He has three rackets that need restringing once a week. A decent stringing machine costs about £1,500. A set of tennis balls, which last about an hour’s intense practice, costs £6. He needs new tennis shoes every three weeks and a constant supply of clothing. The main expense is going to the tournaments, which generally take place with no spectators in anonymous sports centres around the country from Plymouth to Cardiff, Hull to North Wales. At the peak of the season James aims to be playing three tournaments a month, at a cost of about £200 per tournament. And often it’s a long and fruitless journey (2004: 19).

This sportsman defines himself self-deprecatingly as a ‘wannabe pro’. He invests in his pursuit because he believes that one day he might be able to make a living out of his sport. Statistically this is unlikely to happen. In his own research, Stebbins also identified the expenditure associated with the activities he considered, but believes that ‘although additional costs may be endured by these amateurs in the conduct of their pastime, in the end, these costs are substantially offset by the rewards found therein’ (1992: 94).

As the material in chapter 8 demonstrated, like the pro-am tennis player, some of the amateur makers who took part in this study had hopes of converting their pursuit into a business, and to become ‘vocational migrants’. Most, however, were content to remain as amateurs, and invested in their pursuits in the knowledge that there would be little or no financial return. The financial costs for the maker are likely to be in the buying of raw materials, and the expense of maintaining a workshop and a toolkit; though, as I will discuss in chapter 11, the
acquisition of tools and the maintenance of a workspace offers distinct rewards of its own, and the engagement in these activities could be considered a benefit rather than a cost.

There are also non-financial costs associated with serious leisure, and in Stebbins' study these tended to be related to the social structures and interactions that surrounded the activities he considered. This might include failure to make a sports team, failing an audition or 'dying' on stage. For the solitary maker, for whom there is rarely a public audience, fellow participant, or regulatory authority, the frustrations and tensions tend to be associated with the relationship between them and their tools, materials and processes; procedures may not go to plan and equipment might not perform as expected. Greg told me about the frustrations of working out the best way to build his canoes:

_I started one week, and as I laid a few strips I realised it was such a bad way of doing it and I actually ripped it off and started it a different way... but that's got to be worse when you have done some work, and you realise it was all for nothing, and you have got to pull it apart and start again. That's the bit that really gets you, because you think well I spent all this time doing this bit, and because it doesn't marry up with that bit you have to rip it off and start again. But you have just got to try and think of a set of solutions and which is the best way._

An additional cost incurred by all amateur activity is the loss of free time, and the potential impact on interactions with family and friends. Bert Moorhouse noted how amongst American hot-rod builders: 'There is a stress on the costs of success – injury, lack of friends, broken marriages, loss of family life. Moreover, it is not presented as necessarily that enjoyable...' (1991: 165). Hot-rodgers frequently explained their involvement in hot-rodding in terms akin to a love affair, with words like 'fever' and 'addiction' often being used (Moorhouse, 1991: 188). Stebbins also encountered examples of people who had divorced as a result of their participation in serious leisure activity:

_Serious leisure can lead to serious interpersonal role conflict for some practitioners – it led to two divorces among the twenty five respondents in the theatre study (1997: 127)._
Stebbins argues that serious leisure can become uncontrollable, demanding more time and money than is available for it. Furthermore, it lacks the institutional support and widely accepted values that otherwise sustain and legitimate family and work commitments. In this sense, he argues, serious leisure pursuits tend to be marginalised.

These findings are reflected by my own research. Brian told me he how during the week he would spend as much time as he could 'get away with' in his workshop: ‘I stop when I am told [by my wife] I have got to go and screw a screw in here, or mow the lawn…’. When I asked how many hours a week Simon spent building his custom motor bikes he replied ‘It depends how many hours I was let by the wife really, I suppose [laugh]’, and later in the interview he acknowledged that ‘...well it did become difficult and I think, erm, that's part of the reason why we split up’.

Cherry admitted that she was:

... terrible with things, like, if I start knitting something, or I start sewing something, everything else has to stop. I can’t let myself; in the end I had to stop myself from doing like embroidery and knitting, because all I would do is just spend the whole day doing it.

When I asked Eric how much time he spent in his workshop, he replied: ‘The only time I come out is to cut the grass’.

In some cases the enthusiasm for serious making also diminished the appeal of other passive activities that tend to be dismissed as a waste of time. Eric believed that most people were unable to embrace the challenges associated with serious making, and tended to turn instead to more passive forms of recreation:

The real do it yourself building thing is like, is I don’t think people dare take it on nowadays.

Q: So why do you think that is?

I think it’s creative. I mean we just like to create something, the challenge. The option is sitting in the pub or sitting in front of the television.

In spite of these challenges, tensions and expenditures, some people persevere with their pursuits because the benefits outweigh the costs. It is this paradox –
the fact that these individuals must ‘work’ in order to achieve the benefits of the ‘leisure’ activities they take up – that most strongly configures the questions of motivation considered in this thesis. In the following section I start to consider some of the possible rewards associated with leisure that have been put forward by researchers working in this area.

Benefits

Some of the costs associated with amateur making can be regarded as extrinsic, and separable from the experience of making. They require investment in advance – the building of the workshop, the acquisition of tools and materials, and the investment of time needed to develop skills. Other costs are intrinsic to the process – the pressure or stress associated with complex making processes, and the opportunity cost of missed interactions with family and friends that occur as a corollary of the practice. Likewise, the rewards associated with amateur making can also be structured along these lines, with some of the benefits being a separable consequence, whilst others are intrinsic to the activity. The following section discusses this distinction in more detail.

The starting point for the analysis in this section is the work of the French sociologist Joffre Dumazedier, one of the earliest theorists to give serious consideration to the study of leisure, and the first to coin the term ‘the leisure society’. Dumazedier’s book, Vers une Civilisation du Loisir? was first published in 1962, and translated into English as Toward a Society of Leisure, in 1967. The main basis of Dumazedier’s thesis is that leisure was already, in the early 1960s, a major component of modern life (Veal, 2009: 37). Dumazedier associated three functions with leisure: relaxation, entertainment and personal development (1967: 14-17 cited in Stebbins, 1992: 95). These broad-brush descriptions reflect the relatively unsophisticated state of the field of study when Dumazedier was working but, nevertheless, offer a set of categories that have been developed and expanded by later scholars (Haworth, 1997; Parker, 1983; Roberts, 2006), and that can be further developed in relation to this research.

Dumazedier’s definition of leisure adheres to the common-sense assumption that most leisure is passive, and contains intrinsic benefits that are not a separable
consequence of the activity. The following discussion focuses on the types of intrinsic reward identified by Dumazedier, and then follows this by considering Stebbins’ proposition that serious leisure also contains benefits that are extrinsic to the activity.

The first of the intrinsic rewards Dumazedier associates with leisure is relaxation. At first sight, relaxation seems to be a self-evident function of leisure. However, the analysis of the field work has shown that when the notion of a boundary between work and leisure is more fully developed, it becomes apparent that the distinction between these categories of activity is best defined as permeable (Haworth, 1997). Parker’s categorisation of spent time use described in chapter 7 of this thesis already alerts us to the fact that not all time outside paid work is relaxing. It may not be obligation-free, or spent in pleasurable ways, and as has already been noted, for the people who took part in this study, amateur making may also be an activity that contains some of the stresses and anxieties more normally associated with work.

Dumazedier’s next function of leisure is entertainment, or self-gratification. This can be defined as the pure enjoyment associated with a leisure pursuit, and is an experience that is essentially hedonistic and short-lived. Together with social interaction, self-gratification is also likely to be the sole benefit accrued by partakers in casual leisure. For serious leisure enthusiasts involved in sports or performance that involves interaction with audiences or spectators, the powerful ‘thrill’, ‘buzz’ or ‘kick’, provides an enriching experience. The idea of the ‘thrill’, however, is rarely mentioned in relation to amateur making, where words such as fulfilment and satisfaction are more likely to be used, signifying a more subtle form of self-gratification – the pure pleasure associated with carrying out a process-driven activity over extended periods of time.

Personal development, Dumazedier’s third function of leisure, correlates with Stebbins’ finding that serious leisure participants benefit from self-actualisation, self-enrichment and self-expression (Stebbins, 1992: 7). These are identified by Stebbins as the most important rewards for his group of respondents, and are attributed with endowing the individual with moral, cultural, or intellectual resources. The fieldwork for this study has shown that of the three rewards identified by Dumazedier, it is the last which appears to have the most
significance for makers – amateur making may at times be both relaxing and entertaining, but it seems unlikely that these are over-riding consideration for the participants. The term ‘self-actualisation’ was first coined by Kurt Goldstein (Goldstein, 1939 cited in Maslow, 1943: 382) and taken up later in a much more specific fashion by the psychologist Abraham Maslow as part of his work on motivation. He uses it to refer to:

... the desire or self-fulfilment, namely a tendency for [a person] to become actualized in what he [or she] is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions. It is not necessarily a creative urge although in people who have any capacities for creation it will take this form (1943: 382-383).

Maslow’s work on motivation is a needs-based model that is based on the supposition that human needs are multiple, innate, inexhaustible, and arranged in a hierarchy of importance. As one need is satisfied, another (higher) need becomes apparent (Maslow, 1943: 357). These multiple needs are loosely classifiable as physiological needs, security needs, affiliation needs, esteem needs and the so-called self-actualisation needs. These are commonly expressed as a pyramid, with the needs distributed vertically, rising to the highest, final need, self-actualisation. Self-actualization is commonly regarded as ‘growth-motivated’ rather than ‘deficiency-motivated’, being sought not out of a desire to replenish a diminished resource, such as nutrition or shelter, but in order to develop additional capacities. The term has subsequently been used in a variety of contexts, becoming shorthand for the achievement of individual’s human potential above and beyond the utilitarian requirements of everyday existence, and the need for social support and interaction. Stebbins defines self-actualisation as ‘the opportunity offered to participants via the amateur activity to develop their talents, skills, or knowledge; to fulfil part of their potential as human beings’ (1992: 95). He found that in those pursuits where a clear set of
skills or body of knowledge is required, greater importance was placed on the idea of self-actualisation than on self-gratification; in other words, the rewards lay in the development of the individual's long-term capabilities, rather than in the short-lived pleasure that might be associated with a either a successful performance, or victory in competition.

However, even though it is the most often cited model of needs based motivation in introductory text books in a diverse range of disciplines, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been criticised for its weak empirical basis (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). Indeed Maslow appears to pre-empt this criticism when he acknowledges in the early version of his ideas cited above, that his proposal derives most directly from his 'clinical experience' and acknowledges that his theory of motivation:

... must be considered to be a suggested program or framework for future research and must stand or fall, not so much on the facts available or evidence presented, as upon researches to be done... (1943: 371).

When Maslow’s journals (originally written in 1962) were published in 1979 they revealed his continued frustration with the way that his ideas had been revisited and repeated without any empirical evidence or testing, and he wrote:

My motivation theory was published 20 years ago and in all that time nobody repeated it, or tested it, or really analyzed it or criticized it. They just used it, swallowed it whole with only the most minor modifications (quoted in Lowry, 1979: 190, cited in Dye, Mills and Weatherbee, 2005: 1380).

Rollinson and Broadfield note that although Maslow's model has a strong intuitive appeal, it has been subjected to three main criticisms (2005: 204-5) Firstly for being elitist in that some needs are said to be of higher order than other more 'primitive' needs; secondly that it purports to be universally applicable, failing to take account of cross-cultural differences; and thirdly that it has often been contradicted by research carried out since the time Maslow wrote his journals, which challenges the fixed hierarchical order in which needs are said to be addressed. In this respect the framework fails to allow for individual differences in prioritisation of needs.
However, contrary to the reputation that Maslow’s work has acquired by being uncritically incorporated into positivistic management theory, his work took a fundamentally humanist approach to behaviour and motivation, with an emphasis on consciousness-raising and human liberation drawn from his readings of Freud and Marx (Dye, Mills, & Weatherbee, 2005). Maslow believed that his theory of motivation was only useful when culture was considered, and throughout his life he asserted that the nature of human needs, the bases of his theory, were both biologically determined and socially constructed. In this respect it is more perceptive to note the overlapping of his theories across different epistemological and ontological positions. In response to his readings of Marx, Maslow developed a strong criticism of the division of labour, suggesting that people need meaningful work in order to self-actualise, noting that in Fordist systems of manufacture:

... the whole man is not needed – just his hands, or a particular, easily learned, partial skill; the job is broken down into parts and bits not needing highly trained people; judgement, taste, idiosyncrasy, connoisseurship, professionalism, autonomy, pride – all these are minimized. It leads towards an entrepreneur or manager sitting in an office planning for a large organization of ad hoc trained, unskilled, interchangeable, autonomous people (1962, quoted in Lowry, 1979: 402).

And he identified with Marx when he wrote:

Marx on the other hand was the first thinker who saw that the (widespread) realization of the universal and fully awakened man can occur only together with social changes which lead to a new and truly human economic and social organization of mankind. ... You need a fully awakened man to know which social changes to make, which direction to go in, how to do it, how to translate the (purely) institutional change into human (SA) [self-actualisation] terms. ... The process of social and individual betterment must go on simultaneously as a single process (1962, quoted in Lowry, 1979: 269).

The next chapter of the thesis follows up some of these propositions in more detail by considering in depth the ideas of Marx that relate to the questions raised by this research.
Social Rewards

In addition to Dumazedier's three functions of leisure, which are associated with the individual self, there remains a series of 'social rewards' that depend on relations with others. These can be characterised as social attraction, group accomplishment, social interaction and belongingness. Of these rewards, social attraction and group accomplishment tend to be a separable consequence of the activity, whilst social interaction and belongingness are closer to being intrinsic to the activity.46

Social rewards offer the satisfaction of being connected to others through the activity. Although a number of the makers in this study appeared to draw on these benefits by giving away the products of their making activities to family members and friends (Peter giving away his furniture pieces as gifts), or through interactions necessary to enable the activity (Donald recruiting his friends to help erect his shed, and Eric pulling in favours from his network in order to finish a car for a competition), the dominant finding of this research is that these interactions were only limited motivators for the activity. Most of the makers were resolutely independent and in some cases positively rejected these kinds of interactions (Brian not wanting to show his work at craft fairs and Rose rejecting any involvement in local craft events or associations). Likewise, social attraction and group accomplishment, other rewarding aspects of amateur experience identified by Stebbins (1992: 94-95), played only a limited role for the same reasons. This contrasts with other forms of activity such as participation sports, and performance arts such as amateur dramatics and stand up comedy, which also fall under the rubric of serious leisure developed by Stebbins.

The other significant difference between serious amateur making and the sporting and performance related serious leisure and pro-am activities considered by previous researchers (Stebbins, 1992: 7) is that the activity generates lasting physical products. For the makers in this study, resulting physical and tangible outcomes were an essential motivating factor. This was not however, because of any subsequent utility or any subsequent economic value.

46 A fuller discussion of the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and benefits in avoiding a straight polarity between these concepts is contained in chapter 13.
that might be attributed to the artefacts. Jenny, for whom, out of all the cases, making was most strongly initiated by a desire to furnish her house, had the financial resources to pay for ready-made furniture and commented that ....

...you can go and buy something from Ikea or Heal's, or wherever you buy your furniture, and it is something you can buy, I don't know, then it doesn't fit and you get rid of it. And I just think people are probably getting more sort of back to, not nature, but sort of back to basics maybe, and like the idea of having done things themselves.

The fact that the chicken coop she had made had also stood empty for some time because a fox had eaten all the chickens (see figure 3), and that there were no immediate plans to repopulate it, seems to imply that the rewards associated with embarking on the project itself outweighed the financial benefits associated with owning the physical artefact. Jenny also grew her own vegetables and commented that:

...there's a sort of discussion I have with my husband quite regularly, because he says you can get all this beautiful organic local food in the farm shop down the road, why don't you go and buy that, and I don't know why. But I just like the idea of having grown my potatoes, and I don't know, maybe these soya beans will come through that I am trying to grow. It’s not a self sufficiency, because I am not aspiring to that, but it is I guess, it’s just I find it very satisfying to have done things myself.

47 Heals is a well-established upmarket furniture retailer in central London.
In fact, none of the participants in the study attached any great importance to the financial returns that might accrue from owning or selling the lasting physical products of their activities. Even though both Greg the Kayak maker, Simon the wood-turner and, to some extent Cherry, the jeweller, had aspirations to develop their activities into businesses, their ambitions had little to do with financial return, and none of them sustained their activity for its financial benefits, which in all cases appeared to cover their costs at best.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has shown that there are a number of costs associated with serious amateur making that make it an unusual and distinctive form of leisure activity. It can be distinguished from passive leisure by the levels of commitment and involvement it asks of its participants, and the requirement for a long-term commitment to the acquisition of skills and resources. However, although these costs are offset by the rewards that are offered by the activity, these rewards are largely internal to the pursuit – they tend not to be valued for their separable
outcomes. Financial, functional and social rewards seem to play little part in motivating the makers, and they are more likely to be rewarded by the self-actualising qualities of the activities they undertake. When viewed alongside Stebbins’ appraisal of the rewards offered by other forms of serious leisure, there are some key characteristics that differentiate serious amateur making from the wider range of leisure forms considered in his studies. Serious amateur making offers a set of lasting, durable benefits that can only be achieved from a foundation of developed knowledge and skill and articulated through the specific material capital of tools, materials and workshops. In the remaining chapters of the thesis I develop these ideas further, focussing on the ways in which the activity can be rewarding in and of itself, and I build up a clearer picture of the nature of these internal rewards.
10: The Nature of Work

Introduction

I have shown that the many of the activities of the makers sampled for this study have strong similarities to the paid work carried out in the related professions. Although unpaid, these making pursuits require high levels of skill and commitment, utilise complicated equipment and techniques, and result in highly sophisticated outcomes. This corresponds to previous research that has identified and categorised certain kinds of pastimes as pro-am or serious leisure – given that these previous categories embrace a wider range of activities, and are more diffuse than the subject of this thesis.

I will now focus in more detail on the ways in which the amateur nature of the activity – its location in the realm of leisure rather than work – affects it’s meaning in the eyes of the participants. In chapter 8 I considered how the professionalization of a pursuit changed the way it was perceived by the practitioner. I now develop these ideas further by drawing upon the work of philosophers, social theorists and historians who have considered the emergence of capitalism and its affect on the pattern and significance of work.

Work and time

Ben Seligman, in his consideration of work, alienation, and leisure, quotes Lewis Mumford in order to develop an idea of work as an act of creative self-fulfilment:

Man gains through work the insight into nature he needs to transmute work into artifacts and symbols that have a use beyond ensuring his immediate animal survival (...). The role of work is to make man a master of the conditions of life: hence its constant discipline is essential to his grasp of the real world. The function of work is to provide man with a living: not for the purpose of enlarging his capacities to consume but of liberating his capacities to create. The social meaning of work derives
from the acts of creation it makes possible (Mumford, 1944: 5; quoted in Seligman, 1965: 345-346).

Mumford is arguing that work is fundamental to living – not by enabling man to consume, but in so far as it enables him to create, to grasp the real world by participating in its production. The best work is satisfying in and of itself, and my thesis in this chapter is that people are most satisfied when the work that they do has intrinsic value. Later in this chapter I will consider the ways in which work that does not conform to this pattern has an alienating affect on the individual, drawing particularly upon the ideas of Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen. Firstly I want to introduce this topic by returning to the idea of time, moving from the discussion of the ways in which activities are positioned within different ‘types’ of time, to time as a measure of perceived duration, and I demonstrate these differences by drawing upon the accounts of the makers that follow later in this chapter. I start by discussing the way industrialisation has led to the commoditisation of time, and the effect this has had on the way the passing of time is experienced in the context of work and leisure.

Historians have noted how the evolution of historical conditions over the longer term has modified the individuals’ consciousness of time across the whole of society. In Customs in Common, E.P. Thompson’s vivid portrayal of the emergence of time and work discipline in late eighteenth century, it is possible to see how the nature of leisure time was fundamentally changed as a result of industrialisation:

In all these ways – by the division of labour; the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports – new labour habits were formed, and a new time discipline established (1991: 394).

Through this process, the fluidity of pre-industrial work time was lost, and a demarcation between work and leisure became entrenched. Time became increasingly commodified, and as blocks of time were either sold for wages, or withheld for leisure, the concepts of work and leisure became more and more oppositional. Gelber (1999) draws upon Thompson’s findings to account for the emergence of constructive pastimes in the nineteenth century. Over time, as the idea of the work ethic became established, the guardians of public morals become
progressively more concerned that unregulated time would be spent getting into trouble; in other words 'the devil would find work for idle hands'. Gelber notes how since the nineteenth century morally desirable alternatives to work have been promoted in the form of hobbies and pastimes. In his work, Stebbins seems to incorporate this fear when he expresses the concern that ‘a steady diet of casual, unserious leisure in the sizable blocks of time left over after a substantially reduced working week, month, or year, ultimately tends to cause a spiritual wasteland’ (1992: 19).

This anxiety about the use of free time stems from the increasing amounts of leisure time that have become available to workers in the western world ((Roberts, 2006) also see Rojek (1985) cited earlier in this thesis), and concerns with how this might be filled. I noted in chapter 7 how Parker distinguished between the extension pattern of leisure activity, where the job experience is so powerful that it spills over into free time, and the opposition pattern, where leisure is very different from work, and is the main focus of interest in someone’s life. In other words, is leisure activity a mirror of work, or a compensation for the qualities deemed to be missing in work life? This question is thrown into sharp focus when we move from a generalised deliberation of all available leisure forms to a consideration of the ‘work-like’ leisure of amateur making.

As the previous chapter has shown, the amateur makers sampled for this study have a varied relationship between their work and their amateur making. Work for some of the respondents is an alienating experience for which they are able to use amateur making as compensation. However, as the discussion of the field work above has shown, the wish to convert an unpaid hobby into a paid profession often overlooks the problems caused by the extrinsic obligations of a job, and the ways in which this changes the individual’s relationship to the activity. For some, such as Brian, though he pursues his leisure interest with the levels of commitment most people would reserve for their paid work, his pursuit is a relief from his job, which fails to provide him with the satisfaction he first sought when he embarked on his career as an engineer with Rolls Royce. For Eric, his car building has strong parallels with his work as an engineer, and is a direct extension of his job; Greg is extending his work as a joiner and carpenter so that it includes his kayak making, thus allowing his skills to be used in a way
that compensates for the frustrations of working in a time pressured commercial environment – the skills and tools he uses are the same but the experience is different.

The combination of obligation and freedom in amateur work creates a hybrid of Parker’s two categories, ‘non-work obligations’, which includes obligations to non-human objects (in this case to processes, projects and material artefacts) and what Parker called ‘free time’, or ‘discretionary time’. Although serious making contains some of the obligations associated with work like activities, it is perceived as leisure by the participants because it takes place in discretionary time, and they have the freedom to temporarily (or even permanently) withdraw from the task whenever they wish, without suffering consequences from external agents.

Although Greg was willing to tolerate difficult and demanding situations in his amateur work, his attitude was quite different to when his obligation to his employer compelled him to carry on working. Here he describes an example of these frustrations:

... you think well this job should only take me five minutes. Why has it taken me all day, because things keep going wrong, things breaking, there might be something with the machinery you know, and all you have to do is cut something with the machinery and the machinery breaks down and you spend all day fixing the machinery to do a five minute job. It’s so frustrating. ... it’s worse doing a job for somebody else because then you have the time constraint because you want to get the job done for them, if you do it for yourself it doesn’t matter does it.

The varying obligations associated with a task, for instance whether or not the time is perceived by the participants as being part of subsistence time or discretionary time, changes the perception of passing time. Greg, who is now self-employed, but had previously worked for a joinery company, described how he became stressed because of the amount of work that he was being asked to do within the time made available by his employer:

48 The role of non-human participants in the making process is explored more fully in chapter 11, were I discuss the concepts of material capital and situated cognition.
Oh god, time flies, not so much because you are enjoying it because you are on a deadline. I don’t know if you’ve found that, whenever you have to have something done by five o’clock, you start at nine in the morning you start working on it you look up and all of a sudden it’s five to five, and you think my god, you know, and that’s the sort of situation you work through lunch...

He discussed how there is a finite time attached to each making task, and how easy it is to underestimate the total amount of time needed to complete an overall job because of a failure to factor in the number of sub-tasks needed, and the amount of time attached to each of them. The pressure that Greg felt was external to the task, it was a constraint set upon the work by an outside party, in this case Greg’s boss, who was responding in turn to a promise that he had made to an external client.

The problems associated with the nature of work after industrialisation have been considered at length over the past 150 years, and in the following section I review the ways in which this body of thinking helps to answer the question of how amateur making can be such a compelling activity for its participants. Firstly I will turn to another account of making, this time from Roger Coleman who was a designer and maker of furniture in the 1970s and 1980s before becoming a full-time academic.49

In his semi-autobiographical book, The Art of Work, Coleman offers a powerful and familiar description of the limitations imposed by extrinsically governed work – in this case whilst working as bench joiner (Coleman, 1988: 143). The joiner is constrained by his employer, the building firm. He has no choice about what he makes, how he makes it, or the length of time he is allowed to spend making an item. This is exactly the situation described by Greg earlier in this thesis, when he found himself working against the clock for a joinery company. Consequently, the joiner also has no control over the standard he is able to work to. Poor pay and a bonus system ensure he has little choice and little power over his working life. In order to find an alternative to employment as a bench joiner, and to carry on making things, Coleman began working as an independent self-

49 Coleman co-founded and co-directed the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre at the Royal College of Art from 1999 to 2006 and was Professor of Inclusive Design at the College until July 2008.
employed craftsman. This situation grants more freedom and control to the maker. He can set his own standard and determine his own hours. If he designs the work himself he can also choose his materials and invest in the work the qualities he thinks it ought to have. However, as Coleman found, customers were only willing to pay a certain amount for his work – and this is often less than the work is worth – so he ended up exploiting himself for much of the time:

‘...working long hours for little financial reward, worrying about money and the quality of my work, and trying to balance the pressure of bills against my own desire to work creatively’ (Coleman, 1988: 144). Again, this is an exact parallel with the designer-makers discussed in chapter 8, who struggled to make a living as self-employed craftspeople.

Owing a heavy debt to the writings of William Morris, Coleman’s book takes a romantic view of pre-industrial society, and presents a highly moral and rather limited view of the meanings and consequences of mass production. However, some of the concepts he draws from his accounts of pre-industrial societies do offer valuable insights for our modern understanding of free time. Describing the attitude of the ‘great Renaissance artists’ he writes: ‘...work for them was not the alienating self-denying anti-autonomous activity that we see’ (1988: 141). He justifies this assertion by discussing the idea of surplus value, arguing that in pre-industrial societies, surplus value was expressed as free time (1988: 141-150). In these societies, ritual activities abound – activities that may, in another context well be regarded as work. This ‘work’ acted as a way of making free time more significant – a ritualised, social and cohesive activity that was part of natural and instinctive creativity. In contrast to this, as industrialisation took hold, and as the division of labour became the key to increasing productivity and the efficient use of labour, the surplus value produced by the crafts was no longer available as free time which could be reinvested into social ‘well-being’ but was instead stripped away as profit. In other words, rather than being invested in the work itself, this surplus value was instead invested in machines to replace skill, and the trades and crafts were rapidly and inevitably dehumanised.

For Coleman there are two alternative motivating forces for work. He describes them as profit; something extracted from labour and raw materials via a reductive process in which everything is expressed as money, and art; a
constructive process in which labour and raw materials are converted into complex cultural goods which have the ability to provide for a broad spectrum of physical and spiritual and emotional needs (Coleman, 1988: 148). In order to overcome the alienating affects of dominant, profit driven work Coleman proposes a world that depends not on ‘finalized, finite designs, but on open procedures in which people can participate in designing and making their own surroundings’ (Coleman, 1988: 149). In other words using their inalienable labour to construct the world upon which they depend.

The division of labour

The use of the concept of alienation in discussions of work and well-being is well-established, and Karl Marx (1959 [1844]), writing in the nineteenth century, argued that the process of alienation results from man working for someone else rather than himself, and working with materials, on land, and in factories that he does not own. For Marx the root of the issue lay in the division of labour.

Historically, the particular conditions that give rise to work patterns in the industrial world include increasingly complex economic systems of production, and progressively more specialised labour, with different tasks and roles being allocated to different individuals, and to different groupings of individuals in increasingly specialised industries. By the 18th Century industrialisation had led to a transformation of economic and social life in Britain. Feudal structure and the dominance of rural life were broken, and with them disappeared the concept of the artisan supplying his locality with its everyday goods and services. Instead, a large proportion of the rural working classes became city dwelling factory workers and, with this change in occupation, there came a change in their relationship to the products that they were engaged in producing. Rather than over-seeing an entire process and fully understanding the nature and meaning of their working existence, they became alienated from their occupation and its contribution to society. Their involvement in the making of a product was reduced to carrying out a single activity as part of a large sequence of operations,

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50 Man is used throughout to refer to ‘mankind’, and not as a gendered distinction.
never perceiving the entire process. By 1776 Adam Smith was able to vividly recount the division of labour in the making of pins:

One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on, is a peculiar business; to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations. (Smith, 1976 [1776]: 15, quoted in Coleman, 1988: 147)

According to Marx, this results in a loss of the voluntary participation in activity, and an alienation of man from his work:

...the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long therefore, as activity is not voluntary, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood... (Marx & Engels, [1970] 1974: 54, cited in Eagleton, 1997: 24).

In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1959 [1844]), Marx describes four aspects of alienation. Firstly, the worker experiences the product of labour as an alien object. The furniture maker or engineer may produce a beautiful or functional object which perfectly serves the needs of the end user, but it is not his; it is owned by the capitalist, the proprietor of the business, who sells the artefact and retains the surplus value in the form of profit. For Brian the model engineer, who was employed as a print finisher, the products of his labours were books; but he was only involved in operating a machine that trimmed pages and applied bindings. The product of his labour was of no consequence to him; the books could have been acclaimed works of fiction, or technical manuals, it would have made no difference to the experience of his work. When I asked him about
the differences between his paid work as a print finisher and his amateur making he told me he didn’t notice the day going by when doing his own projects, whilst time ‘dragged by’ at work.

Secondly, the worker experiences the *act of production* as alien. Originally the work of the furniture maker, for instance, was carried out in a way of their own choosing; at a speed, method and design determined by them, and in a way that contributed to the formation of their identity. Once they are working for someone else, they are working on someone else’s private property, and they have to work to specifications imposed by the owner of the business. When Greg told me about the glazed doors he made for architectural refurbishments, his concern was not with the pleasure the products of his work would give to the people who had commissioned the doors, but with length of time it would take him to fix each glazing bar and pane of glass, and whether his boss would chastise him for taking too long, and going over budget. Marx describes this as *self-estrangement*; the worker becomes alienated from himself. Thirdly, under the conditions of wage labour and private property, man becomes alien from his distinctively human attribute, which Marx regards not as thought, or consciousness *per se*, but rather free and conscious material production. Rather than activity being the activity of life, it becomes objectified, an instrumental means for his existence.

When June Freeman carried out her study of amateur kitchen design and installation she concluded that men who develop a passion for making tended to articulate the satisfactions their work at home offered by contrasting it with their paid occupations (Freeman, 2004). One is described as working in a factory job that offered no sense of fulfilment. His job is regarded simply as means of acquiring the funds necessary to continue with the renovation of his and his wife’s dilapidated bungalow, whilst another claimed that, had finances allowed, he would have given up his job working with computers in order to do practical work at home the whole time (2004: 116). In my own fieldwork, Simon the wood turner told me how for twenty-five years he had driven lorries for a living, and he ensured his wife of his potential 51 Marx calls this the ‘species being’, and this concept will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.
was clear about the distinction between this and his desired freedom to produce without obligation:

Well a job is what you have to do isn’t it, you have to go out and you have to like sort of earn the money (…), and a job is working for somebody else, it’s not working for yourself (…) it’s not fulfilling your own needs and your own sort of, I suppose really I mean it’s good for the soul to do it for yourself instead of like lining somebody else’s pocket, and you’re only getting a pittance. You have to work hard for your own self (…) but it’s much better for the soul, you know what I mean?

Even Tim, who one might imagine had escaped the drudgery of semi-skilled labour by becoming an academic, bemoaned the alienating aspects of his job, particularly the volume of mundane e-mails he has to answer:

…with the emails it’s, I’ve got, you know, I don’t know, a hundred PhD students who rely on me to make sure that they’re getting through their program, you know, like colleagues who are going to rely on me, my response to their emails. (…) The pleasure of my work as an academic is almost like, something that [laugh], some kind of vision on the horizon, and every time you think you’re almost there, something else drags you back in to the administrative hellhole…

Species being

According to Marx, one of the escapes from this alienated state of being is the recovery of man’s ability to freely create above and beyond material necessity, a return to the species-being. Marx believed that the distinctively human attribute was not thought or consciousness per se, but rather free and conscious material production. It was, therefore, free labour which constituted man's active species life. He sees human kind as a species-being that is naturally productive, and interested in expressing its potential by transforming the world:

52 Translated from the German wordGattungswesen, and often taken to mean 'human nature'; what it is that makes us humans rather than animals.
The practical creation of the *objective* world, the *fashioning* of inorganic nature, is proof that man is a conscious species-being ... man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need (Marx & Engels, [1970] 1974).

Marx argues that it is when we produce without the drive of physical necessity and material obligation that we arrive at our freedom, and that by fashioning the world we realise what we have most in common with others, which is the species-being. By freely producing, the individual and the species-being are ultimately one. It is when these dimensions of the self and the communal become separated that we experience alienation – we are no longer able to recognise ourselves in the world we have created. Our productive capacity becomes solely instrumental in the self-development of others:

... the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer ... the proposition that man is estranged from his species-being means that man is estranged from the others and that all are estranged from man's essence (Marx & Engels, [1970] 1974).

It is important to note that, for Marx, the idea of production was not intended to be reduced to a purely economic sense. Rather, he saw production as a form of self-actualisation akin to the pursuit of wider aesthetic activity. He sees changes in working practices not just as a change in procedure, but as a fundamental alteration to the meaning of production.

Here Marx alludes to a concrete base, the ‘real world’, or the species-being, which precedes activity and reflection. In this respect, Marx is paradoxically an essentialist who holds that there is a human nature or essence, which, in a just society would be allowed to come into its own (Eagleton, 1997: 17). Marx believed that our consciousness is determined by the material conditions of our existence, (‘... circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances’ (Marx in Elster, 1986: 187)) and he aims to tightly link consciousness with the material conditions of the world. But he also wants to unbind that relation, when he asserts that there is an underlying authentic condition, the species-being, that we are prevented from attaining because we have become alienated, both from our productive activity, and from the world we have produced. For Marx, the aim
of our species-being, consists just in realising itself. In common with other Romantic radicals Marx considers that there is, or should be, no ultimate point to human existence beyond the delight of its self-fulfilment; an expression of our creative capacities that is not governed by some law set above them or some imposing set of ends pitched beyond them. According to Marx, the thing that makes us most human, and least like other animals, is when we are free to produce, independently of any immediate material need, generating a kind of creative surplus over what is materially necessary, which is to be judged in its own terms rather than against external ends and objectives. It is an exercise of self-fulfilling energy for the mere sake of it: ‘There is no need to justify this dynamic, any more than we need to justify a smile or a song; it just belongs to our common nature’ (Eagleton, 1997: 19). This outlook describes a world where the rewards of living are intrinsic to life itself. Or as John Lennon succinctly puts it, ‘life is what happens whilst you are busy making other plans’ (Lennon, 1980). Marx asserts, however, that in capitalist society,

‘... labour, life activity, productive life itself appears to man only as a means for the satisfaction of need, the need to preserve physical existence. But productive life is species life. It is life-producing life. The whole character of a species, its species character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species character of man. [In capitalism], life itself appears only as a means of life’ (Marx, 1959 [1844]: 328, quoted in Eagleton, 1997: 20).

The instinct of workmanship

In order to further understand social context for the achievement of these personal rewards it is worth turning to what economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen has called of the ‘instinct of workmanship’. Veblen defined the ‘instinct of workmanship’ or ‘sense of workmanship’ at the end of the nineteenth century, initially in his influential book The Theory of the Leisure Class ([1899] 1994), and in a paper ‘The Instinct of Workmanship and the Irksomeness of Labor’ (1898), finally publishing his ideas in complete form in the book The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts (1914). Veblen is careful to point
out that the phrases ‘instinct of workmanship’ and ‘sense of workmanship’ are not intended to signify irreducible psychological or physical elements within human behaviour, but ‘a concurrence of several instinctive aptitudes’ (Veblen, 1914: 17 (all subsequent page numbers refer to the Kessinger Publishing facsimile edition)). By this he means that ‘in human behaviour this disposition is effective in such consistent, ubiquitous and resilient fashion that students of human culture will have to count with it as one of the integral hereditary traits of mankind’ (1914: 17).

Veblen draws on contemporaneous theory, specifically from Maurice Parmalee (1913) who, he notes ‘offers an incisive critical discussion of the Nature of Instinct with a specific reference to the instinct of workmanship’ (Veblen, 1914: 24). Veblen spends some time discussing what is meant by the term instinct, and later critiques of his work still debate the meaning of the term in the context that Veblen uses it (Cordes, 2005; Ranson, 2005). Veblen does not use the term instinct to refer to determinate behaviour patterns (he calls these tropisms, though most modern writers would call them instincts), but to refer to ‘innate human approval of the determinate purpose of species survival’ (Ranson, 2005: 1061) – innate tendencies of the mind that have evolved in the process of adaption of species to their environment. Put simply, Darwinian evolutionary theory predicts that, by a process of natural selection, species will tend to inherit traits that will ensure their continuity efficiently, functionally and instrumentally. In the case of workmanship, natural selection forces would favour the natural propensity to appreciate effective work, a rejection of futile effort and a drive for technological improvement; working activities that are useful for survival:

‘In so far as he is moved by the instinct of workmanship man contemplates the objects with which he comes into contact from point of view of their relevancy to ulterior results, their aptitude for taking effect in a consequential outcome’ (Veblen, 1914: 33).

According to Veblen the instinct for workmanship includes the capacity to imagine the future form of artefacts, and the skill in manipulating physical objects and tool-using activities required to bring them into being – and the result of this instinct is technological advancement and an impulse towards constructive action. However it is important to note that in spite of Veblen’s use of the term
instinct, he considered this to be a social process, not a biological one; ‘Veblen asserted that every human’s ability to acquire and advance technology is socially determined – it is learned’ (Ranson, 2005: 1062).

As well as describing the human tendency to seek constructive action as an instrumental force, Veblen also describes the instinct for workmanship as being:

... concerned with the ways and means of life rather than any one given ulterior end. It is essentially to do with proximate rather than ulterior ends. Yet workmanship is none the less an object of attention and sentiment in its own right. Efficient use of the means at hand and adequate management of the resources available for the purposes of life is itself an end of endeavour, and accomplishment of this kind is a source of gratification (Veblen, 1914: 19).

For Veblen the difference between general instinctive dispositions and the instinct for workmanship is that in the former the individual goes as directly as possible to the end sought, whereas ‘under the impulse of workmanship the agent’s interest and endeavour are taken up with contriving the ways and means to the end sought (1914: 19).

Conclusions

Although each of these writers look to different historical causes for the human traits they observe, both Marx and Veblen agree on the seemingly natural propensity of people to make – man as ‘homo faber’. For Marx this stems from the ground of the species being, whilst for Veblen it is an instinct for survival learned by one generation from another generation. What their ideas share is an understanding of the unfolding of action as being an end in itself – initially driven by ulterior ends, but fulfilling human potential and reaching a satisfying conclusion for the individual – their creative action on the world ultimately becoming an end in itself, an end that requires no justification other than fulfilling potential of the action itself.

As these ideas are brought to bear on the fieldwork, the idea of aesthetics, the form of human practice that provides its own goals, and that requires no
utilitarian justification, begins to assume increasing significance. June Freeman encountered this when she interviewed the people in her study who had fitted their own kitchens. She notes how they derived their satisfaction from the 'hands on experience of measuring, cutting and hammering involved in fitting a kitchen' (2004: 117-118), and she recounts how the people who had fitted kitchens delicately touched and stroked the surfaces and edges in their kitchen as they described the complexities of what they had achieved (2004: 119). Although their activities were guided by the goal of building a new kitchen, in the end their satisfaction lay in the 'unfolding' of experience; the emergence of tangible outcomes from plans and intentions. There are parallels between Freeman's findings and my own, and in the next chapter I consider in more detail the ways in which material interaction can lead to rewarding outcomes for amateur makers, and discuss how this can provide a guiding aesthetic of its own.
11: Materiality and Process

Introduction

The discussion in chapter 10 proposed that man has a seemingly natural propensity to make – man as ‘homo faber’ – and that this activity is fulfilling when it requires no utilitarian justification, and when its goals and rationale are intrinsic to the activity. Whilst this begins to build the thesis around the motivation for amateur making, it nevertheless presents a very general picture of satisfying work. This chapter takes the analysis further, and increases the level of detail by considering the specificity of the work undertaken by these makers, and taking into account the material capital associated with amateur making. The analysis draws upon the fieldwork in order to generate a clearer understanding of how this material infrastructure contributes to the experience of making and helps to constitute the rewards that result from these pursuits. The chapter utilises a number of theoretical standpoints in order to better understand the physical infrastructure that is used by amateur makers, and considers the ways to which the workshop and its elements constitute an enabling framework. The analysis draws on the interview material and on the photography gathered in the fieldwork, together with my observations made whilst visiting the workshops and, to a lesser extent, my own experiences as a maker.

Material capital

The material capital associated with amateur making is made up of the physical elements of the environment that enable the makers to engage with their activity to the extent they wish, and to sustain the activity in the future. Typically this consists of tools and machinery, workshops and spaces, and stocks of materials and components. The kinds of amateur making sampled for this study differs

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53 The term ‘material capital’ is borrowed from Dant and Wheaton (2007) who use it to refer to the physical kit associated with windsurfing (boards, rigs, wetsuits, harnesses, etc.) and the spaces where windsurfers sail (areas of sea and lakes). Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1978), they distinguish between the material capital of the kit and embodied capital of the sailor’s embodied skill set.
from some other craft based hobbies and pastimes that have been studied in the past because of the larger quantity, range and sophistication of the material elements that are required to sustain the practice. As I noted earlier, it is this parallel with professional practice that defines the makers as serious leisure participants – they begin to be defined by their professional alter ego (Stebbins, 1997: 118).

The range of tools and materials required by amateur makers makes it necessary for them to maintain committed workspaces. These are often in outbuildings or in dedicated parts of their homes, and have a strong resemblance to the kinds of spaces used by the professional makers. Jenny is fortunate enough to have an existing outbuilding at her farmhouse that she has converted into a furniture workshop, complete with dust extraction systems, and an elaborate arrangement of tool and materials storage (see figure 31). This attention to the detail of the ordering and storing the components of the making process was common to all the workshops included in the study, and as much care and ingenuity was often lavished upon these aspects of the workshop organization as on the artefacts under construction (see figure 32).

Figure 31: Jenny’s outbuilding, a former fruit picker’s accommodation in the grounds of her farmhouse that she has converted into a wood workshop.
Figure 32: Jenny’s storage system for small tools and furniture components, and pieces of scrap timber saved for future projects.

Tim also told me how he had constructed his workshop during his summer break:

... in the summer I put up a big outbuilding. It’s ten feet by twenty feet but, you know, starting with the concrete foundations and building the whole timber structure and whatever and putting in the windows, erm, and which is totally different from furniture making, probably only in terms of its scale, and that you don’t need kind of the same precision, there’s more flexibility in what you can get away with. But erm the pleasure of making was
absolutely there. Half of it is a beginner’s workshop, and the other half is a wood store, we have wood burners. But it’s so that I have a place that I can start building another building, I want to build a proper workshop on the property.

Peter, also a woodworker, used to have a separate outbuilding. However, he had recently moved home and lost the use of this space. In his subsequent hunt for a new place to live, he had specifically sought rented accommodation that included a basement suitable for use as a workshop, and that was sound proof so that his activities did not disturb his neighbours. This had significantly reduced the range of rented accommodation available to him, and he recognized that this was an indication of the importance of his making activities to his life outside his work as a mental health nurse:

... when I was thinking about looking for flats, I sort of wondered am I overemphasizing something, because I was looking at things for the criteria of where is there going to be a workspace, or how am I going to do this, is there somewhere I can plug in the power, you know. And then every so often I have to think am I over-valuing, because maybe I could actually get a nicer flat in a nicer area if I didn’t have this criteria, but it feels like a really nice feeling if you can have a work space ...

If amateur makers enter project time when they are making things, to go into the workshop is to enter the ‘project space’. The advantages of the project space are that it allows work in progress to left out in between project time sessions and it offers a sense of order – or, as Tim put it, tools are ‘ready to hand’:

Well I suppose there’s a certain order to things, your tools are there, they’re ready to hand ... a dedicated workshop, the appeal of it is, I guess, you know where your tools are, nothing else is going on in there, you don’t have to move things as you’re working on a project, you don’t have to pack up and clean up at the end of the day; you can simply continue, I suppose it’s like a painting studio just being able to leave your materials out. I suppose as well even in the imagination, even if you’re not using it for a while, you know, if you’re too busy with other things, if I’m too busy with other things I would think of it as um, it’s psychologically pleasing to think that the refuge is
there. You know, and that if you really need to escape you can go there, there’s a physical space to go to like where you can do something else.

Consciously or not (he, is after all, an anthropologist with an interest in material culture), Tim calls to mind Heidegger’s phrase of ‘readiness-to-hand’ (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]: 188-190 cited in Wrathall, 2006: 38-39). For Heidegger readiness-to-hand is more than just an object or tool being available for our use, it is an understanding of the full potential of the tool’s use in the context within which the maker interacts with their environment and equipment – or, to use Heideggerian terminology, Zeug, which is loosely interpreted as ‘stuff’ or ‘gear’ (Dant, 2005: 87). Like the word equipment, Zeug can be thought of as a collective noun – equipment in this collective sense always exists in a network of other tools and organisations; e.g. the plane is on the bench in the space that I use as workshop. Ready-to-hand is available through physical proximity to the human body (hanging on the tool board, or sitting on the bench from the last time the maker was in the workshop) but also understood as usable for action, and as part of a network of other resources that are recognised as being available to the maker.

As well as being ready-to-hand, tools are also signifiers. At a primary level they signify their function through their form, and experienced makers build up a repertoire, both of tools and of names for those tools, which becomes a form of cultural capital.54 Tools also signify at a secondary level, and the provenance of tools played a large part in the way they were regarded by some of the makers in this study. Greg told me about his favourite plane:

\[
\text{In the car I have got my main plane I use. It’s a 1941 German wooden plane. This plane was probably used in the war effort against us. The blades in them days, they were actually made out of cast iron, where the blades now are made out of steel, so for cast iron it’s really hard, and so sharp. I sharpen my blades up and I shave the back of my hand. If I can’t shave the hair on the back of my hand it’s not sharp enough, and I carry on until I can actually shave it. It cuts it smooth and lovely.}
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54 There is no clearer indication of a ‘parvenu’ in the world of the tradesman than the person grasping around for the correct terminology at a trade counter whilst a queue of irritated professionals waits impatiently behind.
Some of the makers valued their tools not because of their brand or utility, but because the tool was given to them or had been owned by a member of their family. Cherry prized a tool that had been bought for her by her husband, and Rose was pleased that her late husband’s first wife, who had died in 1986, lived on in the sewing machine that she now used (though she was not so sentimental about it that she did not recognise that a new sewing machine would make life easier, and she had plans to buy a replacement) (see fig. 34).

![Image of sewing machine](image.jpg)

Figure 33: ‘She’s dead, but she lives on in the sewing machine’. Rose’s sewing machine, which had belonged to her husband’s late wife.

Amongst some makers there was a certain amount of awe reserved for tools which were seen to exist primarily in the domain of the professional, and the use of which signified the attainment of certain level of competence. The ambition to own a particular type of tool (a router, for instance), coincided with the advancement in the maker’s career, and the expansion of their arsenal of skills. Tim described how he had acquired his toolkit, focussing on what he considered to be high quality tools:

Basic tools. Good chisels, good planes. All hand tools ... I don’t have any machines yet.
Q: So what makes them good?

Erm, that they’re reliable, that they sharpen up nicely, that when I sharpen them they last a while as well. (...) I bought some of my tools when I would go back to Canada.

Although Tim was unable to remember the name of the brand, he talked about specifically seeking out planes made by a particular Canadian manufacturer because he knew they were renowned for their quality.

Brian also discussed how he had salvaged and restored a mid-twentieth century milling machine for his own workshop (see figure 35): ‘...that machine is 50 years old. I found it on a scrap heap just up the road (...) I pulled it apart ... it was all rusted solid, and I got the lathe at the same place (...) I did an apprenticeship at Rolls Royce, and at school we learnt all about these things.'
As Greg recognized, in addition to creating workshops, for many participants the opportunity to acquire and maintain a range of specialized tools was one of the continuing motivations for taking part in the pursuit (see figures 36 and 37): ‘...I’m a tool freak, I must admit, and any tool that will make my life easier, I just love the whole idea of using them.’ When I asked Greg what he thought made a good tool he replied:

_I do like high quality stuff, you can’t beat those Japanese saws. They are actually called Japanese razor saws, and when you change the blade and have a brand new one, especially in that one, the one with the back on it – if you have a look at the blade it is very, very fine. (...) They are online but they have a shop in Sittingbourne, which is like a warehouse full of gorgeous tools and stuff._

_Figure 35: Greg rents a lockup garage that he has converted into a workshop. He has a large collection of tools, including these Japanese saws, which he stores around his workshop._

Greg also felt that the workshop was essential to his lifestyle, describing his workshop as: ‘...vital, I couldn’t do what I wanted to do without it. A workshop, it’s like perhaps a shed, sort of thing isn’t it? You’ve got somewhere to go, you’ve got tools, and you can make things...’

Resources such as workspaces, tools and equipment predetermine the possibilities open to the practitioner, but the practitioners themselves invest in
future activity as part of their practice. Accumulations of necessary equipment are dependent on experience and competence – as the activities undertaken increase in complexity and sophistication, and the practitioner acquires new skills and competencies (many of which may be below the threshold of consciousness of the practitioner, and may be tacit and embodied) so the practice becomes increasingly forward looking. The awareness of what might be required in the future becomes more acute, and decisions about purchases and investments in the working environment are better informed. It is therefore important to think of amateur making as always temporally located – makers are reliant on the past experience and accumulations of material capital in order to function, and their activities are invariably framed within the context of future plans and projected outcomes. Seen at this level, their practice is rarely spontaneous, and cannot be entered into lightly. This is not to say, however, that at the level of the making process itself, individual actions are necessarily planned or predictable, and the following section moves the analysis even closer to makers’ direct experience by beginning to consider their actions whilst operating in the workshop.

**Situated cognition**

Amateur makers accumulate sets of tools, sometimes over a lifetime. Their toolkits tend to be tailored towards the particular materials and processes that are used in the area of making being tackled, the materials they are working with, and the scale of their projects. At a basic, or ‘entry’ level of home crafts and do-it-yourself, general purpose tool kits suffice, and at this point the space used for working may also be multi-purpose, and be quickly converted back to normal domestic use should the need arise. The serious making encountered in the study required more than this, and all the participants had dedicated workspaces, some of which had been built from scratch by the makers themselves. These ranged from simple wooden shed-like structures through to brick-built workshops (see figures 38 and 39). Cherry’s jewellery making tool kit could probably fit into a portable box, whilst Jenny’s woodworking equipment filled a moderately sized workshop (see figures 40 and 41).
Figure 36: Brian's lathe and tool storage system.

Figure 37: Eric's purpose-built car building shop.
Figure 38: Brian's brick-built purpose designed workshop.

Figure 39: Cherry's workspace.
Workshops exist as an accumulation of material capital that has to work as an integrated and cohesive whole in order to allow making processes to take place; an arrangement of available devices and ready to hand resources. Even in its most condensed form, the workspace envelopes the maker in an immersive environment, which acts as an extension of his or her body and capabilities. When I asked Tim what he enjoyed most about making, he replied: ‘... I think it’s the immersion in a highly sensual environment and which is why I chose wood as opposed to stone or working with metal.’

Cherry, also talked about the importance of the work space being outside the home, and a place of uninterrupted concentration where she could get ‘in the zone’, or, to use the terms of this thesis be completely in project time:

... when I am working at home I would just think: right, I’ll just put the washing on, and then I would come back, and say, right, I’m going to put the washing out, blah, blah, blah, so I am constantly, I am not in the zone. I am not there at the work, I am constantly distracted, and think oh I’ll go and put the kettle on, oh I’ll go and have some lunch in the kitchen, and you know, somebody knocks at the door, or anything like that. I would much
rather go somewhere where it’s just me, my work, and just make. I couldn’t do that at home.

In order to function effectively the elements of the workshop also depend on their positioning in a defined space, and in the relation between each of them. But this arrangement is always contingent. It will be constantly modified by the users of the workshop, who will add tools to the mix and take them away again according to circumstance. Greg described how he alters the layout of his workshop according to the size of kayak he is making. It is a fluctuating and morphing entity, which nevertheless, possesses a great deal of power, enabling practices that would otherwise be impossible. The space becomes ‘competent’ in a direct relationship to the skills, knowledge and experience of the maker – progressively matching the competence of the individual as it grows, each element enhancing and extending their capacity to act on the world (see figures 42 and 43).

To use James Gibson’s term, the workshop offers ‘affordance’ (Gibson, 1977); this is the possibility for use, intervention and interaction offered by a local environment to an embodied agent (Fisher, 2004, 2005). The ways in which it is organised, the tools and materials it contains, and the actions it makes possible, gives the workshop and its equipment a form of agency, and offers affordance to the maker. Different actors will perceive the affordances offered by a single
object in different ways depending on their circumstance and outlook – an adult will recognise the table as a platform for eating from, or a social centre, whilst a small child might perceive a dining table quite differently, perhaps seeing it as an imaginary house or shelter (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009 [1991]).

Figure 42: Eric’s storage system.

Tools are an expansion of the person. They literally extend the body, making arms longer, offering leverage and momentum, increasing gripping and holding power, and offering a datum for accurate shaping and cutting. They are also an extension of the mind allowing calculation to be carried out in the external world, freeing the brain from overwhelming abstract calculations, and allowing empirical speculation, measuring and testing to take place separately from the internal world of pure abstract thought. One of the ways in which this behaviour succeeds is by the individual using the immediate physical environment as an
external memory store. A simple example of this is the practice of carrying out long arithmetic with a pencil and paper. Eric told me how he had used sketching to tackle part of car restoration project:

*I work it out* on a sketch pad, or I'll have some sketches. I mean if you look at the first car I built which was the Le Mans race car I built, and there is a whole lot of sketches in there. I don't understand what I drew at the time. but they are still there now. Retrospectively I should be more precise, but you don't work like that, I don't work like that.

This technique externalises the problem, breaking it into manageable chunks and offering the possibility of a memory system that is external to the brain. Whole environments can act as aids to memory and calculation by externalising process and materialising abstract systems. In this sense, the material world of the workshop and the associated tools and machinery is not simply a crutch to help the brain do its work, but actually constitutes part of the mental processes required in order to carry out complex tasks.

Designers of artificial intelligence systems have recognised this way of working for some time, and realised that attempts to build a whole world model that can be carried around in the ‘brain’ of a robot creates an impossible objective. Instead, they have begun to design systems that have a form of ‘distributed intelligence’; in other words the knowledge that is required to negotiate tasks in the world remains in the world, and is only accessed by the machine on an as needed basis (Clark, 1997). This avoids the artificial separation of the agent from the external scaffolding of information that is difficult to store as internal abstractions. Thus the world can function as more than an external memory; it can provide an arena in which special classes of external operations systematically transform the problems posed to individual brains (Clark, 1997: 66).

So individual agents use operations on the world as an intrinsic part of a problem solving process – not just as a material expression of a solution but as part of sequence of operations that lead to the solution - trial and error. This can accommodate short term creative acts where a trial and error or iterative approach is used in problem solving. Tim told me how ‘...there are certain stages
where you have to be fully focussed on what it is that you’re doing. That is your problem, you are solving it as you’re doing it’.

Cherry told me how a lot of the things she does are by chance or by exploration:

... when I start off making things, I never know straight away what I am going to make, I have to draw it and draw it and draw it, and push it and push it, before I know where I am actually going.

The cognitive scientist Andy Clark, describes this as an action loop, where ‘pure thought’ leads to external practical actions, which in turn help to simplify the problems confronting ‘pure thought’ (1997: 36). Clarke argues that in order to carry out complex practical tasks we need to create external ‘scaffolding’ which moulds and orchestrates our behaviour:

The rational deliberator turns out to be a well-camouflaged adaptive responder. Brain, body, world and artefact are discovered locked together in the most complex of conspiracies. And mind and action are revealed in an intimate embrace (Clark, 1997: 33).

Figure 43: Simon using a ‘parting chisel’ to finish off a job on his lathe.
Approaches to making often merge the processes of reasoning and action in unexpected ways, and cut back and forth across the traditional boundaries of mind, body and environment. In place of the intellectual engine cogitating in a realm of detailed inner models, we confront the embodied, embedded agent acting as an equal partner in adaptive responses which draw on the resources of mind, body and world (Clark, 1997: 47). Embodied activities are a body's way of supporting what we conceive and talk of as practice. They are acquired, often over a long period of time and are habitually available. If all goes well, our body lends us support to do what we talk of doing.

**Action and iteration**

It is the unconscious ease with which a practiced participant engages in a task, the ease of unattended bodily coordination which is embodiment:

> ... we know that incorporated material culture reaches deep into the psyche of the subject because it reaches it not through abstract knowledge, but through sensori-motor experience' (Warnier, 2001: 10).

We can observe embodied activities in others; however, engaging in them ourselves is another matter entirely. The individual's subjectivity is altered by material experience in a way that it is not by abstract reflection. Warnier uses the term motor-algorithms to describe the kind of motor habit we use in situations which combine practiced skill with levels of uncertainty or unpredictability (2001: 9). In sport this would be the difference between events that require the precise and practised repetition of given actions, such as throwing events, and those that require interaction with other people (such as team events) or with a changing and unpredictable environment, such as sailing or skiing (Dant, 1999; Dant & Wheaton, 2007). In the context of making this would draw a distinction between some needlecrafts, such as cross stitch or knitting, which requires the accurate and continued repetition of movements and techniques, and the more open ended iterative techniques of making observed in this research.

Drawing on tacit knowledge (Wood & Rust, 2009), these interactions involve processes and techniques that require tactile skill, and encourage decision making processes that are heuristic, iterative and intuitive – an attitude to
working that might be usefully referred to as 'bricolage'. Here Eric describes working on one of his cars:

*I remember working that out, and that T junction, and I remember drawing that block and getting it made and, you know, you look at that and you clean it and you think, ‘oh I must try another spring clip’, you know, we worked it out... The same as at the front, you know, it’s got an anti-roll bar on the front and I stood here and I thought ‘oh, the anti-roll bar’s a bit thin maybe we should try a thicker anti-roll bar’, well that’s another couple of months work the way I do it, drawing, finding the material, getting the clamps made, but that’s slowly but surely...*

Or, describing a more immediate mode of work, Greg talks about fitting a piece of timber to a kayak (see figure 45):

*I thought the way I made the strips was going to be ideal, then when I got to a certain point, I couldn’t have known it till I got there, the angle, the way the boat went, the strips just would not go, and every time I tried to get a strip to go it snapped, and I just couldn’t, I tried steaming it, and messing around with it, and all sorts of things and I just could not get it to work (...)

so then I was ranting and raving and finding a solution, and fixing it.*

Figure 44: Greg fitting strips of timber to his kayak.

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55 In *The Savage Mind* (1966) Levi-Strauss calls this ongoing process of problem solving the ‘science of the concrete’ – forming one’s survival by adapting the bricoles of the world. This is richly described in Harper’s account of a small vehicle repair workshop in northern New York state (1987). Even though Willie, the subject of Harper’s ethnography, is a professional tradesman, the organic, almost pre-industrial nature of his work ethic has strong resemblances to practices of the makers discussed in this paper.
The amateur status of the makers means that they are free to develop their work in these unconventional and experimental ways without the fear of running over budgets, missing deadlines or earning the disapproval of colleagues or managers. Describing a ‘trike’ he is going to build, Simon told me how:

…it will change pretty much as I go. I mean well the actual mainframe of the trike will be a pretty standard sort of type affair, which has been done loads and loads of times, but it will be all the added extras (...) you know, and all sorts of things going on it... I mean a lot of this stuff that I'll design as I go along.

This freedom to innovate in an open ended unconstrained fashion gives the activity many of the qualities of play, further reinforcing and enhancing the rewards associated with accomplishment, and achievement against the odds, a way of working that uses the materials and tools to hand, and continuously responds to their qualities and characteristics. Peter described this process:

I think it's about problem solving. I think that is probably as much what's enjoyable about it as anything. It's all about using that sort problem solving part of you isn't it? You do something, and it doesn't seem to work, you have to find another way round it.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have noted how tools not only extend the body, but also the mind. Working in workshops with tools and materials, amateur makers are intertwined in simultaneous interactions between themselves and their environment. Merleau-Ponty has argued that perception cannot be regarded a straightforward objective relationship between the separate entities of the object and the environment. As Haworth notes, drawing upon Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1992 [1945]):

The body does not find meaning pre-existent in the world but calls such meaning into existence by its own activity and by virtue of it being combined with time and space, as opposed to it being in and conceiving
time and space. The body has its world or understands its world without having to use its symbolic identifying function (Haworth, 1997: 110).

Rejecting the Cartesian duality that insists on separating mind and body, this view takes the human as intimately connected to its surroundings and making sense of existence through action and interaction with the material world. Merleau-Ponty calls this ‘inherence’, concluding:

We must conceive the perspectives and the point of view as our insertion into the world-as-an-individual, and perception, no longer as a constitution of the true object, but as our inherence in things (Merleau-Ponty (1992 [1945]) cited in Carman & Hansen, 2005: 271)

This inherence in the material environment, this acting on the world and simultaneous acting of the world on us, becomes not just a means of life, but a source of satisfaction and enjoyment, which transcends the instrumental outcomes of our actions – body and world become what they are through the motivated exploratory activities of us as embodied subjects, and we are motivated by aesthetics, by the sensory experience of material interaction and problem solving.

In the next chapter I begin to talk of amateur making as a form of practice. Practice theory continues this understanding of the maker being intimately connected with the material world by stressing a dynamic understanding between the individual and the environment and, as Haworth notes:

The conceptions presented in practice theory indicate that perception is not consciousness of an existing factual situation, and learning is not simply a process in which the learner consciously internalises a ready-made body of objective knowledge; rather knowledge and understanding are now viewed as tentative and generated through lived experience... (1997: 15).
12: Making as Practice

Introduction

For now, I want to move the analysis on by retaining the idea of making as an unfolding process that is distributed over time, connecting this with the preceding discussion, where we began to think of making as an activity that is also dispersed across space, through the individual, the tools and the enabling environment. The case studies reveal activities that draw together particular individuals, as well as distributed networks of people with common interests, attitudes and competencies. As well as encompassing people and representations, the case studies drew in artefacts, equipment and spaces, and tell us something about the intimate relationship between people and the material world that furnished their time with creative possibilities. Using these terms, amateur making can be thought of as a nexus—temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed, existing across time and across individual elements, actions and sayings, each of which is linked. This complex conceptualisation of the constituent parts of amateur making is drawn together in this chapter by using theories of practice (Cetina, Schatzki, & Savigny, 2000; Warde, 2005; Warnier, 2001). The nature of both internal and external rewards is considered in the context of practice, and this leads onto a reconsideration of the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1991) on flow theory, which was introduced at the beginning of this thesis as a key starting point for the research.

Project time

At this stage we can start to see a consideration of two different kinds of time emerging. Time creates a space in which things can happen, which I described earlier as project time. This way of considering time is in line with the leisure theorist view of time as relative to other commitments and obligations. For the serious amateur maker their leisure time becomes a hybrid of non-work obligation and choosing time. Within this space where things can happen we can
also consider time as a duration by which activities can be measured, both as objective clock time and as subjective, internally perceived time.

The case studies gave an account of activities that were distributed through time in various ways. The largest spans of time encompassed by amateur making are the ‘careers’ that span a portion of an individual’s life time. The making careers considered in this study have ranged from, in the case of Donald, almost an entire lifetime (up to the age of 69 at the time of the interview), to Simon, who had only been woodturning for the previous 18 months (though he has been tinkering with motorbikes from the moment he was old enough to ride them). These careers are calibrated by embodied skill-sets which progressively increase over time, and accumulations of material capital that, although evolving, expanding and developing over time to match the levels of ambition and competence of the maker, tend to be a constant companion in a making career. Simon’s spanner set, for instance, is just as useful in maintaining his lathe as it was in building his motorbikes, and Jenny and Rose have both inherited tools from deceased family members. Whether in the pursuit of a new interest or in possession of their new owners, the potential for the tools to produce new things lives on; they continue to offer affordance to their users.

The cases have shown that the next smallest increment of time for these makers is the project, a period that contains the time taken to complete an artefact or reach a specified objective. This can range from a few weeks to several years, and is bounded by a beginning, normally in the form of a plan or concrete intention and an end, the completion of the artefact. These beginnings and endings are flexible, and it is rare for the maker to work to deadlines, even if they plan to give the object away or sell it. Greg told me about his attitude to deadlines:

...[the person ordering a kayak says] “well what’s the delivery time”, and I say “well I can’t tell you”, and they say” what do you mean”, and I say “I can’t tell you because say three boats down the line like, there’s this guy from Swansea who said I want you to do my boat, when can you start, and I said I don’t know, because I have another two boats to build I don’t know when I am going to finish those exactly, but what I will tell you is, I’ll tell you when I am starting your boat, and at that point it will probably be about two months.
For some makers in the study, objects that are still in their possession remain open to improvement for some time after they have started other projects. Peter was still tinkering with one of his lights and trying to improve the sophistication of the wiring, and Eric will work on several car projects simultaneously, each in a different state of completion. Closure occurred for some makers when they gave the project away to friends or family, sold the outcome, or when they moved on to the next project. Project time can consist of a weekend, or can be a day, an evening, or a snatched hour spent in the workshop. Peter told me how his project time fitted around his paid work:

... I guess in the job that I did before I do now, I used to work three days a week. Long days, like fourteen hour days, so that meant I got four days a week off, so that was really good for project work. You have got lots of days when you could just put a whole day in, or else maybe I would just go in sort of an evening or something like that.

Though this takes place in the ‘choosing time’ identified by Parker – this is not necessarily to say that this is free time. Obligations to paid employment, domestic duties and socialising with family and friends are put to one side, but they are replaced by obligations to the project – to completing sequences of processes and moving the work onto the next stage.

Project work therefore takes place at the junction between project time, and the project space detailed in the previous chapter of this thesis. The actions that take place at this meeting point can be understood as an inherited ‘practice’; a nexus of procedures and engagement, that is a shared, but also differentiated across individual circumstances.\textsuperscript{56} I want to argue that an understanding of theories of practice helps to articulate the experience of the amateur maker, and the following section of the thesis explores this proposition in more detail. An

\textsuperscript{56} The use of practice as an analytical model is strongly influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1984), and is used to denote acts that carry within themselves their own rules, limitations and structures. Alan Warde’s 2005 article provides a useful summary of the main ideas contained in practice theory, and sets out to derive some rudimentary concepts and propositions from what he describes as the heterogeneous theories of practice. My incorporation of practice theory into this thesis is based primarily on his work, together with additional insights from Haworth (Cetina, Schatzki, & Savigny, 2000; Warnier, 2001), Ingold (1996, 1997) and Dant (1996).
understanding of practice theories moves the emphasis of dominant social theories away from minds, texts and conversations, focussing instead on bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routine (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005).

**Practice theory**

Amateur makers become amateur makers because they act out, and recreate a practice of making that they inherit, but which they are nevertheless able to modify and adapt to their individual circumstances through a process that operates as a routine, but which leaves room for improvisation. Human social activities are not, therefore invented by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors (Giddens, 1984, quoted in Warde, 2005: 135); practices are co-ordinated entities, but require *performance* for their existence. Common understanding comes about through the body acting in similar ways, through undertaking common activity in the ‘practical business of life’ (Ingold, 1996).

The idea of practice as originating in shared understanding is demonstrated by the way in which the sampling evolved in this study. The makers who took part in the study, and the people who nominated them as potential participants, were effectively self-defining. They either saw themselves, or saw others, as being part of a category of practice based upon their pre-existing notions of what it meant to be a ‘maker’. Snowball sampling meant that each participant was nominated, or nominated themselves based on the limited amount of information that I gave to them – often in passing conversation, or in accounts passed on by a third party. The conception of being someone who ‘makes things in home workshops’ is a shared understanding of practice. Andreas Reckwitz describes this shared knowledge as a collection of:

... conventionalised mental activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring [that] are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual. Moreover, the practice as a ‘nexus of doings and sayings’ is not only understandable to the agent or the agents who carry it out, it is likewise
understandable to potential observers (at least within the same culture) (Reckwitz, 2002: 250).

Practices are constituted by routine, plus emotion, embodiment and desire – they require obedience to rules and standards of excellence.

Using these insights, we can start to rethink amateur making as a nexus – spatially dispersed, unfolding through time and across individual elements, actions and sayings, each of which is linked (Warde, 2005: 133). Reckwitz has described this as:

... routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of others, etc. – forms so to speak a ‘block’ whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of the these single elements (Reckwitz, 2002: 249-250).

Practice theory moves social cultural analysis beyond the dualism of structure and agency that creates divisions between structurally oriented, collectivistic studies of human behaviour, and theories that are more individual and process oriented. Amateur making is a practice that is not dependent on presumptions of individual rational choice or expressions of identity, yet neither is it dependent on a notion of the holistic totality of culture. In their study of do-it-yourself activity, Shove, Watson, et al, note that:

... theories of practice emphasise tacit and unconscious forms of knowledge and experience through which shared ways of understanding and being in the world are established, through which purposes emerge as desirable, and norms as legitimate (Shove, Watson, Hand, & Ingram, 2007: 12).

In addition to these understandings, practice theory can provide two further important perspectives on amateur making, each of which I will address in the
following section. Firstly, it draws attention both to the dynamic nature of practices, and to the internal and external hierarchies that can exist amongst practitioners; and secondly, it introduces the concept of internal and external goods, or reward. This second perspective, to which I shall turn to shortly, adopts the terminology of the political philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]), and refers to the location of the rewards that participants receive from their practice.

Firstly I will turn to the idea of hierarchy. In common with all practices, there are manifest differences in the various understandings, procedures and engagements of amateur making. These differences occur in the ways in which individual practitioners and social groups may participate in – and classify – the same practice (Warde, 2005: 136-137). Through this process of classification, practices are ranked in ways that are both internal and external to the practice. Internally, practitioners have a view of themselves, and of fellow participants in the practice, and a perception of where they fit in relevant hierarchies of prestige.Externally, the practice as a totality may also be viewed and classified relative to other practices by both participants and observers., In Distinction (1984), his work on taste and social classification, Pierre Bourdieu argues that habitus has causal power over the way that practices are pursued, and that disputes about their place in hierarchies of classification are misrecognised as originating within the practices themselves, when in fact their origins are external to the practice. This analysis can give some insight into the external hierarchy described in the opening chapters of this thesis which places amateur making low in the social rankings of creative practice. This denigration of amateur activity over professional practice is noted by Bourdieu, who observes that illegitimate extra-curricular culture (in other words that learned outside of institutions mandated to teach and govern its distribution) is only given status to the strict extent of its technical proficiency, without any social added value:

The reader of the popular-science monthly Science et Vie who talks about the genetic code or the incest taboo exposes himself to ridicule as soon as he ventures outside the circle of his peers, whereas Claude Levi-Straus or Jacques Monod can only derive additional prestige from their excursions into the fields of music or philosophy (Bourdieu, 1984: 25)
In extreme cases, such as the amateur practice of medicine or architecture, whenever it emerges from the domestic sphere to compete with professional competence, it can be exposed to severe legal sanctions. In other words, through a process of social closure, attempts to gain status through auto-didactic activities are inevitably barred by the social barriers that protect the position of the dominant professional groups.

Practices may also be classified internally, and one example of this is judgement by level of commitment – for example the categories of ‘dabbler’, ‘skilled amateur’ and ‘quasi-professional’ used by Leadbeater and Miller (2004) in their analysis of pro-ams. As well as levels of expertise (the relatively uninformed at one end of the scale, and the highly knowledgeable at the other), we might also differentiate between new initiates and long-established participants. The maker of reproduction furniture may be perceived by those within the practice of amateur woodworking as having a higher status within the practice than a person who turns simple objects on a lathe. For Simon, there was a perception that the ‘old boys’ in the local woodturning group represented an aspirational goal that he hoped to reach one day.

Thus, within practices, there exists a hierarchical system of classification, with which a set of external rewards may be associated. Some of these rewards may result from the satisfaction and prestige of external recognition and, in the case of professionals, may include financial remuneration and career progression. However, regardless of the availability of the external rewards to be had as result of this hierarchy of esteem, individual practitioners are still able to derive a set of internal rewards from their activity, thus bringing us to the second point introduced above, the concept of internal and external goods. According to Warde (2005: 148), anyone who has the opportunity of engaging in a practice as a moderately competent or excellent participant, is likely to be motivated by the internal psychic rewards that psychologists attribute to the process of self-development. This distinction between internal and external reward can be better understood by considering the ways in which rewards offered by a practice can be attained. The contingent external rewards associated with a practice (such as money, prestige and status) can always be attained in ways other than engaging in that practice – they are a separable outcome, forms of
currency that are able to circulate apart from the practice, and which may be derived from a number of alternative sources. The internal rewards associated with the practice, however, can be had only by engaging with that particular kind of practice. In other words they are not a separable outcome; they are intrinsically connected to the specificity of the practice and are motivated by inherent satisfactions, rather than a set of resulting, separable consequences.

In his discussion of practices, MacIntyre clarifies this distinction by using the example of a young chess player. The teacher initially motivates the player to learn chess by the promise of a reward of ‘50 cents worth of candy’ for playing once a week, and an extra 50 cents worth of candy for winning. At first the child will be motivated by the external rewards (and will have no reason not to cheat, if he or she can get away with it), but the teacher will hope that eventually the child will begin to:

... find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands (MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]: 188).

It also follows that these internal rewards can only be recognised by the experience of participating in the practice in question, and it is not possible for those with no experience of the practice to truly appreciate the nature of the rewards which are attained by participants.

Turning to the fieldwork carried for this thesis, it is apparent that most of the participants in the study had been introduced to making early in their lives by some kind of mentor and, like MacIntyre’s young chess player, recognised the available internal rewards by direct engagement with the practice – some by being coerced to help with DIY tasks, and some by being encouraged to complete creative projects of their own. The participant can only recognise and benefit from the internal rewards associated with a practice by engaging directly with an interconnected and specific block of elements: a background knowledge in the form of understanding; states of emotion and motivational knowledge; spaces ‘things’ and their use; forms of mental activities; and forms of bodily activities.
The practice of amateur making is thus reproduced and recognised by an embodied engagement which unfolds across time, but is also depends on a spatially and temporally dispersed network of resources which cannot be reduced to any single element. It is continually and voluntarily recreated in practice by the amateur makers who engage with the activity. Amateur making is therefore made up of both actions and representations (doings and sayings) and involves a shared – yet differentiated – understanding of procedures and engagement. It is constituted by routine, plus emotion, embodiment and desire – and requires obedience to rules and standards of excellence that are non-instrumentalist codes of conduct which lead to motivating internal rewards. In the following section, and in the final chapter, I begin to examine in closer detail the nature of these internal rewards.

**The internal reward of flow**

Within the periods that I have called project time, the makers also experience the passing of time, and this experience varies according to kinds of activities that are being undertaken. I have already discussed how obligation – whether the activity is perceived as work or leisure – can affect the experience of time duration, and later in this chapter I will expand on this in more detail by considering the flow concept introduced at the outset of this thesis.

Two of the theoretical models that help us to grasp these internal rewards are the theory of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985).57 Both attribute human self-development to participation in intrinsically motivating activity. For these theorists, internal rewards would be interpreted as ‘intrinsic’ rewards, and external rewards as ‘extrinsic’ rewards, and I will use these terms from this point forward in the thesis.

Over the course of the fieldwork it became clear that, for many of the makers, the possession or use of the final artefact was the least important part of the activity.

57 I will return to SDT in the next chapter, where I will explore the idea of motivation and reward in a lot more detail. The remainder of this chapter will explore the idea of flow, relating this to the experience of the amateur makers sampled for this study.
When asked how he felt about somebody else owning his finished canoes, Greg replied:

...to tell you the truth I am quite glad to see the back of them (...) I have worked and worked and I have had my pleasure out of building it and then it's just sitting here.

Similarly, although it took Brian seven years to finish his first piece of model engineering (a miniature traction engine), he only ran it once. He told me he was 'not interested in watching them go. I would like to know it does go, but yes, I have only ever had it going once'.

There are similarities between these findings and those of Csikszentmihalyi, who observed a number of painters as part of a study carried out in the early 1970s. He noted how artists became completely engrossed in the process of making a painting, the work filling their thoughts twenty-four hours a day, yet was surprised to find that:

As I watched and photographed painters at their easels, one of the things that struck me most vividly was the almost trancelike state they entered when the work was going well. Once the painting started to take shape, the artist became completely enthralled. The motivation to go on painting was so intense that fatigue, hunger, or discomfort ceased to matter. Why were these people so taken with what they were doing? (..)

The reigning behaviorist explanation suggested that artists are so motivated to paint because they want a reward – the finished painting – and it is this goal that motivates their behavior. But I noticed that the artists I was observing almost immediately lost interest in the canvas they had just painted. Typically they turned the finished canvas around and stacked it against a wall. Nor were they particularly eager to show it off, or very hopeful about selling it. They could hardly wait to start on a new one. (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]: xiv)

Most artists recognize that their work is not going to make them famous or rich – so what, he asks, is the motivation for their continued practice as painters?
Following his observations of painters, Csikszentmihalyi conducted a series of studies to describe as analytically and objectively as possible the experience of enjoyment and the contexts in which it occurred. He and his research team set out to understand enjoyment in its own terms, and to describe what characteristics make an activity enjoyable. These were pursuits that required a great deal of effort and commitment in order to engage with them successfully, but seemed to offer little in the way of conventional rewards. There are strong parallels here with the questions that have driven the research for this thesis, and in the following section I explore Csikszentmihalyi’s work in more detail.

Csikszentmihalyi and his fellow researchers looked at leisure activities such as rock climbing, dance, chess and basketball, and at occupations which they considered one would find enjoyable and absorbing, such as music composition, surgery and teaching (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992 [1988]). They then asked the participants why they performed these activities, and to report on the times when they experienced the most enjoyment. The research proposed that the central component of enjoyment was a particular kind of experience that Csikszentmihalyi initially called ‘autotelic’ (from auto + telos, meaning self and goal) or, in other words, activity having a purpose in and not apart from itself. Although Csikszentmihalyi soon rejected this term in favour of ‘flow’, the word autotelic offers a precision that is particularly apt for this thesis, returning the discussion to the points raised at the end of chapter 9 – the idea that fulfilling activity tends to be non-instrumental, a point made by Marx, in his proposition that the freedom of the species is the freedom to produce without the drive of physical necessity and material obligation; and Veblen, when he asserts that the instinct for workmanship is to do with proximate rather than ulterior ends – it is concerned with the ways and means of life rather than any one given ulterior end.58 Flow, however, was a word that his respondents preferred when describing their feelings while involved in their favourite activities, because it described a current that carried them along effortlessly when an activity was going well. This definition already begins to bring to mind the accounts of the makers in this

58 These points are pursued further in the conclusion to the thesis when I unite these ideas in order to develop an answer to the research question.
study and the ways in which they described the iterative and unfolding nature of their problem solving. In a flow state:

...action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the actor. He expresses it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between past, present and future (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]: 36).

Although flow theory has been in circulation for over 30 years, it has been subjected to surprisingly few academic challenges, and the concept is frequently uncritically referenced in leisure studies and motivation texts (Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Gelber, 1999; Haworth, 1997; Pace, 2004; Pink, 2010; Roberts, 2006). One of its few critics, Chris Rojek, has pointed out, the problem with the concept is that is derived from a pure science of society that ‘fails to represent the social reality’ (Rojek, 2010: 111). Rojek believes that the theory results from a positivist approach to the study of human life, with all the limitations that this implies (Rojek, 2010: 114). However, whilst Rojek may problematise the relation of flow theory to wider sociological and emancipatory projects, this is not to deny the existence of flow states, but simply to acknowledge that a consideration of these forms needs to be located within the structures and activities within the rest of society. Indeed, the contribution of this thesis is to reformulate ‘flow’ as a compensation for the antagonistic, conflict ridden, contradictory nature of other aspects of the subject’s lives.

I spite of what might initially be perceived as its ethereal qualities, over the past thirty years the widespread adoption of flow theory as a research area has generated a large number of empirical studies that support and build upon the initial proposition (Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005). The theory of flow has proved to be so pervasive that it has been taken up and applied by academics in fields as varied as education, business studies, sports psychology and sub-cultural theory (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, [1988] 1992).

According to the Csikszentmihalyi’s findings, flow takes place somewhere between anxiety and boredom. He calls this optimal experience, an ordered state
of consciousness where the level of challenge in a task matches the competence of the participant. Tim described how:

*I am accused by my partner of losing all sense of time (laugh). So time goes by very quickly, and I think it’s because you’re, you know, because I’m engaged in a pleasurable activity, and also a challenging activity. It’s not a kind of a no-brainer activity, you’re engaged in problem solving, but a different kind of problem solving than just simply answering the run of emails.*

Activities that are too demanding cause anxiety, and are disagreeable, whilst those that fail to stretch the participant are quickly perceived as boring, and are dropped in favour of more interesting pursuits. Activities that offer flow experience tend to be exploratory, playful and curiosity driven, and are carried out not for instrumental reasons, but for the positive and pleasurable experiences related to the extending and exercising of one’s capabilities - the exercise of ‘mastery’ or practicing an acquired skill (Dant, 2010). Csikszentmihalyi summarises the common characteristics of flow experience as:

*... a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand in a goal directed, rule bound action system that provides clear clues as to how one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult or dangerous (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991: 17 quoted in Haworth, 1991: 85).*

Csikszentmihalyi uses the example of sailing in a fresh breeze to illustrate the idea of flow:

*It is what the sailor holding a tight course feels when the wind whips through her hair, when the boat lunges through the waves like a colt – sails, hull, wind, and sea humming a harmony that vibrates in the sailor’s veins (Csikszentmihalyi, [1992] 2002: 3).*
Flow and amateur making

The clearest indication that the participants in this study were experiencing flow came in the ways in which they described ‘losing themselves’ in their activities, or more accurately, losing their sense of self – a loss of ego. Peter gave a vivid description of this feeling:

... of being absorbed in something, about not having to think about other people, not be conscious of yourself, you just very much, and I think that’s it, I think what I like about it is that sense of just existing, just doing what you do, you know, you are not conscious of anything you are just there.

And Cherry described how she ‘zoned out’:

Everything else becomes completely peripheral and all my focus is on making this as well as I can, not as quickly as I can, as well as I can...

Brian spoke about how ‘a feeling of calm and peace’ descends upon him as he entered his own domain, whilst Jenny described how she lost her sense of time whilst in her workshop. When people are in flow states clock time no longer marks equal lengths of experienced time:

I suppose it's, when you are in that sort of, I suppose intense place (...) then time kind of doesn’t move really, well it flies by without you noticing, you just, I don't know how to describe it, but basically it feels you look up and suddenly three hours passed and you finish something but you didn’t really know that it took a long time ...

Our sense of how much time passes depends on what we are doing. She went on to explain why she thought this happening. She describes how her making offers her the opportunity to be ‘single-minded’ after the multi-tasking involved in looking after her family:

I am much better at putting my head down and focusing on one thing at a time and I really enjoy that, and I suppose now with looking after a family you don’t really have that. You can’t put your head down and, you always have to sort of I don’t know, half do this and half do something else so when I go to the workshop, that's when I then feel that I can have that again, and
I mean I can go there at seven thirty and then suddenly its sort of eleven thirty.

Research suggests that there are three conditions which tend to lead to the experience of flow. Firstly activities that contain ‘a clear set of goals’, secondly activities that ‘balance perceived challenges and perceived skills’ (the optimal experience discussed above), and thirdly ‘the presence of clear and immediate feedback’. Csikszentmihalyi and his fellow researchers have also observed a set of three clear experiences that are reported by respondents when giving an account of being in flow. These are ‘the merging of action and awareness’; ‘a sense of control’; and ‘an altered sense of time’. (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005: 600-602).

During flow experiences, participants typically experience a sense of control – or rather they feel that they are able to control the situation that they are in, and reduce the risk of feeling a loss of control, thus avoiding the anxiety that comes along with this state. Although Csikszentmihalyi interviewed some people who took part in very dangerous pursuits such as rock climbing and hang gliding, they claimed to have a greater sense of control over their environment during their sport than in everyday life. Whilst taking part in dangerous pursuits, participants are compelled to precisely evaluate the risks involved, minimising and controlling them wherever possible.59 Making is able to offer a clear set of goals, a balance between perceived challenges and perceived skills, and clear and immediate feedback.

59 Two of the participants in the current study had also participated in the sports of mountaineering and rock climbing, and both had direct experience of the dangers involved. Donald had friends who had been killed on mountaineering trips, and Greg had a serious rock-climbing accident that had effectively ended his participation in the sport.
The apparently simple task of using plane or chisel takes a great deal of practice in order to master the technique. Tim described to me how he thought learning to use hand tools is:

...a hard earned acquired skill, and it is through repetitive practice and sometimes a monotonous practice. And I think it’s very complex in the way that it’s assembled. I think that, you know, when we start off learning a new skill, for instance using a plane for the first time, or using a chisel, we observe and then we try to imitate, and we imitate by assembling um ... postures, gestures, activities, ways of grasping things that we already know from our past experience in life. It’s cumulative, but then to turn that first attempt at using it, which is quick fragmented, you know, you’re just picking up kind of the salient bits from watching and observing, but then to turn it into fluent practice I think comes only with, with exactly that, with practice.

During my interview with Donald, he told me some woodworking tasks gave him pleasure, simply saying that he found ‘quite a lot of satisfaction in squaring wood’. Recollecting my own experiences as a maker, I am able to give an account of this process that offers some insight into the kinds of experience that Donald and Tim
are talking about when they discuss using hand tools. ‘Squaring wood’ involves taking roughly machined timber and preparing it for jointing. This is done by smoothing two adjacent faces along the length of the piece so that they are straight and at 90 degrees to one another. These two faces then act as a datum for all future measurements and operations on the piece of wood. If this procedure is not carried out correctly, every other subsequent measurement will be compromised, and it is unlikely that the job will proceed as planned.

The straightness of the wood is measured with a steel straight edge, and the angle between the faces is measured with a steel try square; the material capital that, along with the plane itself, the work bench, straight edge and vice, inheres with the embodied capital of the maker in order to accomplish the task. Although this procedure is the starting point for almost every woodworking operation, it is very difficult to achieve for a novice woodworker, particularly if they are restricted to using hand tools. The woodworking hand plane is a demanding tool to use, and requires a great deal of bodily sensitivity. The experienced woodworker will use their entire body to control the action of the plane as it cuts the wood, pushing forward with their whole body mass as the plane rides across the surface of the timber, simultaneously shifting the pressure from their front hand to their back hand as the tool begins and ends its cut. Failure to execute this almost imperceptible shifting of load from one hand to the other results in the wood taking on a curved form, because the tool will take off more material at the beginning and end of the cut than in the middle. It may take months of practice for a novice woodworker to fully assimilate these bodily actions into their repertoire of skills, to internalise the embodied capital, and the first attempts to square a piece of timber can sometimes take many hours.

The success of the operation also depends on the blade of the plane being very sharp. This can only be achieved with the skilful use of further material capital, a grinding wheel and a slip stone to sharpen the blade. The use of the slip stone requires the use of the whole upper body and a subtle shift of loading as the blade is held at a precise angle by the hands and pushed and dragged across the oily surface of the stone. The resistance of the steel to being slid across the stone, together with the quality of the vibration felt through the hand, will tell the woodworker whether or not they are holding the blade at the correct angle. An
experienced wood worker will recognise when his or her plane needs sharpening, not only because of the force required to drive the blade though the wood, but also by the sound of the plane as it cuts – a sharpened and well adjusted plane ‘hisses’ across the surface of the timber, producing a fine curl of wood shaving. The experienced wood worker will also recognise the ways in which the resistance to the tool varies as it runs along the length of the timber, letting him or her know how the direction of the wood grain is affecting the cut, and suggesting the direction in which the cut should be made. The smell of the timber will also alert the woodworker to the moisture content of the wood – fresh softwood releases a strong sweet resinous smell as it is cut, and older, reclaimed wood smells drier and dustier.

The success or failure of this range of embodied skills and procedures can be judged precisely, and absolutely, with the straight edge and try square. Although unsophisticated, these measuring tools offer accurate and immediate feedback to the woodworker – by holding the steel edge against the surface of the wood and then holding the two up to the light, any irregularities are quickly revealed by visible light passing between the metal and the wood. Either the piece of wood is square and straight, or it is not. Here I am reminded of the line Gelber cites from a 1941 book on home handicrafts, *Fifty Things to make for the Home*:

> Skill takes the place of thought because twelve inches today is twelve inches tomorrow. A good joint well learned is a good joint forever... Fixed values of this sort are a tremendous consolation in a world where the most fundamental concepts are subject to change without notice (Julian Starr Jnr. (cited in Gelber, 1999: 294).

By using my own account of this simple example of a woodworking operation, which would be identical to Donald’s experience, and indeed of any skilled woodworker, it is possible to see how he has a set himself clear goals that guide his actions. He has been able to exercise complete control over the operation, in his own workshop in his own time, and has been able to get clear and direct feedback about the results of his actions. Because Donald has been ‘squaring timber’ for a long time, he is able to draw upon the embodied, capital that he needs to succeed at the task, moving quickly and automatically between the various parts of the job, matching challenge and competence, and achieving flow
in the process. Peter confirmed this in his own observations about planning wood:

...it is that bit where you are in harmony with your body and I think planing is that kind of pure process that where you have to kind of use your whole body it’s very physical you are sweating ... you have to get a motion, it’s in action you can’t just sort of statically plane something, you have to get the right motion then you have to sort of watch what you are doing and see how its progressing, I think that’s the bit that’s probably the most physical process of it.

Figure 46: Jenny's block plane and slip stone.

For this simple operation alone, Donald’s tools include the workbench and vice, the plane, the grinding wheel and slip stone, the straight edge and try square, a candle (for waxing the underside of the plane) and a pencil – the network of artefacts that inheres with the embodied capital of his woodworking skills. As Donald’s skills have developed he will have also have been able act more confidently and more quickly in the operation, causing the level of challenge to rise to match his skills. In another example of skill increasing to meet challenge Greg described to me how he gradually came to understand how to cut a joint accurately:

If you think a piece of carpentry is all to do with cutting stuff, or reducing stuff in size so, if something is say three hundred and twenty seven
millimetres and it fits at three hundred and twenty seven millimetres, but if it’s too long, if it’s three hundred and twenty eight, it doesn’t fit. Three hundred and twenty six is too small, so it has to be three hundred and twenty seven otherwise it don’t fit. So you have got to be, and you’ve got to go and do a cut and think, ‘once I have done this cut, if it’s not right I have just wasted an hour’, so you’ve cut it a bit long. You know, you have cut it wrong. Then you do it again you know, but then after a while, that is where your confidence comes in, knowing that you are going to cut it, do one cut and it fits.

Clear feedback and tangible outcomes

Although the promise of a concrete outcome to these activities – whether making a painting, or building a canoe – is a crucial factor in the structuring of a pursuit, as I noted earlier, it is clear that the possession of the final artefact tends to be eclipsed by the pleasure and satisfaction gained from the process of making. However, this is not to say that tangible outcomes are unimportant – they offer feedback about mastery and achievement. The clear feedback that makers receive as in their making is a result of the tangibility of the outcomes. Tim thought that the satisfaction in making came from being:

...directly engaged with the hands on making. As you’re making its, the making process itself, the practicality of it is feeding back to the way you are thinking about it. [...] there’s almost alchemy to it isn’t there? I mean, you know, to be taking this very raw natural product and turning it into a, er...a piece of art, something that’s going to be used...

Greg expanded on this by referring not just to the moment-by-moment process of making itself, but also to the outcomes of each day's work:

I enjoy going to work of a day, and at the end of the day, and there’s an object, and that gives me great pleasure to see something I have made; it’s tangible isn’t it?

For Cherry, not having a tangible outcome in her work, which had been book keeping, and looking after the accounts in a chain of DIY stores, meant that it was
difficult for people to judge her achievements: ‘it was a different sort of feeling. There was no end product’. This was why she left her job, and she noted how it was only after she had left that people noticed what a good job she was doing, and they asked her to return.

Tangible outcomes offer a solid and lasting confirmation of achievements to the maker that can be evaluated in a way that intangible outcomes cannot. The satisfaction also comes from the process of metamorphosis involved in making: the transformation of a material from one state to another (Sennett, 2008: 120-29). This process of metamorphosis is frequently mentioned by the people in the study. Greg describes the sense of achievement in this process of transformation:

... well, you start off with a pile of rubbish and you end up with something beautiful. As you walked in you could see a couple of long lumps of wood, big hairy bits of wood. Well those hairy bits of wood, after a couple of months, are going to turn into a glorious boat; and you sort of look at it, and think well how am I going to make a boat out of this pile of crap, but it happens, you know, and you think back, ‘oh christ’, you know, ‘I did that’...

Ironically, Simon’s engagement with this process of transformation even extended to a wish to completely conceal the marks of the making process he had just been engaging in:

I mean just like sort of trying to make it so it doesn’t look as though you you’ve used any tools on it. It’s just the smoothness, it’s like down to the finishing, it’s always nice when you’ve finished something, you know, and it doesn’t look as though you’ve actually used tools to make it.

Pleasure in metamorphosis is diminished when the making process is divided into parts and the maker cannot have the satisfaction of observing the full transformation of raw material to finished product. Even though Brian made books as part of his job, his relationship with the products of his paid labour was completely different to the relationship he had with his amateur making, and he again emphasised the metamorphosis that took place during the making process:

Q: So why is it different watching a machine finishing books as opposed to watching a machine milling metal?
Brian: Yes, that’s a good question isn’t it. Erm, I think perhaps at the end you’ve got nothing for it you just go home and all you’ve got is money, whereas a put rusty old bit of metal in there, turn it, I’ve got a nice shiny bit of metal nice and round.

Tim, the academic, contrasted making something tangible with dealing with his e-mails:

I think in creating something, it’s for you and it’s something that will, it will be an artefact in the world. It’s not just a kind of a passing piece of information, or a quick problem that needs to be solved, it’s something that will have presence (...) you feel like you’re putting something in to the world of value.

Conclusions

This chapter has drawn together the previous parts of the data analysis by conceptualising amateur making as a practice that is conditional on arrangements of resources which range across time and place, entailing both equipment and skills – person and environment are mutually constituted by practice – thinking is inseparable from doing. This move enables us to conceptualise the complexities of making much more clearly. An understanding of practices as containing internal rewards that can only be obtained from the practice itself offers us an important insight into the ways that amateur making can generate rewards for its practitioners. By drawing upon Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory, it was possible to see how serious amateur making can create the conditions that lead to flow, and to appraise the positive rewards that this can offer to makers. In the next section, I also incorporate the work of two other social psychologists who have considered the nature of intrinsically rewarding activity, and start to build a more detailed account of these ideas. This moves the thesis closer to answering the original research question, which is dealt with more fully in the conclusion to the study.
13: The Impetus and Inspiration to Act

Introduction

From the outset the aim of the study has been to answer the question: what are the internal rewards associated with amateur making, and how do they offer satisfaction and fulfilment to those who participate in the activity?

Up to this point I have considered the ways in which serious amateur making fits into people’s lives, both in terms of the way they organise their time, and in its relation to paid employment. I have established that the rewarding characteristics of the practice result from the levels of autonomy it affords to its participants, and to the ways in which it enables them to interact with the material world in pleasurable ways. Drawing upon the fieldwork, the analysis has therefore generated an account that starts to locate and defines the various aspects of the practice of amateur making that work in combination to generate the pleasurable experience associated with making things. I have conceptualised these elements by using theories of practice, and developed the concept of internal rewards, and I now want to take these ideas further by introducing theoretical work that sets out to understand the nature of motivation, and assesses its relevance to the material being discussed in this study.

Theories of motivation

Although, for ease of analysis, chapter 9 considered cost and benefits as separate components of the amateur maker’s experience, further sophistication can be brought to the discussion by more clearly integrating the idea of beneficial outcomes into an analytical framework that also considers drive and motivation. Motivation is the force that moves people to do something. An unmotivated person lacks the impetus or inspiration to act, while someone who is energised towards a goal is considered to be motivated. Motivation is an explanatory concept that describes three aspects of behaviour: orientation, the desire to direct one’s action towards a particular goal; intensity, which is how hard an individual tries to go in that direction; and persistence, which is the willingness of the
individual to overcome obstacles when they are encountered (Rollinson & Broadfield, 2005:197).

The makers featured in this study were powerfully motivated towards their pursuits but, as the previous chapters of the thesis have shown, tended to be driven by goals and rewards that are intrinsic to the activity itself. Whilst it would be inaccurate to completely discount extrinsic motivators, for there are a number of instrumental outcomes associated with all the activities considered in the study, it is an understanding of the intrinsically rewarding aspects of the activities that best illuminates the central research question. Later in this chapter I will also argue that some extrinsic rewards can effectively be integrated and fully assimilated to the self, giving some types of extrinsic motivators many of the qualities of their intrinsic equivalents, even though they are done to attain separable outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000b: 73).

The next section briefly considers the literature associated with motivation theories, before identifying the component parts of the motivational factors that spurred on the amateur makers in this study, and arguing that their activities clearly reflect aspects of Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Together with Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]), theories of motivation can provide an explanatory framework that begins to develop clear answers to the questions posed by this research.

It is clear that the makers I met during my research were getting intangible rewards from their practices that were difficult to separate from the process. Peter expressed this by comparing the monetary value of his project outcomes with the pleasure he got from the process: ‘the enjoyment of it is worth a lot more than the money would be...’, whilst Donald simply stated: ‘I am just doing it for personal satisfaction’ – they are motivated to carry out their hobbies without the promise of separable external rewards. The benefits associated with the harnessing of these kinds of motivational forces has made the topic interesting for a number of applied disciplines, including education; healthcare; studies of organisational behaviour; human resource management; and marketing and advertising (Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Krippendorf, 2004; McClelland, 1987; Vroom, 1964). Isolating what motivates people to act, however, is not a straightforward problem, and the task has led to a wide range of research being undertaken. Most
of the primary research in the field has taken place since the mid twentieth century, and most (though not all) theoretical models have been developed in the field of social psychology through empirical studies involving controlled experiments, surveys, and field work.

Early theories of motivation tended to regard human behaviour as primarily motivated either by physiological drives initiated by an imbalance or deficiency in the organism (Hull, 1943), or by a separable external consequence or goal (O'Donohue & Ferguson, 2001; Skinner, 1953). Drive theory, the first of these two models (Hull, 1943), specified a set of innate physiological needs, which, when in deficit, give rise to biological drive states. Hull argued that the motivation for all behaviours is reducible to a small set of drives: hunger, thirst, sex and the avoidance of pain (Deci & Moller, 2005: 579). These push the person into action, and must be satisfied in order for the individual to maintain homeostasis and remain healthy. Examples of these drive states would be those that arise from the need for nutrition, warmth or procreation. They are the most basic needs that have to be met in order to sustain life and, according to drive theory, the drives are reduced or obviated once the needs that give rise to them have been met. Learning is achieved by the linking of the drive stimulations to the actions that reduced the drives by meeting the biological need. Freud's theory of psychosexual development was also based on the idea of a series of irreducible primary instincts, these being sex and aggression, with sex being dominant (Freud (1925) cited in Deci & Moller, 2005: 580). Both Hullian and Freudian drives were considered to operate unconsciously and to form the basis for the regulation or direction of behaviour.

Whilst this needs directed behaviour is said to be driven by internal physiological needs, the argument for goal directed behaviour proposes that people are motivated by the consequences of their actions coupled with a desire to reach external goals. According to B.F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, behaviour will be changed as a result of an individual's response to events that occur in the external environment (O'Donohue & Ferguson, 2001; Skinner, 1953). The individual becomes conditioned to respond in a certain way when a reward is received, and with repetition the behaviour is reinforced. Likewise, unwanted behaviour can be deterred by withdrawal of a reward, or by the administering of
a punishment. These are extrinsic motivators that are dependent on the individual's success or failure to meet external goals. This system of management, known colloquially as the 'carrot and stick' method has, until recently, tended to dominate the administration of paid work (Pink, 2010). Although subsequent research into work-place motivation has led to increasingly sophisticated work-related theoretical models being developed that take into account the multi-facetted aspects of human resource management (Herzberg, 1966; McClelland, 1987; McGregor, 1960; Vroom, 1964), for the purposes of this argument I want to focus on the work that has been carried out in the more general area of intrinsic motivation, and the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

**Intrinsic Rewards**

Needs-directed and goal-directed behaviour theories tend to depict human beings as fundamentally inert – in other words we will not act unless prompted by a biological drive arising from a deficiency or an external force associated with reward or punishment. They fail to explain behaviour linked to curiosity, play, investigation, and other activities not linked to drive reduction or reward and punishment.  

Experimental work carried out by Edward Deci in the 1960s (Deci, 1971) attempted to answer these questions by setting up a series of inherently interesting and enjoyable tasks involving the assembly of a small wooden, three-dimensional puzzle known as a Soma Cube. He was surprised to discover that even though the task was enjoyable, and would be happily undertaken by his subjects without an external incentive, the provision of additional extrinsic rewards actually began to de-motivate them, and they became less inclined to continue with the task (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This was a reversal of the common-sense expectation that external rewards, such as money or prestige, would make people work harder and increase their performance.

Although some researchers have challenged the link between extrinsic rewards and performance reduction (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996), on balance the

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60 This was also the primary starting point for the work of Csikszentmihalyi on flow, discussed earlier and, of course, also forms the core of the research question addressed by this thesis.
research seems to indicate that extrinsic rewards are detrimental to particular kinds of tasks. These tasks are what Daniel Pink has described as ‘heuristic’, where you have to ‘...experiment with possibilities and devise a novel solution’. These are distinct from 'algorithmic' tasks, or ‘...one[s] in which you follow a set of established instructions down a single pathway to one conclusion’, where, according to Pink, extrinsic rewards can still be a motivating factor under certain circumstances (Pink, 2010: 29). He argues that as Western economies become progressively more reliant on heuristic work roles, effective job design will become increasingly dependent on the incorporation of intrinsic rewards.

Deci defined the difference between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation thus:

... *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. Over three decades of research has shown that the quality of experience and performance can be very different when one is behaving for intrinsic versus extrinsic reasons [original emphases retained] (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 230).

Tasks that contain intrinsic rewards tend to be investigative, play-like and open-ended – exactly the characteristics that Csikszentmihalyi associated with activities that could lead to flow experiences. There are also strong parallels here with the kinds of activities that Maslow argued for in the pursuit of self-actualisation. The account I have given of the fieldwork up to this point firmly places amateur making into these categories of activity, and it seems clear that these perspectives begin to connect together, shedding light on the motivations for amateur making, and offering some answers to the research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis. In order to pursue this line further, the following section gives an account of the later developments of Deci’s work, and explores some the ways it is able illuminate the fieldwork gathered as part of this research.
Self-Determination Theory

Extrinsic motivations are future oriented, justifying actions as a means to reach particular ends, to achieve goals or to obtain results, whilst intrinsic motivations:

‘...justify actions in their own terms; that is without references to an outcome, achievement or result. (...) Having fun, doing something for its own sake, enjoying the moment and being deeply involved in something are reasons that people give and accept as valid motivations’ (Deci & Moller, 2005: 583).

Deci argued that intrinsic motivation is a natural psychological process inherent in the nature of human life and, unless people are prevented from doing so, they will attempt to master the world by engaging in their physical and social environments, and doing the things that they enjoy and that interest them (Deci & Moller, 2005: 583). Intrinsic motivation exists in individuals, but also in the relation between individuals and activities.

In order to better understand these relationships, Deci built upon his original experimental work in the 1960s and 70s, and began collaborating with a fellow academic, Richard Ryan. Over a number of years Deci’s original ideas have been refined and presented as a single theory that Deci and Ryan have called self-determination theory or SDT. Deci and Ryan’s theories were based on studies of the effects of rewards, feedback, and other external events on intrinsic motivation, and have subsequently been confirmed through empirical work in both laboratory experiments and applied field studies. Deci and Ryan argue that intrinsic motivation is ‘an inherent organismic propensity that that is catalysed (rather than caused) when individuals are in conditions that conduce towards its expression.’ (Ryan & Deci, 2000a: 57).

Drawing upon these studies, SDT proposes that ‘an understanding of human motivation requires a consideration of innate psychological needs for

61 Working from the Department of Clinical and Social Sciences in Psychology, University of Rochester, New York, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan co-ordinate a research project that draws upon a global research network. This consists of over 60 academics working across the fields of social and clinical psychology, education, sports science, and management studies (http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT, accessed: 29/11/10).
competence, autonomy, and relatedness' (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 1985), and it is the parsimonious identification of these three core needs that forms the basis of the theory. The need for competence is the need for people to feel effective in their actions; the need for autonomy is the need to feel that their actions are self-determined, and the need for relatedness is the need to feel close to other people. Deci and Ryan found that the needs for competence and autonomy are the most important motivating factors, followed by relatedness, which is a less substantial element of the three.

SDT posits that humans have a natural propensity toward growth and development, but argues that this tendency is influenced by the extent to which external factors allow the fulfilment of the three core needs. In other words the defined needs are phenotypical – they are the observable characteristics of an organism, as determined by both genetic makeup and environmental influences. SDT, therefore, proposes that these needs are innate, but can be developed in a social context, and some people will develop stronger needs than others, creating differences between individuals. I now want to review each of these core needs, and develop them further in relation to the fieldwork.

**Competence**

Deci and Moller draw upon the work of White (1959) to develop the idea of competence as:

...people’s capacity to interact effectively with the environment – to understand the effects they can have on the environment and the effects the environment has on them (Deci & Moller, 2005: 581).

According to White competence is attained over time and requires directed selective and persistent activity, including exploration and manipulation. The subjective side of competence is the feeling of efficacy it generates for the individual, and it is this feeling that provides the ‘reward’ for activities. This enhances the intrinsic motivation for the action by allowing the satisfaction of the basic psychological need for capability – the attaining, or exceeding of a standard in one’s performance. However it is important to note that this is not a deficit
motivation in the sense of Hullian drives – individuals are not trying to make up for something they feel is missing – but instead ‘satisfies an intrinsic need to deal with the environment’, to build on their experiences, and expand their interactions with the world. (White, 1959: 318, cited in Deci and Moller 2005: 581).

Although people build their competencies as a result of their interaction with the environment, their goal is not to become more competent. The aim is simply to enjoy themselves and have fun, with competence building being a by-product of their intentions. This is similar to the way that people are able to achieve flow as a by-product by using the specific goals of a task as a justification for their activity, thereby giving it direction, and shaping their actions.

The respondents in the case studies expressed this in a number of different ways. Brian told me how he would not like to sell one of his finished models, a scale model of a traction engine, but that he did not want to do anything with it either: ‘I just like to look at it occasionally and think did I really make that’, whilst Donald spoke about how he wanted to cut ‘proper dovetails’ as this would give him more satisfaction: ‘I think if I had a machine that would make dovetails I wouldn’t use it. I would cut them out by hand because I think there is such satisfaction in that’.

Jenny’s father-in-law enjoyed using demanding woodworking techniques, and believed it was worth making something out of a ‘good piece of wood’ even it was harder to do (see figure 48), but she also told me how he became frustrated when people failed to recognise his competence for what it was:

... what is that people used to say, yes: “you must be very patient”. That made him absolutely furious.

Q Did it?

Yes, there is a skill to it as well, it’s not just about being patient, and he felt that that was undermining the work that he had done.
Autonomy

However, according to self-determination theory, competence and the need to feel effective, will not lead to self-worth if it is not accompanied by a sense of autonomy; in other words people need their feelings of competence to be experienced as self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 227). In SDT autonomy refers not to being detached, or selfish, but rather to the feeling of choice that can accompany any act, whether dependent or independent, collectivist or individualist (Ryan & Deci, 2000b: 74).

Tangible rewards made contingent on a task impair performance by reducing autonomy, as do threats, deadlines, directives and competition pressure, all of which diminish motivation by being perceived as external controllers of behaviour. On the other hand, when people perceive the locus of causality for their behaviour to be within themselves, they tend to be intrinsically motivated, with all the benefits that this brings (Deci & Moller, 2005: 584). In other words you can be effective on an assembly line, but you won't satisfy your competence need, because the activity is not autonomous. Simon, who had made the switch from his hobby of building motorbikes to wood-turning after a stint working as a
wood machinist, told me how making things for himself made him ‘content’, contrasting the experience with working on a production line:

*I feel content, it’s like, it’s a much better feeling of like, if you’re standing at a milling machine working for somebody else, just running off hundreds and hundreds of nuts and bolts, you know, I mean where’s the satisfaction in that, you know? Ok you’ve made them yourself, but I mean you can’t take pride in your work can you, you know, but when you’re standing here, and just like sort of running off 20 say, you know, ear plugs62, you know, you take a pride in every single one…*

Brian, who works as a print finisher, told me how time flew by when in his own work shop, but how it dragged by when he was working at his machine:

*…see, the better you are at doing it the less trouble you have, the more boring it gets. So you are really working against yourself. Once your machine is going well all you have got to do is watch it, and that gets boring.*

Ironically, even though Brian was making things, and making sure his machine ran well, his competence wasn’t matched by autonomy, resulting in him being alienated from his work. This can be contrasted with his view of working in his own workshop when he told me:

*I really like when you are working alone, and you are just peeling metal off like that, a quarter of an inch at a time. That is quite an impressive feeling, I would be quite happy doing that for 8 hours a day.*

So choice, and the opportunity for self-direction enhance intrinsic motivation by affording a greater sense of autonomy, and when activities are self-chosen, there is a sense of self-determination, which brings gratification. The respondents who took part in this study frequently referred to the ways in which their pursuit offered them a sense of individual control and autonomy. Cherry told me how she thought she had inherited this from her father:

62 Simon turns wooden plugs that are used to widen people's ear piercings, and are sold through piercing shops.
I have always done like decorating and things like, that so there is a whole satisfaction of knowing that you have done it all yourself, and I like the fact that I’m really bad at delegating things. (...) My Dad’s like me; if he wants a job done properly he does it himself. My Dad won’t pay somebody else to do something that he can do.

Tim concurred with Cherry:

I think there’s something deeply satisfying about doing something under your own steam... and I suppose it’s just, it’s constant reaffirmation that you exist and that you’re a part of this world, and that you are not just simply kind of existing in it, but you’re also making it.

There is also parallel here with Eric’s experience of growing up in South Africa, when he describes the ingenuity that results from a shortage of resources:

There is a self-do thing [in South Africa], definitely, there is definitely a self-do thing, certainly in motor racing that’s the reason we came to Europe, is that the best mechanics on the race cars came from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and the reason is because they have got such a very broad manufacturing capability, because you couldn’t just go to a shop, because even in England if you have a Morris 1100 or a Morris 1000 you could go to the shop and somebody would get you the part and you would replace it, in South Africa if you were in the bush you didn’t have that ... you fixed it.

Relatedness

According to SDT, as well as satisfying the participant’s need for competence and autonomy, activities are also found to be intrinsically motivating when they meet the individual’s need for relatedness. Relatedness refers to the extent to which an activity is motivated by the desire to maintain a sense of connection with the person’s peer group, family, community, or other group to which they feel personally and emotionally associated. However, the makers in these case studies tended to share a self-centred attitude towards their activities – they organized their pursuits in a way that required a minimum of social obligations, and maximized the possibility of rewards that were intrinsic to the process itself, and
their interest in making tended to be privately experienced. Brian, the model engineer, describing the use of his milling machine, noted how he preferred to get on quietly by himself:

\[\text{...without looking at other people, and having them tell me I am doing it wrong. [I enjoy] that feeling of calm and peace that descends on you as you enter your own domain.}\]

Although it is clear to see that Brian was avoiding the external judgements and regulation that tend to reduce intrinsic reward, it is more difficult to see how his activity met his need for relatedness. Jenny also described how her father-in-law, an accomplished amateur furniture maker ‘would just shut the world out’ when he went into his workshop. It could be assumed that this isolation added to the autonomous nature of the activity, but Deci and Ryan note that it is not solitude itself which generates autonomy:

\[\text{Of course, many intrinsically motivated behaviours are happily performed in isolation, suggesting that proximal relational supports may not be necessary for intrinsic motivation, but a secure relational base does seem to be important for the expression of intrinsic motivation to be in evidence (Ryan & Deci, 2000b: 71).}\]

The makers also generally stressed that outside of their times in their workshops they not only had other social interests, but that they were also able to call upon support from family and friends when necessary: Eric told me:

\[\text{... for some reason I like working on my own. I have friends, I do have friends who come down and help me, [a friend] came down last Sunday to help me. I've got another friend who comes and helps me, but I am a loner on that respect, because it's like any hobby I suppose. You stand and look at it more than you actually do the work. So I might go over there and stand there for an hour and look at it and do ten minutes work or try and think on how I can do that or how it was done in the period, or go into the computer and see how was that done.}\]

Donald was keen to stress that although:

\[\text{...doing woodwork is a lonely occupation whereas skiing and climbing is communal; a sort of fellowship of other people, and I go skiing with twelve}\]
men from the church, or eleven of us, and so we have a great time being together.

As I discussed in chapter 9, the makers seemed to achieve relatedness in two main ways. Firstly they often made things for other people or gave away their products; though the reluctance to meet deadlines discussed in chapter 7 still applied, Peter still offered to make things for people:

_I guess I am pretty non-committal about deadlines [laughter] I manage expectations a little bit. I'll say like, “I might make something for you one day and it might take a year or so”._

Secondly they value the feedback that they get from friends and family. Donald was pleased that his competence was recognised when his friends said: ‘_gosh, how did you do that?_’ when to him it was fairly obvious; and Cherry told me: ‘_you know, I would like to have, I like people to look at my work and say “I really like your work”._’ Simon also recounted how he had been spurred on by other people’s recognition of his ability when he had made things in his breaks at the factory where he had worked:

_...that’s where I found that I could actually really, sort of, make stuff, you know, and it looked fairly good, you know, to my eye and to other people’s eyes it looked sort of, obviously they, you know, said “that’s good”..._

So, as well as making things for people, and involving family and friends when they required help, the makers were also able to sustain their self-esteem and motivation by receiving the feedback about their competences. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1992 [1988]) external environmental factors such as effectance promoting feedback, and freedom from demeaning evaluation all promote intrinsically rewarding activity.

Aligning amateur making with self-determination theory highlights the ways in which the qualities of the activity make it intrinsically rewarding. It allows the participants to satisfy their need to feel competent and to feel autonomous in their actions, both of which lead to intrinsic motivation. The degree to which amateur making satisfies the need for relatedness is less clear cut as the makers tended to be solitary in their activities and even rejected some of social interactions that their interest could make available to them. However, the
research has shown that their pursuits connected them to family and friends in less obvious ways, through the opportunity to give away their work, to enlist help when necessary, and to garner self-esteem through feedback and praise for their pursuits. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the key role of amateur making for its participants is in its ability to confirm their competence and autonomy. Feelings of competence during an action enhance intrinsic motivation because they satisfy innate psychological needs, but feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation unless they are accompanied by a sense of autonomy. Therefore the satisfaction of the innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy generates high levels of intrinsic motivation.

In the following section, again drawing on SDT, I develop a more finely grained appraisal of intrinsic and extrinsic reward that allows us to describe the variability of motivation of amateur makers more effectively.

**Increasing autonomy**

The preceding section has argued that whilst choice, and the opportunity for self-direction all enhance intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards tend to undermine intrinsic motivation by shifting the causality of action from an internal location to an external one. Threats, deadlines, directives and competition pressure diminish intrinsic motivation because they are experienced as controllers of behaviour – reducing the individual’s sense of autonomy. However, extrinsic motivation is not always non-autonomous. Although externally propelled actions may be carried out with resentment, resistance or disinterest, in different circumstances an inner acceptance of the utility of the task as leading to later, positive outcomes may mean that the goal becomes self-endorsed. Clearly not all activities that amateurs undertake are necessarily intrinsically motivating, just as not all aspects of their activities contain intrinsic rewards, or result in flow experiences – activities that are not inherently interesting may be also engaged as a result of extrinsic motivations. Earlier in the thesis I discussed how amateur makers committed themselves to activities that were occasionally demanding and unpleasant. This does not mean, however, that these actions are destined to be empty or dispiriting, but simply that their consequences and outcomes tend to be
separable from the action itself, and that there is an instrumental value attached to the task. Days of demanding and precise work on a milling machine may have to be repeated because of an unexpected accident, and joining together the two halves of a canoe may require sticking one’s head into a fume filled cavity for extended periods of time; but these ordeals are understood by the maker as being necessary in order to complete the project. The degree to which these forces are felt as non-autonomous depends upon the degree to which the motivating forces have been internalised by the individual. Ryan and Deci address this variability by developing a series of degrees to which extrinsic motivations become internalised, and which they expressed diagrammatically as follows:

This model incorporates a series of ‘regulatory styles’ each of which identifies a point on the continuum between amotivation, or a complete lack of incentive to act, and intrinsic motivation. According to Deci and Ryan’s theory, amotivation results from a perception that the task lacks relevance and is non-contingent, and that the participant perceives themselves as low in competence. The locus of causality, or the impetus to act, has no personal connection with the individual.
However, rather like Alasdair Macintyre’s example of the young chess player cited in chapter 12, an acceptance of external rewards as motivation to participate can eventually lead to recognition of the internal rewards that can be gleaned. The recognition that the activity has a longer term consequence that may lead to intrinsic rewards may also lead to the conscious valuing of the activity, and the goals become internalised as the individual identifies with the activity more strongly over time. In this process the individual becomes increasingly autonomous. Once he or she has recognised the internal rewards associated with a game of chess, the young player will begin to initiate their own games, and take control of their understanding of themselves as a chess player.

We may also illustrate each of the regulatory styles formulated by Ryan and Deci by relating them to the motivation associated with different kinds of construction and maintenance activities carried out within the home by the householder. If we take the example of clearing the guttering on a house, then this could be considered as externally regulated. This is an instrumental action with separable consequences. The punishment for not repairing the guttering is damp walls and consequential damage to the building. The activity is externally motivated by a need to maintain both the effectiveness of the dwelling and the value of the property. It is an unpleasant job that has to be done, and though it offers little in the way of intrinsic reward, it may still confirm the householder’s ability to be in control, and give them satisfaction in their own competence. However, in and Ryan and Deci’s, terms the perceived locus of causality is still external and it would typically be experienced as a process of compliance and reactance.

Alternatively, painting the woodwork around the windows of a house would probably fall under the category of introjection. In this case there is still the obligation to protect the fabric of the building against the elements, but there is now a certain amount of ego involvement. This might involve the approval of the self in the ability to apply paint with skill and dexterity, and of others, in the recognition that the house will look more attractive, uphold the standards of the neighbourhood, and protect the household more effectively. The locus of causality is still external because the actions are performed with a feeling of pressure to avoid guilt or anxiety about the outward appearance of the house, or
maintaining its value over time. Ryan and Deci describe this as regulation by contingent self-esteem.

*Identification* represents a more autonomous, or self-determined form of extrinsic motivation. An example of this might be the householder who learns demanding tiling techniques because they want to create a more beautiful bathroom. The investment in embodied capital leads to an increased sense of competence – the learning process may be hard, and may result in frustration and mistakes along the way, but the person is able to recognise it as a valuable capability which they will able to retain, identifying its significance for future DIY projects, and internalising the value of the activity. The regulation of this behaviour is accepted as the person's own, and they have identified with the personal importance of the activity, and endorsed their own goals. Here we begin to see the ways in which the early 'do-it-yourself' activity could be portrayed by the magazines that promoted it not only as a means of saving money by bypassing the use of tradesmen, but also providing satisfaction in the process.

Finally, the most self-determined form of behaviour is *integration*. Integration occurs when identified regulations have been fully assimilated to the self. This occurs through self-examination and bringing new regulations in congruence with one's other values and needs. The more one internalises the reasons for an action and assimilates them to the self, the more one’s extrinsically motivated actions become self-determined. Integrated forms of motivation share many qualities with intrinsic motivation, being both autonomous and unconflicted (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In our example of household maintenance, the amateur furniture maker might fall into this category, particularly when the adoption of this activity is not only intended to supply the household with functional artefacts, but is also undertaken with the intention of the person to 'become a furniture maker'. Like many of the respondents in the study a first taste of practical activity might come from house maintenance, but experience encourages the participant to develop their skills further, and eventually the goals of the activity become congruent with the individual’s synthesised hierarchy of goals. Here the identity of the person becomes bound up with the activity, and the perceived values of this life choice become internalised – attention to detail and precise work are pursued, with some tedious operations.
being tolerated for the benefit of the project. There is a separable outcome, the furniture, but the reward comes primarily from the process itself. As Donald, who began his career as an amateur maker by extending and modifying his family home, noted:

...the satisfaction of doing the job, I mean it’s a delight in making a drawer and cutting dovetails, and then fitting them together and seeing that everything goes square, and then you clamp it and glue it. And there is a satisfaction in not using nails or screws, because the joints are doing the task for you, and to make a complete piece of furniture, and just have everything jointed together is extraordinarily satisfying.

Ryan and Deci argue that this kind of internalisation yield[s] manifold adaptive advantages including more behavioural effectiveness (due to lessened conflict and greater access to personal resources) and greater experienced well being (Ryan & Deci, 2000a: 62).

In contrast to the needs based models discussed earlier that regard satisfaction as a process of replenishing deficiency, with the individual passively awaiting disequilibrium before acting, SDT proposes that people are:

...naturally inclined to act on their inner and outer environments, engage in activities that interest them, and move towards personal and interpersonal coherence. Thus they do not have to be pushed or prodded to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000a: 63-64).

There are strong parallels here with Maslow's ideas on self-actualisation, which were discussed in chapter 9. Both theories regard the sets of needs they consider as being 'growth-motivated' rather than 'deficiency-motivated'; people seek to fulfil them, not out of a desire to replenish a diminished resource, but in order to develop additional capacities.

**Conclusions**

The following brief summary of the preceding chapter is succeeded by a more comprehensive consideration of these ideas in the conclusion to the whole thesis.
In this chapter, I have considered in detail how theories of motivation can be applied to the fieldwork in this study in order to answer questions about the internal rewards associated with amateur making. Amateur makers are able achieve a sense of competence through their activities, but in order for this sense of competence to be motivating, amateur makers also require autonomy – that is autonomy from perceived external loci of causality such as paid labour and deadlines, accompanied by the sense of self-reliance and independence that comes from working in your own workshop, and determining the unfolding of your activities.

Self-determination theory also offers an account of how pursuits that start out as being externally motivated can, under the right conditions become integrated into the practitioner's behaviour, with their goals being increasingly self-determined. This pattern can be observed in the careers of makers who started out assisting with functional DIY, or by carrying out make-do and mend type activities, but later move on to the production of artefacts where the functional value of the outcomes is outweighed by the intrinsic reward associated with the activity.

In the following conclusion to the thesis, I round up the analysis, and bring together the findings of the preceding chapters in order to generate a coherent answer to the research questions that initiated this study.
The making of things by physically interacting with the material world can be a powerful source of pleasure for all makers. The art and cultural historian Ellen Dissanayake puts it this way:

There is an inherent pleasure in making. We might call this *joie de faire* (like *joie de vivre*) to indicate that there is something important, even urgent, to be said about the sheer enjoyment of making something exist that didn’t exist before, of using one’s own agency, dexterity, feelings and judgement to mold, form, touch, hold and craft physical materials, *apart* from anticipating the fact of its eventual beauty, uniqueness or usefulness. (Ellen Dissanayake (2001: 326 - emphasis added) (cited in Gauntlett, 2011: 24)).

This research set out to identify the ways in which this pleasure is constituted for amateur makers, and asked the question: What are the internal rewards associated with amateur making, and how do they offer satisfaction and fulfilment to those who participate in the activity?

Serious amateur makers are a particular kind of constituency because they often undertake their activity without any external incentives, and often with few social obligations. Leadbeater and Miller’s definition of the pro-am has helped to highlight this group of people and, in his work on serious leisure, Stebbins has already found that for committed amateurs, volunteers, and hobbyists, their activity makes a positive contribution to their own well-being (Stebbins, 1992: 5-6). This research, however, aimed to build on and extend these findings by addressing a smaller and more closely defined population than those considered in this earlier work. Whilst Stebbins’ research subjects found pleasure from engaging in a wide range of activities, including team sporting activities, involvement in amateur theatre and pursuits such as astronomy, the subjects described in this thesis engaged in activities that always involved the physical manipulation of the material world and the production of artefacts, often in solitary environments with few communal ties.
As well as focussing more closely on a single aspect of serious leisure, the thesis is also unique because, in order to better comprehend the phenomenon, it utilises work carried out in the field of social psychology, in particular the work of Csikszentmihalyi, and Deci and Ryan. Although their work has produced a series of dominant theoretical explanatory models, these have not been applied to analyses of serious leisure, or in studies of amateur making.

The nature of the subject meant that the research method had to uncover the attitudes, experiences and practices of individual people. Therefore, in order to answer the research question, I planned a programme of qualitative research that allowed me to closely interrogate individual makers, visit their workshops and discuss their motivations. Based on this fieldwork, the subsequent analysis resulted in a weaving together of empirical data and existing theoretical literature in a sensitising reciprocal relationship, where the fieldwork led to literature searches, and the literature illuminated the fieldwork. This process drew in theoretical work originating in a group of loosely associated disciplines, including sociology, social psychology, cultural studies and design history. These fields of enquiry do not always make happy bed-fellows, and to some extent the work of this thesis is in synthesising these viewpoints, and taking an interdisciplinary approach in order to comprehend what is (for an activity that is often regarded either as insignificant, or quaint and mildly amusing) a surprisingly complex set of relationships and practices. I will return to the interdisciplinarily nature of the research later in the conclusion; firstly I want to round up the various parts of my findings and bring them together to provide a coherent account of the thesis that has been developed in this work.

**Summary**

Amateur making is a significant aspect of everyday life in Britain. In my historical review I showed how it had become increasing popular during the 1950s and 1960s, and that it spanned not only do-it-yourself and home maintenance, but also hobbies and home crafts. I also noted how a particular strand of amateur making became increasingly concerned with non-instrumental outcomes. Aided by increases in leisure time, and the availability of cheaper tools and materials,
this type of making evolved from the make-do-and-mend activities of post-war Britain into a set of complex and demanding pastimes that were often undertaken in the absence of instrumental results. It was the activity itself which provided interest and enjoyment rather than the practical or symbolic outcomes. The research was therefore oriented towards an understanding of the intrinsic rewards associated with amateur making: the feelings of pleasure and engagement that occur as one partakes in the activity of making things for no other reason than the pursuit of the activity itself. The thesis is therefore significant because it tells us something about the nature of both making and motivation.

The literature review quickly established the problems associated with addressing the subject matter from within a particular discipline. The topic has the potential to be tackled from a number of different viewpoints, and can also encompass a diverse range of activities. Its location in the realm of leisure makes it potentially interesting for sociologists, and its association with design processes and the production of artefacts makes it interesting to design historians. Its gender implications attract the interest of anthropologists, social historians and cultural theorists, and its particular form of human behaviour potentially makes the subject interesting for social psychologists. However, in spite of this variability of approach, I found that very few studies from any of these disciplines had addressed the intrinsic motivations of amateur makers, tending to focus instead on the symbolic and representational aspects of their activities.

Primary research yielded a rich set of data, including interview transcripts, photography and field notes. This data was always, and unavoidably, interpreted through the lens of my own past experience as a maker, both as a professional and an amateur. In line with the inductive approach detailed in chapter 5, the data analysis was carried out iteratively as the fieldwork progressed, and the literature search was extended as commonalities across the data were identified and concepts emerged and began to be developed. Hence, the central research question resulted in a number of lines of enquiry, each of which constitutes a chapter of the thesis. These aim to move the analysis progressively from a wider cultural and sociological approach to the material, towards a closer
understanding of the individual experiences of the maker, finally drawing in work from social psychology.

One of the aims of the fieldwork was to elicit the ways in which serious amateur making fits into the lives of people whose employment and income is not derived from their making activities. The opening chapters therefore addressed the place of making in the overall life, and life history of the participants. I found that although the early experience of making for the people in this study was rooted in instrumental outcomes, most of them now continue to make not out of utility but as a form of leisure. I considered the ways in which almost all the makers acquired their interest in making through their family or school background, and by being encouraged to have direct hands-on engagement with material processes. Most of the participants in this study had been introduced to making early in their lives by some kind of mentor, and like MacIntyre’s example of the young chess player cited in chapter 12, recognised the available internal rewards by engaging directly in the practice – some by being coerced to help with DIY tasks, and some by being encouraged to complete creative projects of their own.

I discussed how some of the respondents made career choices based upon this experience, and later became disappointed when their subsequent work roles took them away from hands on activity.

However, even though serious amateur making is divorced from the normal duties of paid work, I also found that many amateur makers attain a different kind of ‘professional’ status which can be measured by the sophistication of the work undertaken, the skills acquired, and the tools and facilities utilised in the making process – and indeed, they set their own constraints and obligations that sometimes mirrored work-like activity, and often incurred both financial and social costs. I moved on to consider the concept of the boundary between work and leisure and it became apparent that the distinction between these categories of activity is best defined as permeable. The strength of participation means that some amateur activities can be classified as ‘serious’ or ‘productive’ leisure, with the outcomes sometimes equalling the work of professional counterparts. An exploration of the concept of leisure followed, which further reinforced the importance of avoiding a simplistic binary opposition between work time and leisure time. I found that some people make the effort to turn their amateur
interest into professional occupation, but that this often took away some of the enjoyment to be had in making, strengthening the proposition that one of the factors in the pleasure to be had from making comes from its amateur status.

I drew a distinction between the cyclical time of everyday life, and the ‘project time’ of making. Project time is a space where things can happen, which cuts across the repetition of the everyday by a having an indeterminate span that is bounded by a beginning and an ending, and that overlays normal routine. I have argued that this is a special kind of time that provides a unique space where amateur makers are able behave according to different sets of aspirations and obligations.

A consideration of the different ways time is managed established some key differences in the way activities are experienced, both in leisure and at work. Turning to the work of Marx and Veblen, amongst others, I introduced the concept of alienation into the thesis, considering the effects of industrialisation and the division of labour on the experience of work. Drawing on Marx’s concept of the ‘species being’ and Veblen’s idea of the ‘instinct for workmanship’, I began to develop the thesis that work that is valued in and of itself can make the greatest contribution to the well-being, both of the individual and of the world. I intend to draw together these ideas in the final part of this conclusion.

The next part of the data analysis addressed themes that were more directly related to the individual experience of the makers, developing an understanding of their pursuits as a practice that depended on a network of physical resources, commonly understood procedures, and embodied interaction with environments and processes. If amateur makers enter project time when they are making things, to go into the workshop is to enter the ‘project space’. My visits to home workshops revealed complex workspaces, with clearly organised storage and display of tools and materials. For the amateur maker, the project space is effectively a form of distributed competence with each element enhancing and extending their capabilities. The material capital of the workshop precedes the project, and remains after the project is over, with a continuing potential for future action. The work space progressively matches the capability of the maker as they develop and extend its capabilities, allowing them to achieve their goals by matching the challenge of their projects with the competence of their project
space. The project space is positioned between past investments and future plans.

Turning to ideas about situated cognition, I argued that this relationship with the physical world extended the mind of the makers, allowing their calculations to be carried out in the external world, freeing them from overwhelming abstract calculations, and allowing their empirical speculation to take place separately from the internal world of abstract thought – creating external ‘scaffolding’ which aided their continuous problem solving, and the iterative physical interaction with the world. Embodied activities are a body’s way of supporting what we conceive and talk of as practice, and I have argued that aligning these findings with theories of practice allows us to avoid conceptualising the activity as either solely self-determined, or completely structured by social forces. Practice theory allows us to comprehend non-instrumentalist notions of conduct, ‘both observing the role of routine on the one hand, and emotion, embodiment and desire on the other’ (Warde, 2005: 136).

Serious amateur making has similarities with other practices – it can be regarded as a form of serious leisure; and the processes and equipment it involves mirrors many other types of making practices. The research has shown, however, that at the same time it is also differentiated from those practices, and as such offers us new insights into the relationship between internal rewards and the making of things. The key to an understanding of this relationship is recognition of what it feels like to be deeply involved in making. Therefore, having established the form of the practices undertaken by amateur makers, the final sections of the analysis asked questions about the characteristics of the experiences felt by them, and the ways in which the satisfactions associated with making things were constituted.

The makers in this study have been found to be over-whelmingly motivated by rewards that are intrinsic to their activity, and that this marks them out from many of the constituencies considered in previous studies of pro-ams and serious leisure enthusiasts. Assessing the kinds of work that the amateur makers undertook, and listening to them recount their thoughts and feelings about the making process, allowed me to make clear connections between the findings of this research and the work carried out on flow by Csikszentmihalyi and his co-researchers. To re-iterate, a person in flow feels a ‘unified flowing from one
moment to the next in which he is in control of his actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment, between past, present and future’ (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975]: 36). This results in effectance motivation (the feeling of having an effect on the world, and producing change in the environment), and encourages participants to keep on at an activity in order to get improved results. Flow can be obtained from any activity; the specific goals of the task serve as tokens that justify the activity by giving it direction and determining the rules of action; it is the striving which offers the reward, not the separable outcome.

An investigation of wider theories of intrinsic motivation, took the analysis to the work of Deci and Ryan, who developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT and Flow offer congruent theoretical frameworks for understanding human action, both asserting that the ability to operate effectively in an environment fulfils a primary need, and that the satisfaction of that need leads to feelings of well-being. Like Flow theory, SDT starts with a focus on intrinsic motivation proposing that intrinsically rewarding activities will offer participants feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness, which Deci and Ryan consider to be innate human needs. Self-determination, or autonomy, results from a mastery of the environment, and competence from the learned ability to do the activity well. Feelings of competence are also enhanced by social contextual conditions such as optimal challenge and positive feedback, which are two of the conditions that Csikszentmihalyi has found lead to flow experiences. In addition as Deci and Moller point out:

... people can remain intrinsically motivated without having the immediate satisfaction of the relatedness need while doing the activity, but people must experience satisfaction of the needs for competence and autonomy while doing the activity in order to remain intrinsically motivated (Deci & Moller, 2005: 590).

Indeed, it was sometimes difficult to see how the amateur makers who took part in this study achieved relatedness through their pursuit. The solitary nature of what they do suggests that they don’t want to get involved in the messy business of society. Or at least, not in their making activities – though they may well do in other areas of their lives, including work. But as I noted in the analysis, the
makers seemed to achieve relatedness by making things for other people or giving away their products, and by the way they utilised the positive feedback that they were given by their friends and family.

However, the research showed that the over-riding characteristics of amateur making are that it offers the makers a powerful sense of competence, accompanied by a feeling of autonomy. They were able to control and interact with their environments in a way that allowed them to balance challenge with skill, and the tangible outcomes of their work offered positive feedback about their efforts. Amateur makers achieved feelings of satisfaction from these intrinsically rewarding facets of their activity, and their accounts of their experiences clearly indicate that they frequently experience, and enjoy, the flow states associated with their practice.

Motivation and aesthetics

Whilst the conclusions above set out some clear answers to the questions posed by this research, they do not fully address the specificity of amateur making. The same conclusions could have been drawn by addressing a number of other serious leisure pursuits – and indeed these accounts exist in the literature (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992 [1988]). Therefore, in this final section of the conclusion I want to address the particular characteristics of amateur making that differentiate it from other kinds of intrinsically satisfying activity.

In a particularly insightful comment, Tim, the furniture maker, told me why making things was satisfying:

\[ The\ satisfaction\ comes\ in\ kind\ of\ two\ ways,\ but\ they’re\ very\ much\ entangled\ with\ one\ another.\ One\ is\ the\ intellectual\ satisfaction,\ the\ problem\ solving,\ the\ creative\ engagement.\ The\ second\ one\ is\ involving\ yourself\ physically\ in\ producing\ something...\ \]

SDT distinguishes between two types of motivation based in different reasons or goals that give rise to action. Intrinsic motivation can be said to exist partly in the activity, which has to be interesting to the individual, and in the satisfaction a
person gains from intrinsically motivated engagement. Therefore the two approaches to understanding intrinsic motivation tend to focus either on what makes a task interesting, or the innate psychological needs that are satisfied by the activity. Ryan and Deci’s approach focuses primarily on psychological needs – namely, the innate needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness – but they of course recognise that ‘basic need satisfaction accrues in part from engaging in interesting activities’ (Ryan & Deci, 2000a:55). This may result from novelty, challenge or aesthetic appeal. ‘Aesthetic’ is used here in the original scientific sense, the conditions of sensuous perception (as opposed to anaesthetic, describing a general loss of feeling). Hence the appeal may arise from physical sensation, or another perceptual sense apart from the visual, which is conventionally associated with the term. It is this aesthetic dimension of making that is engaged by the embodied activities of the craft practitioner described in chapter 11. Working in workshops with tools and materials, amateur makers derive aesthetic satisfaction by being intertwined in simultaneous interactions between themselves and their environment, by the sensory experience of material interaction and problem solving. This inherence in the material world, this acting on the world and simultaneous acting of the world on them, becomes not just a means of life, but a source of satisfaction and enjoyment, which transcends the instrumental outcomes of their actions. The research has shown that in order to understand amateur making it is necessary look beyond the immediate moment in the workshop. Understanding making as a practice helps us to avoid the fallacy that the sensations of the embodied practitioner are derived entirely from the act of making, and allows us to consider their actions as temporally situated, and part of a dispersed network of people with common interests and conceptions. The maker’s experience also depends on artefacts and materials that are spatially distributed, but which enable the maker to operate in sophisticated ways, to think and problem solve.

In chapter 9 of the thesis, I briefly discussed the contribution that some aspects of the work of Marx and Veblen might make to the analysis of the data. In this conclusion I now want to reintroduce their ideas and connect them with the preceding discussion, which has drawn primarily on the work of social psychologists. Although there are tensions between the disciplines of sociology and psychology, I argue in this thesis that the intrinsically rewarding
characteristics of amateur making cannot be isolated to a reductive account that embraces either historical determinism or innate instinctual behaviour, but instead result from a synthesis of factors, requiring an inter-disciplinary approach to their understanding. This allows us to think of intrinsic motivations not as purely internal psychic rewards achieved by autonomous individuals, but as experiences that are connected to wider social contexts and patterns of behaviour, thus avoiding a view of the completely self-determined individual operating outside the bounds of the social structures that give meaning to experience.

In a number of instances, the fieldwork demonstrated the ways in which the respondents felt alienated from their paid work. Whilst Deci and Ryan would attribute this to a failure to meet the innate human need for autonomy, and the lack of opportunity to express competences, a reading of Marx would frame this slightly differently – albeit as failure meet an innate need. According to Marx, one of the escapes from the state of alienation is the ability to freely create above and beyond material necessity, returning to what he called the 'species-being'. In this respect, Marx is paradoxically an essentialist who holds that there is a human nature or essence, which, in a just society would be allowed to come into its own. He asserts that there is an underlying authentic condition, the species-being, that we are prevented from attaining because we have become alienated, both from our productive activity, and from the world we have produced. According to this idea, there is, or should be, no ultimate point to human existence beyond the delight of its self-fulfilment; an expression of our capacity to create that is not governed by the need to meet a set of ends pitched beyond the activity itself. The thing that makes us most human is our ability to generate a kind of creative surplus over what is materially necessary, which is to be judged in its own terms rather than against external ends and objectives. Veblen makes a similar point when he argues that the instinct for workmanship is concerned with the ways and means of life rather than any one given ulterior end. According to Veblen, efficient use of the resources available for the purposes of life is itself an end, and a source of gratification. Terry Eagleton not only sums up Marx's argument, but also usefully connects his ideas to the concept of aesthetics:
If we were asked to characterise Marx’s ethics, then we might do worse than call them aesthetic. For the aesthetic is traditionally that form of human practice which requires no utilitarian justification, but which furnishes its own goals, grounds and rationales. It is an exercise of self-fulfilling energy for the mere sake of it (Eagleton, 1997: 20-21).

This research has found that, above all, it is the aesthetic interaction with their material environment that allows the serious amateur maker to achieve intrinsically rewarding and psychologically fulfilling feelings of competence and autonomy, offering them satisfactions that cannot be had from their paid employment. This human/object interaction is a form of ‘work’, but it is also a form of productive pleasure seeking.
15: References

Build Your Own Bungalow. (1955). *Practical Householder, 34*.


16: Appendices

- Pre-visit information sheet
- Pre-visit questionnaire
- Informant consent form
- Example of interview structure
Information Sheet

Research Study Title:

*Makers and their workshops – Investigating the experience of making*

Research Description:

This research study is looking at the way people who make for pleasure (i.e. in addition to their main paid work) use their time in their workshops, and how they feel about their experiences whilst making things.

To achieve this, the research aims to interview a number of makers, asking them questions about the kind of making they do and their motivations for making things. The interview will also explore the relation of this activity to the interviewees other paid work, and to other aspects of their life.

The interviews will be semi-structured; in other words there will be a few set questions decided by the interviewer before the meeting takes place, but on the whole the interview will feel like a normal conversation. The interview will last around an hour, and be sound-recorded for transcription purposes only.

1. Participants are asked for demographic information (age, gender, occupation etc) and are then asked to take the researcher on a ‘tour’ of their workspace. This may involve photographing the space and artifacts being discussed.

2. Participants are then asked questions on the type of making they do, when they do it, and the levels of enjoyment or satisfaction, or frustrations, associated with the various activities that they undertake.

Overall, visits take no longer than 2 hours. All participants remain anonymous and the findings are being used for academic research purposes only.

**Researcher contact details:**

Andrew Jackson, University for the Creative Arts,
c/o [Redacted]
Makers and their Workshops
Preliminary Questionnaire

This study is being conducted in accordance with the University College for the Creative Arts Research Ethics Policy which protects you under the Data Protection Act of 1984. Your information will not be held for any other purposes than for this project and remains confidential.

1. Title (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss, Dr etc): _______________________________

2. First Name/Surname: _______________________________

3. Age: ________

4. Gender: ________

5. Profession: _______________________________

6. Full address including Postcode: _______________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

7. Daytime contact telephone number: _______________________________

8. E-mail Address: _______________________________

9. Do you live with a partner/spouse? ________

10. Age of partner/spouse: ______

11. Number of children: ________

12. Age of children: ________

13. Please describe the kind of making you do, including the kinds of objects you make and the materials you use:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
14. On average, what is the total number of hours a month that you spend on these making activities?

☐ Less than 6 hours  
☐ Between 6 and 12 hours  
☐ Between 12 and 18 hours  
☐ Between 18 and 24 hours  
☐ Between 24 and 30 hours  
☐ More than 30 hours

15. Do you have a dedicated workspace for your making? __________

16. If yes, would you describe it as being:

☐ A room within my house  
☐ In a shed  
☐ In the garage  
☐ In a loft conversion  
☐ In a workshop away from my home  
☐ A different kind of space not listed above

If so, how would you describe this space? .................................................................

Thank you for help with this research. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below:

Please return this form to: Andrew Jackson, Makers and their Workshops Project, University College for the Creative Arts, Fort Pitt, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1DZ.

e-mail: andy.research@btinternet.com
Volunteer Consent Form – Makers and their Workshops

I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on *Makers and their Workshops*.

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I understand that whilst my anonymity will be preserved, the evidence gathered during the research may be used for academic and scholarly activity.

- I understand that any photographs taken by the researcher, or images produced by me and given to the researcher will be used for the purposes of this research study and may be published or presented publicly.

- I understand that any photographs supplied by me can be used, copyright-free for the purposes of the publication of this research study, and that in any future publication permission will be sought by the researcher.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ...........................................................

Address .................................................................................................
.................................................................................................
.................................................................................................

Signed .................................................................................................

Date .................................................................................................
Interview structure:

1
- Please start by telling me how you became interested in making things.
- What kinds of things have you made in the past?
- How much time are you able to spend making things now?
- Can you show me your workshop and your tools?

2
- What kind of work have you done for a living?
- What have you enjoyed most about your paid work?
- How do you feel about the differences between working for pleasure and working for money?
- Which do you enjoy most and why?
- What other difference are there between working for pleasure and working for money?

3
- Thinking about how you feel when working in your workshop, when are you happiest?
- When do you feel frustrated?
- How do you overcome this?
- What other emotions do you feel whilst working?
- How important is making to your overall life?

4
- How do you think that the difficulty and skill levels required in a job affect the enjoyment? How do you rate your skill level now in comparison to when you started making things?
- What would make you want to give up working on a particular job?
- How important are the finished objects to you? What happens to them when they are finished?
- Do you have any other hobbies or pastimes? Are there any other activities that you do that compare to the feelings you get whilst making things?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your making interests?